

קולנו



שמע

SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND FACULTY OF MTA

PESACH 5784



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Divrei Bracha

This has been a very challenging year for the Jewish people. Our sense of collective and individual vulnerability has been on display for the entire world to see.

A common refrain we have heard throughout the year is “I have no words.” While that feeling may be true—the truth is that we need words. In our darkest moments, we need to find words of self-expression, words of comfort and healing. In our tradition, we are blessed to have great repositories of these words.

The book I turn to in these moments is *Tehillim*, the book of Psalms.

In *Tehillim* we read, “*Harofei lishvurei leiv umchabeish l’atzevosam*”—“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (147:3).

G-d is described as the healer of broken hearts and the mender of our wounds. Looking out at the Jewish people, this is the form of divine comfort we so desperately need in this moment. How is this achieved? Two directions are

suggested in the psalm:

בִּנְהַי יְרוּשָׁלַם יְהוָה נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנָס׃

“The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; He gathers in the exiles of Israel” (ibid, 2)

הִרְפָּא לְשִׁבוּרֵי לֵב וּמְחַבֵּשׁ לְעַצְבוֹתָם׃

“He heals the brokenhearted; and binds up their wounds.”

G-d gathers in all those suffering in exile, all those who feel homeless, rootless, disconnected, and disenfranchised. Healing begins with a sense of community, with knowing that none of us are alone, but we are here with each other and for each other.

Then *Tehillim* adds something else in the next verse: “*Moneh mispar lakochavim l’chulam sheimos yikra*”—“He assigns a count to the stars; He calls all of them by name.”

G-d calls each star by name. What does that mean? G-d is not a scientist who classifies each star and galaxy in the universe. I would



**Rabbi Dr. Ari
Berman ('87)**
**President and Rosh Yeshiva,
Yeshiva University**

suggest—that name here refers to purpose. “*L’chulam sheimos yikra*”—everything around us, and within each of us, has a purpose.

Sometimes when we are most broken, our lives can feel purposeless, empty and lost. “*L’chulam sheimos yikra*”—each person, every difficult story, every period of pain in our lives—each has a name, each has a purpose.

We heal through our collective

identity by coming together, and we heal by giving names to our struggles, by discovering the purpose of our individual lives, and creating meaning even in the darkest moments of our lives.

This is the central theme of Pesach, the holiday in which we anchor our individual identity within the context of our national identity. While Pesach is the celebration of the birth of the Jewish people, the Rabbis teach that each individual is to experience this night as if he or she was liberated from Egypt.

In a broader sense, our personal stories are not only part of the greater whole, but also run parallel to the story of redemption. We too have our struggles and triumphs. We too at times feel the weight of our surroundings and moments of liberation.

Perhaps this year, more than others, our individual feelings mirror those of the entire Jewish people. When our soldiers are at risk, we are all in fear. When our brothers and sisters are still being held in captivity, we are all in turmoil.

When Israel is at war, we are all called to service

We pray to the Rofei liShvurei Leiv uMchabeish l'Atzevosam.

May He bring the hostages home, protect our soldiers and bless our students and families, our children and families. May we find the words, the strength, and the purpose to bring healing individually and collectively. May Hashem mend our wounds, and bring redemption to all.



THE MAGIC OF MTA

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Questions With No Answers

Rabbi Michael Taubes ('76)
Rosh Yeshiva, YUHSB and RIETS

As is well known, one of the prominent features of the Seder on Pesach night is the intergenerational dialogue that takes place in the form of questions and answers. The Torah itself in several places (*Shemos* 12:26 and 13:14, *Devarim* 6:20), in passages cited by the Haggadah when presenting the famous *Arba'ah Banim*, the four children asking about Pesach, outlines certain questions that will be posed in the future. Moreover, the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah essentially begins with the even more famous four questions of the *Mah Nishtanah*. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik thus posits (*Chidushei HaGrach Al HaShas to Pesachim* 116a) that one of the primary distinctions between the daily and nightly *mitzvah* of *Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the requirement to make mention of the story of the Exodus, and the unique Pesach night *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the requirement to relate the whole story in detail, is that the latter must be done specifically in a question and answer format.

In order to stimulate questions from

the participants, one should engage in somewhat unusual activities at the Seder to attract people's interest and arouse curiosity, as clearly stated by the Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz uMatzah* 7:3) and others. Among those activities is the eating of *Karpas*, a certain vegetable that is dipped into liquid well before the actual meal, as presented by the Mishnah in *Pesachim* (114a). Rashi and the Rashbam there (*d"h ad shemagia*) both explain that this practice is unusual because people do not generally eat a vegetable in this manner prior to their meal, thus prompting a question. Another such activity is the pouring of a second cup of wine, as indicated by a subsequent Mishnah in *Pesachim* (116a); the famous *Mah Nishtanah* questions are asked just after this because, as Rashi and the Rashbam there explain (*d'h v'kan haben sho'eil*), it is unusual to pour another cup of wine after *kiddush* before starting the meal.

One might wonder, however, what the answers to some of these questions are. Certainly, one who follows the Haggadah properly will eventually understand the answer

to the questions of the *Mah Nishtanah*. It will become clear that we eat *matzah* because our ancestors had to flee Egypt before the bread they were baking was able to rise and because it was the "poor man's bread" eaten by slaves in Egypt, that we eat the bitter tasting *maror* because our ancestors' lives were embittered in Egypt due to the backbreaking labor that they were forced to perform, and that we eat vegetables with dip and comfortably recline in the manner of wealthy people as a sign of our freedom. While these questions are comfortably resolved, the answers to other questions remain unclear. Why do we actually eat *Karpas*? Why do we pour a second cup of wine when we do? The answers to those questions are somewhat more elusive; at least according to some, the answer to the question of why we do these things is so that the children will ask why we do them!

To clarify the true intent behind these unusual activities, some authorities, including the *Pri Chadash* (to *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 473:6) and the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (No. 40), explain that

Introduction

Rabbi Michael Taubes, Rosh Yeshiva

while there is indeed no specific reason for engaging in these behaviors, since they are out of the ordinary, people will naturally question them, and will ultimately come to question the more significant matters, the explanations for which will result in a fuller comprehension of the Pesach story. In other words, the goal is to create an overall atmosphere at the *Seder* where questions are raised and curiosity is piqued. Therefore, things are done which, in and of themselves, may not contribute to the understanding of the story, but by noticing these things and asking about them, one will notice other things and ask about them too. In an environment where general questions are encouraged and interest is inspired, pointed questions and serious inquiries will eventually also be raised, leading to discussions that will result in the proper fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* by all.

One may, however, propose another reason for setting up questions at the *Seder* that do not seem to have any specific or relevant answers. As much as we want to explain everything to our children, to answer all of their questions, and to respond to all of their challenges, it is important to recognize that at times we in fact cannot provide satisfactory answers. There are some questions to which we do not really know the answer—to which none of us know the answer—and that is perfectly ok. We are human beings and we do not understand absolutely everything. While it is acceptable for our children (of any

age) to pose all questions, it is also acceptable for us to acknowledge that we do not always have a clear answer.

“

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There are certain things that we do, whether at the Pesach *Seder* or throughout the year, that we strive mightily to understand—and hopefully we succeed—but we know that even if we do not, we must do them anyway, as required by the Torah and the *halacha*. That too is a lesson taught by the activities at the *Seder*. Additionally, on a deeper level, it is important to recognize that as much as we may want everything in life to make sense and to “fit in,” such is not always the case. We can not explain why Hashem allows certain things to happen, much as we might want to and try. Perhaps this too is a message to be taken to heart specifically on Pesach night, when we note that our ancestors endured such terrible hardships for so long in Egypt before the majestic events of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and when we highlight (in “*Vehi She’amdah*”) that in every generation people stand against us to annihilate us. This past year, we have experienced much profound suffering as a people. We do not know why, or what Hashem’s ultimate plan is. Despite this, we move ahead, confident in our conviction that He indeed has a plan, and looking forward to the final fulfillment of “*veHaKadosh Baruch Hu matzileinu miyadam*,” at which time all the unanswered questions will be resolved—*bimheirah b’yameinu!*



Lessons From Our Leadership:

Pesach Perspectives from the Hanhalah of MTA



Rabbi Shimon
Schenker
Menahel, YUHSB

Does Eliyahu Really Drink the Wine?

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

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

“

“Look, it is lower, Eliyahu Hanavi did come and drink it!” I think many of us grew up with that same joke. However, I think many of us still have a view of the cup in a simplistic and childish perspective that robs us of appreciating this beautiful and meaningful minhag

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This custom is, in fact, not as simple as it seems. The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 118a) writes: “On the fourth cup, we say the whole *Hallel*; these are the words of Rabbi Tarfon.” This is the

text of Rashi, Tosafos, and the Rashbam there. However, Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon points out in his *Haggadah* that *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* has the text, “one who drinks the fifth cup, completes the *Hallel*” (the Maharam Chalava and the Maharam also have this text). The *Shulchan Aruch* (481:1) *paskens* that we can’t add a fifth cup; however, the Rema adds from the *Mordechai* that one can add a fifth cup as long as he says full *Hallel* on it. Rav Rimon explains that this is why the cup is called *Kos shel Eliyahu*; it is based on the *passuk* of “*veheiveisi*”—“I will bring [you to the land which I swore to give]” (*Shemos* 6:8), the fifth language of redemption (see Rashi, *Pesachim* 99b), in that Eliyahu Hanavi will herald the ultimate redemption.

The common custom is to pour the cup but not to drink it. The Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz uMatzah* 8:10) writes that one should pour the fifth cup and say full *Hallel*; however, one shouldn’t drink it, as it is forbidden

to drink after the fourth cup. The Raavad in his commentary to the *Ba'al Hamaor* (*Pesachim* ibid.) takes this one step further, that even though the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 99b) tells us we cannot have less than four cups, one can certainly add a fifth, and this is praiseworthy. Again, the dispute becomes more complicated.

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

As we look around the world, we are often confronted with situations that we think we understand, but after we look into them they become so uncertain that we need to wait until *Mashiach* clarifies it for us. This year has been one of those years for *Klal Yisrael*, that as each day passes, we crave the coming of *Mashiach* more and more to help us understand the situation that we are in. In our personal lives as well, we try to make sense of things, to look at life through logic and with *svara*, yet sometimes we realize that ultimately we need Hashem to give us *siyata dishmaya* to understand what to do. Hashem should bless us all to see the coming of *Mashiach* and Eliyahu Hanavi, to give us the ultimate clarity, so that we will no longer have to sing "*leshanah haba'ah biYerushalayim*," and for once and for all, resolve how many cups we should actually have at the *Seder*.



Rabbi Daniel
Konigsberg ('05)
Principal, YUHSB

Vehi She'amda - Eternal and Timely, Now More Than Ever

For the past decade, I have had the opportunity to daven for the *amud* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur at Congregation Bais Tefilah in Woodmere. I recall how the first year I was hired to lead the *tefillah*, I walked up to the *amud*, trembling with fear and nerves. To this day I am still not sure how I made it past the first few minutes of stepping up to lead a *kehilla* in their *tefillas musaf* of *yamim noraim* for the first time.

“
Recalling the words behind the tune, I am reminded that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is always with each and every one of us at all times to help us face any and all adversity, be it personal, collective, individual or national, just as he promised Avraham Avinu thousands of years ago.”

As the years went on, I became more confident and thus more comfortable in my task. The thought of bearing responsibility on behalf of an entire congregation became something I had accepted. Yet each year as time goes on, a familiar feeling of nervousness and anxiety begins to set in just as the *Baal Koreh* finishes the haftorah. And

then, as the *Baal Tokea* blows *shofar* and recites the verses repeated by the congregation, I begin to panic. Each year, no matter how long it's been, no matter how many years of experience I have with a congregation that is familiar with me and comfortable with my leadership, I cannot shake the fear, nervousness, and anxiety of standing before the Creator of the World on the holiest days of the year.

As I begin to approach the *amud*, I typically find it difficult to maintain my composure. The experience in me helps me work my way through the opening *Kaddish*. And then, as we begin the silent prayer, I can finally take a breath. When the repetition is set to begin, I am once again filled with nerves. Year after year I experience the same phenomenon. I begin my task of leading *Chazaras HaShatz* with trepidation, until I reach a specific point that helps calm my nerves and gives me the confidence and reassurance to continue on in my service. At first I wasn't sure if there was anything specific that helped me settle in, perhaps nothing other than "hitting my groove" after a certain amount of time.

Yet, after years of self reflection and introspection, I realized that there was actually something comforting about the way I chose to lead the services that helped me feel at ease and gave me confidence. You see, for the paragraph of *Atah Gibor*, I chose to sing it to the tune of Yaakov Shwekey's *Vehi She'amda*. As I reflected on this, I realized that this song of timeless and ageless lyrics gave me a degree of confidence to continue on in my service. Recalling the words behind the tune, I am reminded that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is always with each and every one of us at all times to help us face any and all

adversity, be it personal, collective, individual or national, just as he promised Avraham Avinu thousands of years ago.

This year, as we sit at the Pesach Seder, *Vehi She'amda* will not be the same. I will nervously sit and wait as we approach this section of the Haggadah, not knowing how I will react when this song is sung. In a year where our enemies attacked us in an unprecedented way and we have seen and heard the phrase "*Omdim Aleinu LiChaloseinu*" come to life in front of our eyes, how can *Vehi She'amda* be the same?

In dark times of our nation's history such as these, there is often a bright light that can be seen at the end of the tunnel, if one takes the time to look around and process the surrounding events. The last time I sang *Vehi She'amda* was one such time, a time that spreads exactly this kind of hope.

It was in late February at the site of the Nova Festival in Re'eim, a now-memorial that embodies "*Omdim Aleinu Lichaloseinu*". I, together with approximately 40 members of our MTA community, stood arm in arm with hundreds of Jews—strangers who we had never met before, singing, proclaiming to the world that no matter how hard they try to destroy us we will persevere. We will survive.

This passage of the Haggadah, this year more than ever, must be concentrated on and said with great intention, prayer, emotion and faith. May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* hear our *tefillos* and bring us to a time and place where we no longer have to fear the threats of our enemies. May we live in peace and harmony, dedicated and devoted to His service, with the coming of *Mashiach bimheirah b'yameinu*.



Where Credit is Due

It is often the case that lessons we learn at a young age make a deep impression on us. The Mishnah in *Avos* (4:20) compares Torah study in one's youth to ink written on fresh paper, whose words carry a lasting impact. One idea that many have learned at an early age relates to the opening plagues that G-d unleashed on the Egyptians. In the first two plagues, Hashem directed Moshe to tell Aharon to interact with the water of the Nile, first in changing it to blood, and then in creating a swarm of frogs that emerged from it. Similarly, in the third plague of *kinim*, G-d once again told Moshe to stand down, and instead have Aharon strike the ground to commence the infestation of lice.

Every product of a Jewish day school education knows the reason for these decisions: it's all about the importance of *hakaras hatov*, of giving appropriate thanks and appreciation. Rashi (*Shemos* 7:19) points out that for both the plague of blood and frogs, it would be inappropriate for Moshe Rabbeinu to hit the water. After all, we know that when Moshe was a baby, his mother Yocheved floated him in a basket down the Nile River to escape the Egyptian decree of killing Jewish male newborns. It was the waters of the Nile which ultimately saved Moshe's life; therefore, writes Rashi, if Moshe

were to hit the water, even to perform a G-dly decree, it would demonstrate a serious lack of respect and appreciation for the entity that protected him.

Similarly, Rashi (8:12) notes that during the administration of the plague of lice, it would be inappropriate for Moshe to hit the ground. After all, it was the Egyptian desert sand that hid the body of the Egyptian officer that Moshe killed. How could he strike this very same dust that protected him in his very vulnerable moment? Again, we emerge from this incident with an enhanced appreciation for the Torah value of *hakaras hatov*.

An "ink on fresh paper" type of lesson is powerful and indelible. Yet sometimes, precisely because it is a concept that has been learned and relearned, engraved in our consciousness, it can obscure rather obvious questions or challenges. In this case, we can certainly appreciate the beautiful lesson of *hakaras hatov*, but if we stop and think for a moment, we may be bothered by the fact that Moshe is being directed to express thanks to water and sand, inanimate objects that have no agency or feelings. They are not going to be insulted if Moshe strikes them, nor will they feel honored if Moshe recalls earlier experiences and refrains from hitting them. What then, is the significance of G-d's direction to Moshe? Are these really examples of *hakaras hatov*?

Rav Eliyahu Dessler *zt"l* answers this question with an unequivocal "yes!" He explains that, contrary to conventional wisdom, when we engage in acts of thanks and appreciation, we are not primarily doing it to benefit someone else. The act of gratitude is actually a gift to ourselves. Demonstrating appreciation for inanimate objects

helps perfect our own character. When we make a decision to be grateful, we more sharply attune ourselves to the many things that we benefit from every day and often take for granted. We become better, more thoughtful people, and in practicing the “muscle” of thanks and appreciation, we are more likely to give appropriate thanks to those people in our lives who deserve it. Most importantly, this practice will allow us to continue to develop our ability to properly thank Hashem for the millions of blessings He bestows upon us.

Rav Yisroel Zev Gustman served as the *rosh yeshiva* of Netzach Yisroel, a *yeshiva* first established in Europe and then in Israel after World War II, and was considered one of the *gedolei hador* in postwar Israel. Hailed as a child prodigy growing up, Rav Gustman had the unusual distinction of being appointed by Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski as the head of the *beis din* in Vilna while still in his 20s, and they enjoyed a very close relationship. In the later years of his life, Rav Gustman served as the *rosh yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisrael*. One of his talmidim, Rav Dovid Mishkovsky, noticed that each day, the elderly Rosh Yeshiva would walk outside and personally water the bushes outside of the building. Rav Dovid finally mustered the courage to ask his Rebbe about this unusual practice.

Rav Gustman explained that, back in Vilna, he would often take walks through the forest with Rav Chaim Ozer. They would often discuss Torah topics, but Rav Chaim Ozer would stop from time to time, point to specific forms of vegetation, and say things like “you see this plant? It can provide sustenance for days,” or “if you put that leaf on your tongue, it will quench your thirst for a long time.”

Rav Gustman would smile and nod, but he had no idea why the *gadol hador* was providing him with lessons in botany. It was only years later, amidst the horrors of the Holocaust and World War II, that Rav Gustman came to see how these walks in the woods saved his life. Rav Gustman had escaped the Nazis by fighting alongside the partisans in the forest, and in his years spent in the woods, there were many instances in which the plants that Rav Chaim Ozer had shown him kept him alive. Rav Gustman explained to his *talmid* that “since plants provided me with sustenance during the war, I feel that I have an obligation to express my *hakaras hatov* to these plants by providing *their* sustenance.”

“*When we make a decision to be grateful, we more sharply attune ourselves to the many things that we benefit from every day and often take for granted.*”

If we were to look at the concept of *hakaras hatov* on a purely logical level, this of course makes no sense. Not only do plants have no feelings, of course, and could not appreciate the reciprocal thanks that Rav Gustman was showing them, but these were not even the same plants or even species that Rav Gustman encountered in Europe! But Rav Gustman appreciated that the purpose of expressing thanks is to allow a person to perfect themselves, and become a person that appreciates the good that is done to them by others, especially from Hashem.

Expressing thanks is not an easy thing. The word *todah*—thanks—really has its roots in the word *modeh*—to admit. We are admitting that we could not do something on

our own. Especially over time, we can easily forget about those things that we are given because they happen so often and we take them for granted.

Dr. David Pelcovitz once described an experience that he had while presenting a paper at a psychology conference in Hawaii: The conference was at a magnificently beautiful resort.

One day in the late afternoon, he “cut” a meeting session and walked outside. Dr. Pelcovitz was standing on a balcony, looking at this incredible scene: a beautiful sunset, the waves lapping against the beach, and a waterfall off to the side. He recalled feeling absolutely mesmerized. He noticed that on this balcony, it was just him and a hotel employee who was busy sweeping the floor. Dr. Pelcovitz turned to this gentleman and said “I can’t imagine what it must be like to work in such an unbelievable setting. What’s it like to have a job in a place like this?” The man stopped sweeping and stared at Dr. Pelcovitz for a few seconds with a look of bewilderment. He then responded: “Sir, I dread coming into work each Monday morning as much as the next guy.”

Pesach serves as an opportunity for us to take a step back and relive the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. It is, of course, a dramatic and exciting story, but more importantly, it serves as an opportunity for us to express thanks and appreciation to Hashem for making us His children. It allows us to stop and take stock of the tremendous miracles that Hashem does for us each and every day. Hopefully, we can emerge from this Yom Tov with a renewed awareness of the tremendous gifts each of us are given, big and small.



MTA MISSION TO ISRAEL

Close to 40 members of the MTA family were privileged to spend 4 unforgettable days in Israel immersed in Torah, *tefilah*, *chessed*, and *chizzuk*. They had the opportunity to interact with *chayalim*, displaced families, survivors of October 7th, families of those who lost their lives and those who are still in captivity - all while experiencing the unbelievable sense of *achdus* permeating *Eretz Yisrael*.

Am Yisrael Chai!





From the Beis Medrash: Insights on Erev Yom Tov



Dov Hochman, '23

You Can Almost Taste The Matzah

Every year, about a month before Pesach, all the Jewish children around the world think the exact same thing: How in the world am I supposed to eat all my Purim candy by the time Pesach comes? While this concern is certainly valid, it's important to remember that there's more on which to focus a month before Pesach. It's also the time to start delving into the *halachos* of the holiday, as one is meant to begin learning them 30 days in advance. This idea is taken so seriously to the point where people stop eating *matzah* to whet their

appetite for Pesach. The question is, why do we need to look ahead a month and prepare so eagerly?

The Gemara in *Pesachim* (6b) says that the reason one must prepare for a holiday a month in advance is because Moshe taught *Bnei Yisrael* about Pesach Sheini, which happens a month after Pesach, on Pesach. The Gemara points out that prior to the discussion of Pesach Sheini, the *pesukim* describe Hashem's instructions to offer the *Korban Pesach* and *Bnei Yisrael's* fulfillment of this commandment on the fourteenth of Nisan.

Immediately following these events, the *passuk* says, "*Vayhi anashim asher hayu teme'im l'nefesh adam v'lo yachelu la'asos haPesach bayom hahu vayikrivu lifnei Moshe v'lifnei Aharon*"—"There were men who were ritually unclean [because of contact with] a dead person, and could not offer the *Korban Pesach* on that day, so they approached Moshe and Aharon" (*Bamidbar* 9:6).

It was at this point that Moshe began to delineate the *halachos* of Pesach Sheini.

There is a *machlokes* between the Beis Yosef, the Maharsha, and the Chok Yaakov about the extent to which the idea of preparing a month in advance actually applies. The Beis Yosef holds that one is required by *halacha* to start studying *Hilchos Pesach* on Purim because of how much there is to learn before the holiday approaches. On the other hand, the Maharsha holds that one must start learning the *halachos* of all of the *Shalosh Regalim* 30 days in advance. Finally, the Chok Yaakov holds that, in regard to Pesach, it is a *chiyuv* to learn the *halachos* 30 days prior, but concerning Shavuos and Sukkos, this practice is only a nice *minhag*. Despite the differences between these opinions, they all agree that one must prepare for Pesach a month in advance, no matter how difficult the presence of Purim may be.

When introducing kabbalah in the *Shlosha Ma'amarim*, the Piaseczna Rebbe gives a *mashal* to understand it. He explains that if a non-Jew were to learn the laws relating to Pesach, he would be incapable of fully comprehending the many specific details in the creation of this “guarded flatbread” (*shmurah matzah*), and why the table has to be set in such a strange way for the night of the *Seder*. On the other hand, even a young student in *yeshiva* can taste the *matzah* as he’s learning about the *halachos*, see the *Seder* table set in front of him, and feel the freedom of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. This is because of the higher connection our souls feel towards *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

The *Bnei Yisrael* were told at *Matan Torah* that they needed to prepare for three days. The Rav, in his explanation of this time that they spent purifying themselves for the Torah, said that, “holiness does not arrive suddenly; it comes by invitation inherent in the act of preparation.” *Bnei Yisrael* could not immediately transition from the *tumah* filled lives that they were living in *Mitzrayim* to living as a “*mamleches kohanim v’goy kadosh*” (*Shemos* 19:6). It took intense preparation, as well as a complete lifestyle change.

When listing Yom Kippur among the various festivals throughout the year, the *passuk* tells us, “*v’inisem es nafshoseichem b’sisha lachodesh ba’erev mei’erev ad erev tishbisu shabatchem*”—“you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe your rest day” (*Vayikra* 23:32). While this *passuk* may seem to state that one should fast on the ninth day, *Chazal* explain that this is meant to teach us that one who

eats on the ninth in preparation of fasting on the tenth is rewarded as if he fasted on both the ninth and tenth (*Yoma* 81b, et al.). We can see from here that eating with the right intentions can be turned into a *mitzvah*. Based on this, it may be possible that eating all of that candy before Pesach might even be a way to prepare for the *mitzvah* of *biur chametz*.

The above examples clearly show us how crucial it is to prepare in advance for the holidays. While reliving the Exodus and spending the next 49 days counting up until the celebration of the acceptance of the Torah, we need to recognize that it is only with the proper preparation that we will be able to keep every detail of the precious holidays and develop a close personal connection to Hashem. We need to prepare ourselves so well to the point where we can almost taste the *matzah*.



Caution: Assur When Wet

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 35a) states that *matzos* baked for the purpose of being used for the *korban todah*, or for the offering of a *nazir*, may not be used for the *mitzvah*. The Gemara (*ibid.* 38a) quotes Rabbah that the source for this *halacha* is the *passuk* (*Shemos* 12:17), which

states, “and you shall guard the *matzos*”: *matzah* which has been guarded for the sake of *matzah*, and not a sacrifice, is required. Rashi (*d”h ushemartem*) explains that the “guarding” which is referred to here is anything done to prevent the *matzah* from becoming *chametz*.

Given the context of the *passuk*, it is not immediately obvious that the “guarding” means to guard from *chimutz*, as the *issur* of *chametz* is not mentioned until two *pesukim* later. It would seem Rashi’s source for this assertion is on *daf* 40a. The Gemara discusses the process of *lesisah*, in which bakers would soak their wheat kernels in water before grinding them in order to remove excess dirt and chaff (see *Rambam Hilchos Chametz uMatzah* 5:7). The Gemara says as follows:

הדר אמר רבא מצוה ללתות שנאמר ושמרתם את המצות אי לא דבעי לתייה שימור למאי אי שימור דלישה שימור דלישה לאו שימור הוא דאמר רב הונא בצקות של נכרים אדם ממלא כריסו מהן ובלבד שיאכל כזית מצה באחרונה באחרונה אין בראשונה לא מ”ט משום דלא עבד בה שימור ולעביד ליה שימור מאפייה ואילך אלא לאו שמע מינה שימור מעיקרא בעינן וממאי דילמא שאני התם דבעידנא דנחית לשימור לא עבד לה שימור אבל היכא דבעידנא דנחית לשימור עביד לה שימור הכי נמי דשימור דלישה הוי שימור ואפ”ה לא הדר ביה רבא דאמר להו להנהו דמהפכי כיפי כי מהפכיתו הפיכו לשום מצוה אלמא קסבר שימור מעיקרא מתחלתו ועד סופו בעינן

Rava later said: it is a *mitzvah* to perform *lesisah*, as the *passuk* states “and you shall guard the *matzos*.” [For] if *lesisah* is not required, what must one guard from? It cannot be the guarding which takes place during kneading, as this is not considered “guarding,” as Rav Huna said: one may fill his belly with dough baked by non-Jews [on Pesach], as long as he eats a *kezayis* of *matzah* afterwards. This implies that such

bread may not be used to fulfill one's obligation, because it has not been guarded for the sake of *matzah*. But let one guard it from the moment of baking and onwards! Clearly, it is necessary to guard the dough from the beginning of the process [and if one does not do *lesisah*, there will be no opportunity to guard at the beginning of the process]. [The Gemara responds:] Perhaps that case is different, since the dough of non-Jews was not guarded from the moment that it began to require guarding [when it came in contact with water]. However, in a case where you guarded it from when it first came in contact with water, it would be considered guarding. [Thus, it wouldn't be necessary to guard it from the time of *lesisah*.] Even so, Rava did not retract his statement, as he was known to tell the people who cut the stalks of wheat, "when you cut, make sure to cut for the sake of *matzah*." Clearly, he maintained that one must guard from the beginning of the process.

A glaring structural problem emerges from this Gemara. The Gemara first states that Rava held there is a *mitzvah* to perform *lesisah*, since the *passuk* apparently requires *shemirah* before kneading, and if *lesisah* is not part of the process, there is nothing before kneading to guard from. The Gemara later rejects this premise, but states that Rava did not retract his original statement, as seen from a story where he told those cutting the wheat to make sure to guard the wheat *lishmah*. However, this story would seem to not support the premise—Rava's proof that *lesisah* is required was because there would be no other reason to guard the wheat before kneading. If he held that the wheat had to be guarded from when it was cut, there is no basis for his original

statement; if so, why does the Gemara say that Rava did not retract his statement? The *Rishonim* offer various explanations of this Gemara in order to answer this question, and from their answers emerge variant understandings of this *halacha*.

A) Tosafos (*d"h ki*) understands that Rava's original statement was based on an interpretation of the *passuk* which implied a requirement of *shemirah* for the entire process. Rava himself inferred from this that the Torah would not have required *shemirah* for the entire process unless there were some moment before kneading at which the wheat must come in contact with water. Thus, by proving that Rava did not retract from his interpretation of *shemirah*, the Gemara implicitly proves that he did not retract from his requirement of *lesisah* either.

B) Rashi (*d"h va'afilu*) understands that the Gemara's assertion that "Rava did not retract" refers to Rava's explanation that *shemirah* is required at some point before kneading. At first, this seems problematic, as Rava's original statement was not explicitly about the requirement of *shemirah*, but about the presumed requirement of *lesisah*. Seemingly, Rashi understands that while Rava only spoke explicitly about *lesisah*, his statement was based on an implicit understanding of *shemirah*; namely, that the *passuk* required *shemirah* throughout the entire process. Thus, even though Rava found no proof to require *lesisah*, he still maintains that *shemirah* is needed for the entire process. The implication of

this is that Rashi believes that Rava's understanding of *shemirah* has nothing to do with when the wheat comes in contact with the water; regardless of whether *lesisah* is performed, *shemirah* is required the entire time. This would also seem to be the opinion of the Rif (12b *b'dafei haRif*), who brings the requirement of *shemirah* from the harvest, but does not bring Rava's statement that *lesisah* is a *mitzvah*.

C) The Rosh (2:26) understands that Rava's insistence on *shemirah* from the moment of harvest was only a *chumrah*, and that he really agreed with the Gemara's rejection of his statement. This also seems to be the opinion of the Ran (12b *b'dafei haRif, d"h umiba'i*). However, the Rosh also quotes a *minhag* of *bnei Ashkenaz* to guard the wheat from when it was ground, since they were accustomed to use water mills, and there was concern that the wheat would touch water in the process of being ground. This implies that even according to the Rosh, the requirement of *shemirah* is not strictly set at the moment of kneading, but extends to whichever point in the process the wheat first comes near water. The same understanding is also implied in the *She'iltos* of Rav Achai Gaon (*Parshas Tzav She'ilta* 76).

What emerges from this is two major understandings of the requirement of *shemirah*. Tosafos, Rashi and the Rif understand that the *passuk* obligated *shemirah* for the entire process of baking *matzos*, regardless of whether there is reasonable concern of the wheat touching water. On the other hand, the Rosh and the Ran understand that Rava's practice to guard from the moment of harvest was just a *chumrah*, and the *de'oraysa* requirement only exists whenever the *chametz* comes in contact with water.



Yaakov Weinstock, '22

The Creation Of A Nation

There are many details about the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach*. It has to be eaten in a *chabura*, it must be roasted, it can only be *schechted* specifically for those designated to eat it, and many other intricate *halachos*. However, amid all the details, sometimes the bigger idea that is trying to be conveyed can be lost. Maybe, Rabban Gamliel intended that through the visual aids of *Pesach*, *Matzah*, *uMaror*, we would make sure not to get too caught up in the details, and we would make sure to talk about the fundamentals that are meant to be talked about on the night of the *Seder*. Throughout history, the *Korban Pesach* has been a fundamental part of the *Seder*, and it is something that we are obligated to talk about and discuss to be *yotzei* the *chiyuvim* of the night. However, what is the *Korban Pesach* really all about?

Rabban Gamliel explains in the Haggadah that the *Korban Pesach* represents that Hashem passed over us in *Mitzrayim* when He killed all of the Egyptian firstborns. Rabban Gamliel then quotes the *passuk* (*Shemos* 12:27) that proves that this is the correct definition and that this is what the *Korban Pesach* is really about.

However, it seems that while this is an important detail, it is still a part of the larger story of *Yetzias*

Mitzrayim. What is so important about this part of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* that it should seemingly define the *Korban Pesach*? The *Aggadeta D'Pischa*, one of the *Rishonim* on the Haggadah, writes that Hashem's passing over the houses of the Jews represents Hashem's personal *hashgacha* of us. While this is a nice idea, the entire story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* shows this idea, so why did we choose specifically the moment of Hashem passing over our houses as an example of this idea?

I would like to suggest that there is something a little deeper behind this statement of the *Aggadeta D'Pischa*, and it requires a slightly different understanding of what the *Korban Pesach* represents. Rashi in *Parshas Beha'alo-secha* quotes a Midrash that says that you might think that a *ger* needs to bring a *Korban Pesach* right when he converts, but we learn from the *passuk* that he does it on *Erev Pesach* like everybody else.

The question is: what is the *hava amina* that a *ger* should have to bring a *Korban Pesach* right when he converts? Rav Soloveitchik understands that a *Korban Pesach* is a type of *korban* of conversion, as it represents our birth as a nation. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that the *Korban Pesach* represents us entering into a covenant with Hashem, and entering *tachas kanfei hashechinah*, under the metaphorical wings of Hashem's Divine Presence. Therefore, there is a *hava amina* that a *ger* might need to bring one when he converts, and only those that are completely in the covenant with Hashem can eat from the *korban*, unlike a *rasha* or an *arel*, someone who is uncircumcised. The *Meshech Chochmah* even says that maybe if a *ger* brings a *Korban Pesach* he

doesn't need to bring a *Korban Ger*. This complements the idea of Rav Soloveitchik that the *Korban Pesach* is a type of *Korban Ger* as it represents our birth as a nation, and it complements the idea of the *Sefer Hachinuch* that the *Korban Pesach* represents us entering into a covenant with Hashem and entering *tachas kanfei hashechinah*.

Based on these ideas we can maybe explain the words of the *Aggadeta D'Pischa* a little more deeply than Hashem's passing over the houses being just about Hashem's *hashgacha* over us. It's not the *hashgacha pratis* itself that is being commemorated, it's what the *hashgacha pratis* represents. The *hashgacha pratis* represents a relationship with Hashem that we have and that no other nation has. This is the explanation of the *Meshech Chochmah*, that the *Korban Pesach* shows that Hashem runs the world with a personal *hashgacha pratis* for us that separates us from the rest of the nations. We see now that the *hashgacha pratis* mentioned by the *Aggadeta D'Pischa* is a symbol for the deeper idea expressed by the *Korban Pesach* and by Hashem skipping over our houses, that we are special and are separated from everyone else through our personal *hashgacha*.

From Our Table to Yours: Insights on the Opening of the Seder



Yehuda Pfeiffer, '24

When Kiddush Becomes Kadesh

After all the anticipation and excitement, one of the most exciting moments of the entire year, the Pesach Seder, finally arrives. As the festivities begin, everybody starts singing the song of "*Kadesh, Urchatz, Karpas, etc.*" Someone completely new to Pesach might think to start the *seudah* with something more integral to the holiday, such as the *matzah*, the *maror*, or the story of *Yetzias Mizrayim*, but instead, as we do every Shabbos and Yom Tov, we start with *kiddush*. What is the reason that we commence the

Seder with something that leads off every other Shabbos and Yom Tov meal? What differentiates this *Kadesh* from all the other ones to the extent that it is designated as one of the fifteen *simanim* on Pesach night?

Rav Yisroel Meir Druck, in his Haggadah, provides three answers. The first of which, stems from a Gemara in *Pesachim* (108a) that states that women are obligated to drink each of the *arba kosos*, despite the fact that it is a *mitzvas aseh shehazman grama*, in which women are typically not obligated. This is because women were also involved in the *neis* of *Yetzias Mizrayim*. However, in regard to *kiddush* on Shabbos and Yom Tov, women are not *chayavos* to drink. It emerges from these *halachos* that the *kiddush* of Pesach is unique in the sense that every member of the family is obligated in drinking the wine, unlike Shabbos and Yom Tov.

A second answer to our question

states that this *kiddush* serves a dual purpose.

The Abudraham writes that while the *kiddush* at the Seder acts as the regular *kiddush* for Yom Tov, it also serves as the *bracha* over reading the Haggadah and the story of *Yetzias Metzrayim!* This is the answer to many of the questions posed in relation to *Maggid* as to why there is no *bracha* before the section of *Sippur Yetzias Mizrayim*; it is all covered in *Kadesh* at the beginning. This also clearly differentiates *Kadesh* from the *kiddush* said throughout the remainder of the year.

A third answer is based on the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 472:1), who writes that *kiddush* may not be said until nightfall. (This topic is a subject of *machlokes* between the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Terumas Hadeshen*, who says that, in truth, *kiddush* may even be recited before nightfall, similar to Shabbos and Yom Tov. However, since the wine

drunk at *kiddush* is one of the four cups of the *Seder*, and the *mitzvah* of the *arba kosos* must be done only when the other obligations of Pesach apply, *kiddush* must be made after nightfall.) R' Chaim Soloveitchik, based on a teaching of the Rambam, points out a possible reason why the *Shulchan Aruch* rules that *Kadesh* must be performed after nightfall.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz uMatzah* 7:1), in explaining that there is a *mitzvas aseh mid'Oraisa* to recount the miracles and wonders performed for our ancestors in Egypt, quotes the following two *pesukim*: “*Zachur es hayom hazeh asher yetzasem miMitzrayim*”—“Remember this day on which you departed from Egypt” (*Shemos* 13:3), and “*Zachur es yom haShabbos lekadesh*”—“Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it” (*ibid.* 20:8). By doing so, the Rambam is comparing the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* to the *mitzvah* of remembering the day of Shabbos. Just as the *mitzvah* of remembering Shabbos includes a verbal statement that the day is Shabbos, the same has to be done in the context of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. This means that when we do the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, it must be done during *zman cheiruseinu*—the actual time during which we were freed—which begins at nightfall. It is based on this that we can see why the *Shulchan Aruch* writes that *Kadesh* may not take place before nightfall, as it is a part of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. It is this role that *Kadesh* plays in the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* that distinguishes it from the other *kiddushim* of the year, and that warrants its place at the start of the *Seder*.

A fourth answer, based on Rav

Shalom Rosner’s Haggadah, Shalom Rav, explains that on *Seder* night, *kiddush* is unique in that it symbolizes each person’s ability to control his own destiny:

Kiddush is the way by which we sanctify our holidays and, in turn, time. As we became free from slavery, we were presented with a newfound freedom to control our own time. This is seen in the fact that the first commandment we received as a nation was the *mitzvah* of Rosh Chodesh, the sanctification of each month. It is possible that these concepts serve as the reason each person receives his own cup at the *Seder*. By providing each individual with a cup for *kiddush*, we are recognizing the fact that, in addition to the physical redemption, Hashem granted each of us with the ability to manage our own time and utilize it to our fullest potential, a privilege not afforded to slaves.

May we all merit to be redeemed from our final *galus*, and to all see *Mashiach* come *bimheirah b'yameinu!*



Feeling Washed Out?

Throughout the long *Seder* night there is often one step in particular that gets looked over. Coming

second in the order of the *Seder*, *Urchatz* can be easily misunderstood. Questions like, “why do we wash before vegetables,” and “why aren’t we saying a *bracha*,” percolate through the minds of children and adults alike as the *Seder* swings into motion.

In an article titled “Understanding *Urchatz*,” Rabbi Yehuda Spitz compiles multiple answers to these questions, offering insights into the halachic significance of *Urchatz* as well as its relevance in *mussar*.

First, Rabbi Spitz points out an answer that comes directly from the *dapim* of the Gemara in *Pesachim* (114b), which, in responding to why we dip twice on the *Seder* night, replies “*ki heichi d’lehavei hekeira l’tinokos*”—“so there should be a distinction for the children.” Rashi and the Rashbam each interpret (*d’h dilma*) the Gemara to mean that this unconventional act of dipping twice will cause the children to ask more questions and thus learn more about our Exodus. However, the *Tur* argues that the basis for the children’s question will come from the specific timing of the dipping, and not from the fact that we do it twice. Instead, the children will inquire about the fact that the dipping occurs at the start of the meal, rather than in the middle, as the custom would normally be. Nonetheless, it is possible that this is the answer to our question, that we do *Urchatz* solely so the children will ask. While this might be the case, we would be remiss to not look further.

Rabbi Spitz goes on to write that there also seems to be a strong halachic basis for *Urchatz*. On the next *daf* in *Pesachim* (115a), the Gemara states, “Any food item dipped in liquid requires handwashing before eating.”

Rashi believes (*d"h tzarich*) that this is still applicable nowadays, as it is the same as the *halacha* to wash before eating bread. Alternatively, Tosafos believes (*d"h kol*) that it is a law only in regard to *halachos* of *taharos*, which no longer apply today. We follow the opinion of Tosafos, but it's important to note that many *poskim* (including the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema O"C 158:4*) hold that it is important to be vigilant in this *halacha* and to wash our hands before eating food that has been dipped in a liquid. Due to the aforementioned *machlokes rishonim* and our being unsure if there is truly an obligation to wash in this scenario, we employ the concept of *safek brachos lehakel*, and do not make a *bracha* (*Mishnah Berurah 158:20*).

The Chida, in his *Simchas HaRegel*, comments on the reason that *Urchatz*, unlike all other steps of the *Seder*, starts with the letter *vav*. He points out that we find something similar in the context of Yitzchak's *bracha* to Yaakov. At the start of the *bracha*, Yitzchak says, "V'yitein lecha"—"And Hashem should give you" (*Bereishis 27:28*). Rashi, quoting the *Bereishis Rabbah* (66:3), comments that this seemingly out-of-place *vav* means *yitein v'yachzor v'yitein*, that Hashem should continually and constantly give. Likewise, the *vav* in *Urchatz* is telling us to continue to wash everytime we eat a food dipped in liquid.

On a similar note, in their Haggadah, the Chasam Sofer and his grandson, the Chasan Sofer, attempt to bring to light a deeper message behind the seemingly simple step of *Urchatz*. They write that *Urchatz* as a whole is meant to give *tochacha* to those who are lackadaisical in this *halacha*, as well as serving as a reminder that this *halacha* applies year round.

By combining the Chida's understanding of the continuous message of *Urchatz* and the Chasam Sofer's idea that *Urchatz* is meant to give rebuke, we can start to get a hold of a deeper message. Within Judaism, there are many *halachos* that may at first seem strange, making it easy to stray from being stringent in adherence to them. It is to combat this idea that *Urchatz* comes at the very beginning of the *Seder*, just as we are about to embark upon the story of what made our people truly into a nation. *Urchatz* reminds us what binds us as a nation in the first place, and upon what our nation is built. *Urchatz* acts as a reminder that even those *halachos* that may seem confusing must be observed to the highest standard. The role of *Urchatz* in the *Seder* is to remind us to be strict in our actions all year round, and to remember that every *halacha*, no matter how small, matters more than we can imagine.

[The article, "Understanding Urchatz" by Rabbi Yehudah Spitz can be found at Ohr Somayach Institutions. www.ohr.edu.](#)



The Fundamental Role of the Middle Matzah

Many people view *Yachatz* as the fun part of the *seder*. The exciting step where we get to watch with anticipation as the host breaks the *matzah* in half, wondering if they will make a clean break in the middle of

the three *matzahs* or not. We sit at the edge of our seat, barely holding back from sprinting from the table to begin hiding the *afikoman*. However, there is a far deeper meaning behind the significance of the middle *matzah* as well as why we hide away the bigger half, and keep the smaller half present at the table.

First, there are multiple opinions as to what the three *matzos* represent. Some say it alludes to the three *avos*: Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. We are showing that although we were enslaved we are descendants of great people, and despite our troubles, we have still managed to keep our lineage. There seems to be this constant theme of a split dichotomy between being enslaved and being free throughout the entire *seder*. Some view the three *matzos* as a symbol of the three cakes of *matzah* that were taken as *terumah* for Hashem from the *korban todah*. The Gemara in *Berachos* (54b) lists the different situations in which one is required to bring a *korban todah*. This list includes one who returns from a journey across the sea or desert, one who recovers from an illness, and one who is freed from prison. The miracle of Pesach included all of the above situations, as we were freed as slaves from *Mitzrayim*, we were brought through the *yam suf* and the *midbar*, and all of our illnesses were cured. Therefore it is fitting that the three *matzos* are representative of the entirety of the miracle.

However, there is another unique symbolism of the three *matzos*. It is possible to say that the three *matzos* allude to the statuses of the *Kohen*, *Levi*, and *Yisrael*. The *Kohen* being the top *matzah*, as the *Kohen* generally takes precedence in everything. The bottom *matzah* is

the *Yisrael matzah*, which is later used for *korech*. And finally, the middle is the *Levi matzah*, which is broken into two uneven halves during *yachatz*, the larger half being hidden away and eaten later during *tzafun*.

The Rambam towards the end of *Hilchos Shemitah* explains that *Shevet Levi* had a special role in *Klal Yisroel* of full dedication to learning and serving Hashem. The Rambam goes on to explain that anyone can join *Shevet Levi*, as long as he too gives full dedication to Hashem, and will ultimately be supported just as *Shevet Levi* was, from the *masser* of *Klal Yisroel* (Rambam *Hilchos Shemitah v'yovel* 13:10-13). This may be a deeper answer to the question as to why we keep the smaller half of the middle on the table. We say *halachma anya* directly after *yachatz* to kick off *magid*, as to say that any poor person who can't afford to eat is invited to the *sefer*. Similarly, we are showing that if someone wants to learn full time, we will support and sustain him in his aspirations.

But how can we practically implement this idea into our lives? We famously say in *Pirkei Avos* that the world stands on three things: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilas chasadim* (*Pirkei Avos* 1:2). We see that Torah is mentioned first out of the three. This is because Torah supports everything, as we also famously say, "*Talmud Torah k'neged kulam*," that Torah is equal to them all [all of the *mitzvos* mentioned in the beginning of the Mishnah] (*Peah* 1:1). Although everybody has their own role in *Klal Yisrael*, Torah supports everything. However, without the *Torah* there is no *avodah* or *gemilas chasadim*. This is why *Shevet Levi* is the middle *matzah*. Yes, everybody's role is equally as important, but it is critical to remember that *Torah* is the

blueprint for it all. Additionally, we must have leaders in every aspect of life, whether it be in our communities, or in our case, Torah. We must have Torah role models surrounding us, as the Rambam says that we are affected by those who surround us, and therefore must be constantly in the presence of *talmidei chachamim* (Rambam *Hilchos Deos* 6:1). Once we have a middle *matzah* in our lives, then we are able to build around it and expand it into something far greater.

This is yet another answer as to why we hide the bigger half for later and keep the smaller half present on the table. We are showing that, although we have a *Shevet Levi* holding us up, we have still not advanced to the next stage of the *geulah* yet. We must take this as a humbling lesson, that although we have the Torah and everybody has a unique role in *klal yisroel*, we are merely holding up, and are still working towards the final goal.

This answers the question of what the deeper significance of the middle *matzah* is, but what about the other two *matzos*? Although we use the other two *matzos* for other *mitzvos*, namely the *Yisrael* for *koreich* and the *Kohen* to eat with the *afikomen*, they are simply side benefits to the main *mitzvah*. This too ties back into the idea that there is a central purpose and a side purpose. Torah is the centerpiece of our lives while everything else is a side piece that comes along with it. We should all be *zocheh* to place Torah at the center of our lives in order to bring *mashiach b'meheirah b'yameinu*.

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From Mitzrayim to Yerushalayim: Insights on Maggid and Beyond



Rabbi Eli Cohn, '00
Maggid Shiur,
Freshman Grade Dean

Hidden Impacts

Despite the upheaval since October 7th, the Balaban Nursery, located just north of the Gaza Strip, remains busy. Most of its green houses are filled with potted plants in various stages of growth benefitting from the complicated irrigation system and watchful care of Ronit and her staff. True, many of the Thai workers that the nursery depended on decided to return to their homes in the aftermath of the terror attacks, but a steady stream of volunteers and the skeletal staff that has remained keep the operation going.

However, one of the farm's greenhouses remains barren. Its roof was punctured by an incoming rocket, fired over the border from just a few kilometers away. One can clearly see the crater created from the impact and the twisted metal debris of what was once a planting table and the shattered plastic tubing of the damaged irrigation system. As our near 40 person group of MTA *talmidim*, parents, and faculty stood close to Ronit and heard her story of October 7th, she urged us not just to look at the sight of impact, as our eyes were naturally drawn to the most obvious signs of damage. Rather, Ronit told us to look at the entire ceiling of the greenhouse – hundreds of smaller holes caused by the shrapnel generating thousands upon thousands of shekels worth of damage.

Ronit's guidance is not just helpful in appreciating the damage wreaked upon her family business, but it is also instructive in how to

better comprehend the scope of the tragedy of October 7th. We're naturally drawn to the site of impact – the precious lives lost, our brothers and sisters in captivity, and the frightening destruction all around. However, if we're able to take a step back and see the surrounding shrapnel, the damage and destruction is immense. Families relocated, a sense of security lost, soldiers called to drop everything, businesses on hold, family life upended...the list goes on. The direct impact is scary but obvious; the ripple effects are infinite and ongoing.

Perhaps the Haggadah is attempting to arouse within us this same sensitivity. When one considers *shibud Mitzrayim*, there are obvious components to the calamity that come to mind. The backbreaking forced labor, the cruelty, the murderous decrees...the Haggadah is filled with descriptions and references to the horrors our ancestors endured before the

geulah. Yet, at times the Haggadah zeroes in on some of the less obvious aspects of slavery that almost seem insignificant when faced with the bigger picture.

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We're naturally drawn to the site of impact – the precious lives lost, our brothers and sisters in captivity... However, if we're able to take a step back and see the surrounding shrapnel, the damage and destruction is immense. Families relocated, a sense of security lost...the list goes on.”

For example, the Haggadah cites "*v'es lachatzeinu*" – "our duress", and defines it as "*hadechak*" – "the pressure". There are many interpretations as to what the pressure being referred to might be – but all seem to be somewhat minor when compared to the fact that they were enslaved. Rabbeinu Bachya suggests the *dechak* stems from the fact that *Bnei Yisrael* remained constricted to the borders of Goshen even though their population had far exceeded the original 70 souls that settled there. Alternatively, the *Rid* suggests that it refers to the increased pressure the Jews felt to fulfill their brick quota on a daily basis. Yes – cramped ghetto-like quarters and unreasonable workloads are terrible, but perhaps not what one immediately thinks of when considering the horror of generations of slavery.

A few lines earlier the Haggadah highlights another aspect of the experience that one might not have naturally focused on. Explaining the phrase "*vayar es anyeinu*" – "and He saw our affliction", the Haggadah points to "*prishus derech erez*", literally "separating from the way of the world". Most *meforshim* seem to suggest that the Haggadah is describing the breakdown of the family and the loss of intimacy

between husband and wife. As the Rashbam notes, the intense expectations of the taskmasters kept the men away from home as it was more efficient to sleep out in the fields. In context, the Haggadah seems focused on how this would impact the ability to produce a new generation – it was not merely that Pharaoh drowned all the male children, but his henchmen created circumstances that made it impossible to procreate at all. Indeed, the Ritva suggests that the labor and stress impacted the fertility rates of *Bnei Yisrael* on a biological level.

Yet, it is also possible to sense that the Haggadah is pushing us to consider a more subtle impact of the slavery as well. The prooftext chosen states "*vayeida Elokim*", that Hashem knew that which could not be known by others. The Rashbatz and others explain that this is referring to the fact that the private nature of the loss could only be perceived by Hashem. It is not just the missed time between husband and wife limited to the confines of their private residence – it is that only Hashem is able to understand the impact this could have on a family. Not just the ability for the family to grow, but for the *shalom bayis* to exist when a couple feels so detached and separated.

And yet the Haggadah testifies "*Vayar es anyeinu v'es amaleinu v'es lachatzeinu*" – "and He saw our affliction, and our toil and our duress". When we cried out to Hashem, He saw and perceived to the fullest extent possible our affliction, our toil and our duress. May it be His will that he hears our continued national cry since October 7th. May He perceive the full suffering of His people in ways we cannot even begin to fathom, and speedily send our ultimate *geulah*.



Moshe Anapolle, '24

What Does It Mean to Be Free?

The story of Pesach is one of the greatest stories of redemption known to man, from the hardships that the Jews faced in Egypt as slaves to the miracle by the *Yam Suf*. All these events culminate in the celebration of the holiday of Pesach.

There are different traditions set by the *Chachamim* to celebrate Pesach properly. In the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah, there is the well-known statement of Rabban Gamliel, that one who did not discuss the *Korban Pesach*, *matzah*, or *maror* did not fulfill their obligation of the Seder. Each item represents an element of our journey from slavery to freedom. The *Korban Pesach*, which was brought in the *Beis Hamikdash*, symbolizes the freedom and luxury that *Bnei Yisrael* experienced after leaving Egypt. The *maror* represents slavery, due to its sharp and bitter taste. The *Matzah* combines both aspects of slavery and freedom. It was the bread *Bnei Yisroel* ate as slaves and the bread they ate as they left Egypt.

However, the order of these items is very peculiar. Why is it that the symbols of freedom precede those of slavery? It would make sense to place the *maror* before the *matzah* and *Korban Pesach*, due to *maror's* association with the bitterness of slavery that preceded the freedom symbolized by the *Korban Pesach*

and *Matzah*. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l ("A Pesach Message," Published on OUTorah.org), quoting a chassidic concept, explains that only to a free person does slavery taste bitter. Had *Bnei Yisrael* never been exposed to freedom, the slavery they endured would not have seemed as bad as it was. As such, it is logical to have the items that invoke feelings of freedom before those that are evocative of slavery.

Rabbi Sacks explains that true freedom can only come from not feeling free. He explains this through the use of different two Hebrew terms that describe freedom, *chofesh* and *cheirus*. First, Rabbi Sacks explains, *chofesh* means 'freedom from' whereas *cheirus* means 'freedom to'. A slave who was freed from his master is an example of *chofesh*, with the slave now being free from slavery. However, the slave has merely been released from servitude, he does not know what liberty and freedom have to offer. A freed slave experiences *chofesh*, freedom from his master, but does not necessarily have the privilege of *cheirus*, the freedom to exercise certain liberties and rights.

Rabbi Sacks explains that *cheirus*, as opposed to *chofesh*, represents freedom where everyone respects and acknowledges the other person's liberties. This is what a free society should represent, as it is the ultimate aim of the Torah for us to live our lives with justice and compassion. Thus we say in *Ha Lachmya Anya*, 'Next year may we all be *bnei chorin*,' invoking specifically *cheirus*, not *chofesh*. This means, 'May we be free in a way where everyone else's freedom is valued as well, and not just individual freedom'.

Rabbi Sacks reminds us that

freedom is not just a physical state, but a mentality. No matter how dire our circumstances may seem, there is always hope for redemption and liberation. We must then reflect on the journey from slavery to freedom on Pesach so we can reaffirm our commitment to pursuing justice and compassion for all. We can all be inspired to go out of our comfort zones and embrace the boundless potential within ourselves and us as a greater whole. Nowhere more than on Pesach, do we see this, that one story can inspire so many people. With this understanding, we as the Jewish nation will continue to live and thrive and truly experience what it means to be free.



Noam Sheffey, '25

Mah Nishtanah Hamitzvah Haze Mikol Hamitzvos?

The main *mitzvah* that is fulfilled through the *Seder* is the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. At each of our *Seders*, we remember the *geulah* we experienced so long ago. Although our departure from *Mitzrayim* is the main idea of the entire Yom Tov of Pesach, the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, telling the story of our leaving Egypt, is specifically a *mitzvah* on the *Seder* night. This is learned from the *passuk* that says, "V'higadta l'vincha bayom hahu leimor."—"And you shall tell your son on that day, saying" (*Shemos* 13:8).

There is a question, however,

regarding the way the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is done at the *Seder*.

Why is it that there is no *bracha* on the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*? There are many different *mitzvos* for the different Yamim Tovim, and each of these *mitzvos* receive a *bracha*. For example, the *mitzvos* of *lulav* on *Sukkos* and *achilas matzah* on Pesach. Just like the *mitzvah* of *lulav*, and the *mitzvah* of *achilas matzah*, *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is a *mitzvah* that is an integral part of its Yom Tov. Yet, there is no *bracha* on the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Why is this? What makes *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* different from other *mitzvos*? We do recite a *bracha* at the end of *Maggid*, but this *bracha* is mainly speaking about the *geulah*. The question still stands; why is there no *bracha* on *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* before we start *Maggid*?

One answer is suggested by the Maharal. The Maharal posits that the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is a *davar shebalev*, and it is known that *devarim shebalev einam devarim*. Since the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is not done in a physical manner, there is no *bracha* recited on it. On the other hand, *mitzvos* like *lulav* or *achilas matzah* are done in a physical manner, and therefore there is a *bracha* recited on them.

Alternatively, the question can be answered based on a Ritva in *Maseches Pesachim*. The Ritva says that the purpose of a *bracha* in a general sense is to reveal that your intentions in doing the *ma'aseh mitzvah* are for Hashem. Perhaps, according to the Ritva, *brachos* are only deemed necessary when it's not obvious from your actions that you're doing it for Hashem. Within

the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, it is inherently clear that you're doing it for Hashem because you are thanking Hashem. Therefore, you would not need a *bracha*, because it's obvious that what you're doing is *l'sheim shamayim*.

This is an idea that can be applied to us over Yom Tov. When you are sitting at your *Sedarim* you should remember that what you are doing is *l'sheim shamayim*, and it should therefore be done with an extra excitement that you are serving Hashem. Even throughout your day to day life, you should make sure that whatever you are doing is *l'sheim shamayim* and should therefore be done with excitement.



Dovid Winston, '24

Today's Special: Torah

The *Maggid* section in the Haggadah begins:

"הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְרָהָמָא בְּאַרְעָא
דְּמִצְרַיִם כֹּל דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכּוֹל כֹּל דְּצָרָהּ יִיתִי
וְיִפְסַח הַשְּׂתָא הַכָּא, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּאַרְעָא
דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׂתָא עֲבָדִי, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּנֵי חוּרִין."

"This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat. Whoever needs, let him come and make Pesach for himself. This year—here, next year—in the Land of Israel. This year—as slaves, next year—as free men."

Why is this the beginning of

Maggid? After all, one would expect *Maggid* to speak about the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The beginning should be an introduction to the rest of the section, but this seems to be rather standalone. Additionally, the contents of "*ha lachma*" itself are confusing, seemingly made of three disconnected parts: first, making it known that this bread on the table is the "*lachma anya*" that our forefathers ate; second, an invitation to all those hungry or needy; and third, a hope and/or *tefillah* for speedy redemption.

The Mishnah in *Bava Metzia* (83a) cites a story where Rabbi Yochanan ben Masya wanted his son to go hire Jewish workers. His son went and pledged them sustenance (in general) for their work. When he came back, his father told him that considering their Jewish lineage, he won't be able to give them the proper compensation; for a descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, their standard of sustenance is higher. For a normal worker, bread and toppings is assumed as enough, but for a descendant of the *Avos*, even a full feast doesn't suffice. Thus, he must stipulate from the beginning that they will only receive bread and toppings. So too is the case by this *seder*: since the *ba'al habayis* is going to be inviting Jews, he knows they'll be *bonei malachim*, sons of the *Avos*. Therefore, he specifies that the meal will consist of "*ha lachma anya*"—"this bread of affliction," and no more is necessary. This doesn't explain, however, why it must be mentioned that this is what the forefathers ate in *Mitzrayim*. The Midrash in *Shemos Rabbah* (30:9) states that that which Hashem does, He tells the Jews to do. Thus, Hashem is also, *kaveyachol*, saying "*ha lachma*

anya" together with us. Hashem's *lachma anya* is that when we went into *galus*, the *Shechinah* also went into *galus*. Along with physical *galus* meaning that the Jews don't have a *Beis Hamikdash* and unity, it also means that G-dliness in the world is in a state of concealment. Although we try, we often don't see Hashem's hand in everything. This goes along with the Gemara in *Nedarim* (41a) that says "*ein ani ela bedeiah*"—"the only true poverty is in lack of knowledge." Here, we lack knowledge of the ultimate truth—Hashem running the world at all times—because of our *galus*. The *galus* of the *Shechina* is the "*di achalu avhasana*," where Hashem's presence also ate of affliction, so to speak, and became concealed. This is similar to our forefathers in *Mitzrayim*. Pharaoh refused to acknowledge—to know—any *nikudah* of G-dliness, as he said, "*lo yadati es Hashem*"—"I do not know Hashem" (*Shemos* 5:2). He also wished to impose this mindset on his Jewish slaves. The real "bread of affliction" that we have in common with our ancestors is the concealment of G-dliness that we undergo. We are not only eating *matzah* as a *zecher* for what our forefathers ate. Rather, it's a reminder that our affliction started then and continues now.

Furthermore, the Gemara in *Bava Basra* (10a) writes that "*gedolah tzedakah shemekareves es hageulah*"—"great is *tzedakah* that it brings the redemption closer." This explains the connection between inviting the poor and our hope for the future. The invitation will help make our *tefilos* a reality. Finally, the last part of "*ha lachma*" parallels what Hashem is constantly telling us: anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat. No matter how dark the *galus* is, how little we see G-dliness, if one is hungry and makes

the effort to eat, Hashem will feed him.

Finally, it becomes apparent why “*ha lachma*” is placed in the beginning of *Maggid*—it is, in fact, a general description of all of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. It’s brought down that *Galus Mitzrayim* is a source for all future exiles, and *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is a source for all future redemptions. The purpose of retelling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is to arouse again our *emunah* in coming redemption. When one considers the current situation, one may get discouraged by the fact that we have been in *galus* for so long. Therefore, right away we are told that Hashem assures us if we show a hunger and need for Hashem and His Torah, He will give us food to eat. Not only this, but He will also give us “*veyifsach*”—our own Pesach and *yetziah* from this *galus*, *bimheirah b’yameinu*.



Pinchas Rosenfeld, '24

The Rite To Freedom

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) presents the idea that when teaching one’s son about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, one should begin with disgrace and end in praise—“*maschil bignus umesayeim b’shevach*.” The Gemara (*Pesachim* 116a) has a dispute between Rav and Shmuel regarding the disgrace with which one should begin. Rav is of the opinion that we begin with the disgrace of “*mitechilah ovedei avodah zarah hayu avoseinu*”—“in

the beginning, our ancestors were idol worshippers.” However, Shmuel disagrees and holds that we begin with the disgrace of “*avadim hayinu [l’Pharaoh b’Mitzrayim]*”—“we were slaves [to Pharaoh in Egypt].”

As an aside, the Malbim, in his *peirush* on the Haggadah, explains that the significance of starting with disgrace before praising Hashem is the contrast provided by juxtaposing the two. By first expounding the pain and suffering we faced, we can better appreciate Hashem taking us out of Egypt and freeing us from that servitude.

Modern versions of the Haggadah, as explained by the Rif (*Pesachim* 25b *b’dapei haRif*), contain both of the statements of disgrace to follow both opinions in the Gemara. [However, the Ritva (Commentary on Haggadah, *d”h avadim hayinu*) understands the dispute to merely be about the order of the statements and which one should come first, but he thinks that the *Amora'im* agreed that both statements should be said. If so, we follow Rav’s opinion that we should start with discussing being idol worshippers.]

While the argument between Rav and Shmuel seems simple—with which disgrace do we start our retelling of the story of leaving Egypt—the lack of reasoning behind each opinion leaves what to be desired. What drove the argument between these two Amoraic sages? Their opinions must have been based on something concrete and not random.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik *zt”l*, as quoted by Rabbi Yonason Sacks in his compilation on the Haggadah (*Chazon L’Yomim* p. 112), suggests

that this *machlokes* between Rav and Shmuel is based on a different dispute between the same duo found in *Gittin* (38a), regarding a non-Jewish slave—*Eved Canaani*. There, Shmuel is of the opinion that a verbal relinquishment of ownership is enough to free a non-Jewish slave from his servitude, based on the *passuk* that includes the phrase, “*v’chol eved ish miknas kasef*”—“every man’s slave that is bought for money” (*Shemos* 12:44), which implies that the slave’s status is dependent on his master’s authority over his work. Once the owner has given up control of the slave in regard to his work, the slave’s status as an *eved* is completely removed. Rav disagrees and argues that an emancipation document—*get shichrur*—is required to free the slave from his servitude.

This argument is consistent with the Ramban’s commentary to *Kiddushin* 16a, where he explains the fundamentals of the process of acquiring a non-Jewish slave. The Ramban understands that there are two transactions, or *kinyanim*, that take place when acquiring an *Eved Canaani*. The first *kinyan* is monetary: it is for all of the time and work that the slave will perform under his servitude. The second *kinyan* is for the legal status of the slave, such as who he may marry and if certain commandments apply to him.

This understanding of the process of becoming an *Eved Canaani* can be used to explain the argument between Rav and Shmuel. For Rav, despite having verbally freed the slave monetarily, there is still the additional *kinyan* of legal status that has not been undone, and doing so requires a document of emancipation. Shmuel disagrees and seems to understand that since

the master has complete ownership over his slave, he has the authority to also change the slave's legal status verbally as well. Therefore, by freeing him of his work, there is also an implied freedom from the slave's legal status within that statement.

Rav Solovetchick explains that the *machlokes* found in *Gittin* with regard to servitude is similar to the *machlokes* in *Pesachim* about the disgrace with which to begin the retelling of the story of leaving Egypt. Since Rav maintains that a *get shichrur* is required to free the slave, he understands the disgrace to begin with "*mitechilah ovedei avodah zarah hayu avoseinu*"—"in the beginning our ancestors were idol worshippers." This is because that statement then continues with "*v'achshav keirvanu HaMakom la'avodaso*"—"and now Hashem brought us close to His worship," referring to bringing us closer to His Torah. The giving of the Torah acts as the *get shichrur* that Rav requires to leave servitude. The freedom is more than just physical freedom, but also legal and spiritual freedom to worship the way we want. Shmuel, however, does not require any additional *kinyan*, and therefore holds that stating "*avadim hayinu l'Pharaoh b'Mitzrayim*"—"we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt," followed by describing Hashem taking us out with strength, serves as a sufficient *kinyan* to free the nation from their servitude, since being physically removed acts as enough of a *kinyan* for religious freedom.

We hope and pray for a transformative freedom, not just removing our torments, but a positive freedom that transforms us into better people and *Ovdei Hashem*.



Wisdom Unveiled: A Dive Into The Chacham

הַכֶּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֲקִים
וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתֶכֶם. וְאַף
אֲתָה אָמַר לֹו כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אִין מִפְּטִירִין
אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמֵן.

"What does the wise one say? 'What are these testimonies, statutes, and judgments that Hashem our G-d commanded you?' Accordingly, you will respond as per the laws of Pesach, 'We may not eat an *afikomen* after eating the *Korban Pesach*.'"

The quoted text above is the question of, and response to, the wise son. The first question we must ask ourselves is how do we know that this son is truly wise? The Ritva explains that since he seems to be holding in the different *inyanim* of Pesach, considering he mentioned the "testimonies, statutes, and judgments," we can deduce that this son is a wise one.

The *Rokeach* writes that he is called wise because he clearly already knows about all the miracles performed by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and he has moved on to asking about the statutes that we follow, a true sign of wisdom.

Now that we have established that he truly is a *chacham*, we can now talk more about his questions

specifically. The *Rashbatz* explains that the *chacham* is really asking about why we give the kids sweet dessert nuts *before* the *seudah* while on most nights they are eaten *after* the meal. The answer we give him is that we cannot eat anything after the *seudah*, because we need the taste of the *Korban Pesach* and *matzah* to stay in our mouths.

The *Maharsha* takes a much more metaphorical approach, explaining that the question of the wise son is really directed at his ancestors who were in Egypt at the time of the events discussed during the *Seder*. He sees the *nissim* performed for them and he asks, "Why must you all follow these testimonies, statutes, and judgments when the greatness of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is so obvious?" To this they respond that we are required to have the taste of the *Korban Pesach* and *matzah* be the lasting taste in our mouths after the *Seder*. This means that following Hashem, and his commandments with all the rules included, is the root of *emunah* and the essence of the longevity of Judaism. To show your children a diligent following of G-d, and metaphorically, leaving it as a lasting taste in their mouths.

Rashi explains that the son is really asking his father, "Why are we eating the *Korban Chagigah* before the *Korban Pesach*? After all, the main *mitzvah* of Pesach is eating the *pesach*. So we should be eating it first?!" and the father replies, "You're right, really we should be eating the *Pesach* first, but because of this idea that we cannot eat the *afikoman* after the *Pesach*, combined with the fact that the *Korban Pesach* is supposed to be the last taste in your mouth of the night, we have to eat the *Chagigah* first."

The Ritva adds onto this that since

the taste of *matzah* stays in your mouth it will constantly remind you of the reasons for these *mitzvos*, which in turn will cause you to continue speaking about Pesach for the rest of the night. These *Rishonim* come together to provide a beautiful explanation of this question and response.

There is a lot to be learned from the interactions of all four sons, but there is something special about the conversation of the wise son. What separates the wise son from the three others is the fact that he tries to delve into and question the rituals of Pesach. None of the other sons can successfully do this. One does not know how to ask, one is too simple to seriously understand what is happening, and one is too wicked to accept any answer, rendering it pointless for him to even ask. However, the wise son is different. The wise son recognizes the complexity of the world, and more importantly, he recognizes that there are no perfect answers. He understands that even his father will only be able to answer his question to some degree, but he also understands, unlike the wicked son, that just because his parents don't know everything, does not mean that they do not know anything. On a similar note, Mark Twain once wrote, "When I was fifteen, I discovered that my dad was dumb. When I was twenty, I was amazed by how much the 'old man' learned in the last five years." The *chacham* gets his name because of the questions that he understands to ask. Out of all the sons, he is the only one that knows that he does not know.



Natan Rosman, '26

A Step by Step Guide to Denying G-d

In examining the words of the *rasha* in the Haggadah, many questions stand out. The *rasha* asks, "*mah ha'avodah hazos lachem*"—"what is this *mitzvah* for you," but what is he really asking? Why doesn't the Haggadah just simply write "what is this *mitzvah*?" Furthermore, the Haggadah expounds that by saying "*lachem*," the *rasha* is separating himself from the *klal*, but how is using the word *lachem* separating himself? Finally, the father answers the *rasha's* question with "*ba'avur zeh asah Hashem li betzeisi miMitzrayim*"—"because of what Hashem did for me when I was leaving *Mitzrayim*." This is the same answer we give the son who doesn't know how to ask questions. What is the connection between the *rasha* and the son who doesn't know how to ask, and why do we respond to them with the same answer?

The Abarbanel gives us a new explanation to this situation. He explains that the entire problem with the *rasha* is that he is denying Hashem's existence, which is, in turn, a denial of Hashem's part in creating these *mitzvos*. When the *rasha* says "*ha'avodah hazos lachem*," he isn't just saying "what is this *avodah* to you," rather, it can be explained to mean "what is this

avodah you have established." By saying this, he is implying two things: the *mitzvos* were made by humans and not Hashem, and that these *mitzvos* were just an excuse to indulge themselves in a nice piece of roasted meat (i.e. the *Korban Pesach*). This is also how the *rasha* excluded himself from the group, from the last question. When the Haggadah says that he excluded himself ("*atzmo*"), it isn't talking about removing himself from the people. Rather, the word "*atzmo*" is referring to Hashem, who is commonly referred to as "*atzmo*."

An example of this can be found in *Gittin* on *daf* 56b, where Titus enters the *Beis Hamikdash* and stabs the *paroches*, and blood starts pouring out. The *Gemara* says that Titus thought he killed himself ("*atzmo*"), but Rashi explains that "*atzmo*" was referring to Hashem, and the *Gemara* only used the word as a euphemism, in order not to say that Titus thought he killed Hashem. So, when we look back at the Haggadah, the *rasha* isn't removing himself from the people; rather, he is removing Hashem from the *mitzvos*. This again means that he is saying that people made these *mitzvos* for themselves. Finally, the question of why the *rasha* was given the same answer as the child who doesn't know how to ask can be answered along these same lines. The child who is unable to ask presents a problem for the father: the father doesn't know what kind of child this is. This child may be denying Hashem in his heart and is a *rasha*. Therefore, the father treats him the same as he treats the *rasha* because, for all he knows, he's speaking to a *rasha*.

After exploring this situation, there is a very clear lesson to be learned. The *rasha* took Hashem out of *mitzvos*, the quintessential part of

Judaism. It is clear that in order to serve Hashem properly, not only do we need to see Hashem in the *mitzvos*, but to also see Hashem as part of everything we do. When you go to sleep, you have the opportunity to do a *mitzvah*. You merely need to have in mind that you are sleeping in order to serve Hashem better, and if you live your life like this, everything you do will be a *mitzvah*.



Taking Midrashim Without a Grain of Salt

In its *drasha* of the words “*Gadol Atzum*,” the Haggadah quotes the *passuk* from the beginning of *Sefer Shemos*: “*uVnei Yisrael paru vayishretzu vayirbu vaya’atzmu bime’od me’od*”—“But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly” (*Shemos* 1:7).

The intent of the Midrash is that *Bnei Yisrael* didn’t only grow in number, but they exploded. As Rashi famously writes in explaining the four verbs (*paru, vayishretzu, vayirbu, vaya’atzmu*) and two adverbs (*bime’od me’od*), this indicates that the Jewish women gave birth to sextuplets in each pregnancy.

It is tempting to dismiss this Rashi

as hyperbole, simply an exaggeration. After all, six at a time? Really? But it becomes more plausible when one considers that somehow *Bnei Yisrael* grew in a very short time from 70 to over 600,000, and that’s only men aged 20–60. How can that happen in just a few generations? Clearly the Jewish women must have been incredibly prolific.

But the great Rav Eliezer Gordon, the Telzer Rav and Rosh Yeshiva, points out that this also explains a strange fact that slips under the radar of many students of *Sefer Bamidbar*. In the third *perek* of *Bamidbar*, the Torah states that there were exactly 22,273 *bechorim* out of a population of 603,550 adult males. Now, since each family can have at most one firstborn child, that means that all the males other than those 22,273 are younger brothers of these *bechorim*, and that means that the average number of male children per family should be $603,550 / 22,273$, or about 27.

That brings us back to our Rashi above. Which is more amazing, sextuplets or 27 sons (plus presumably a similar number of girls) per mother? Maybe the answer is that it is one and the same. The only way a mother could produce so many children is to have more than just one at a time.

This leads us to a bit more of math. If indeed mothers are producing 27 sons apiece, it explains how *Bnei Yisrael* could explode in just a few generations from 70 to over 600,000 men. If, in each generation, each father and mother was producing 27 sons, it wouldn’t take long. In the second generation, you get $70 \times 27 = 1,890$, in the third you get $1890 \times 27 = 51,030$, and in only four

generations you get a total of $51,030 \times 27$, almost 1.4 million. Presumably you need to subtract from that total all the babies that Pharaoh threw in the Nile or otherwise killed, but the math works out.

This should give us some humility when we read the various numbers the Haggadah presents to us. 50 *makkos* in Egypt? 250 at the Red Sea? We should be careful not to dismiss these numbers as exaggeration. Surely, if Rav Eliezer Gordon had not suffered a heart attack and died in London in 1910 while trying to raise funds to rebuild Telz after a devastating fire, he would have been able to show us why these numbers must be true as well. In his absence we need to figure it out ourselves. Instead, let’s take our cue from the Haggadah’s encouragement of “*vechol hamarbeh lesaper b’Yetzias Mitzrayim harei zeh meshubach*”—“And anyone who adds [and spends extra time] in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt, behold he is praiseworthy.” Perhaps “*hamarbeh*” does not only mean that one should expand on the story, but maybe it also means that one should search for all the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* until one adds up to Rabbi Akiva’s totals.



Achieving Spiritual Freedom Through Physical Means

A major theme of Pesach is the transition of the Jewish nation from enslavement to *Matan Torah*. The

narrative of the Exodus is filled with many open miracles and struggles that the Jewish people endured leading up to their exit from *Mitzrayim*. There is a Kabbalistic idea that the word "*Mitzrayim*" comes from the word "*metzar*," which means narrow or constricted. We see that *Mitzrayim* was the ultimate place of constriction before and during the times of the Jewish people, as Rashi (*Shemos* 18:9) tells us that no slave had ever escaped from there, let alone an entire nation. They were in a country that had the lowest morals and values and was known as the abomination of the earth.

Eventually, *Bnei Yisrael* became free from the physical slavery that they endured for hundreds of years, and displayed their freedom in the following ways. First, when Hashem commanded the Jews to go out and sacrifice the *Korban Pesach*, they showed their withdrawal from serving the Egyptians as they were now serving Hashem. Additionally, they showed that the gods that the Egyptians worshiped were worthless, and Hashem endures as the only G-d. As they triumphantly marched out of Egypt they demonstrated the fullest physical freedom, achieving freedom from the surrounding world.

Aside from the physical freedom, there is also the spiritual aspect of freedom. However, this can only be accomplished through looking at the physical freedom. The story of the Exodus is recalled every day during *Shema*, and again when we say *Kiddush* on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 116b) says that the Seder on Pesach is where we not only tell, but also relive the story of Pesach every year. We do this through the food and symbols that reflect slavery and freedom. The Haggadah shifts our view from the perspective of a

nation to an individual, as each person is obligated to see himself as though he left *Mitzrayim*, and display his freedom. One of the ways we can achieve this, according to the Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz uMatzah* 7:6), is to understand that the point of the Mishnah's commandment is that we have to relive the story through the emotions that the Jews experienced. We each must see what it meant to be a slave in those times, and what every person endured. The Haggadah is written in a way that we look at our past physical enslavement, which then allows us to look inwards in order to achieve spiritual freedom.

Mitzrayim had the properties of a place where we were squeezed tightly into a narrow space. It was a place where no one had ever been freed both physically and spiritually. Pesach opens our minds to contemplate where in one's own life he is constricted, and how one can move constricted, and how one can move into a place of freedom. To move out of narrow places means to move away from bad habits that hold us back. The Lubavitcher Rebbe said that when seeking self-freedom and fulfillment, some restrict themselves to their spiritual needs, neglecting the physical aspects of life. He writes that freedom also has to include the gratification of one's physical needs not just their spiritual ones. A person has to elevate the surrounding physical world using spiritual means. When the Torah speaks about freedom, it always connects it to the purpose or outcome of that freedom. When Moshe asked Pharaoh to let the Jews leave *Mitzrayim*, Moshe said that Hashem said to free them so they could serve Him. The second part of the statement is fundamental to explain the first point, that the main reason we were redeemed was so that we

serve Hashem. The idea of their freedom was for the purpose of serving Hashem, and that is why Moshe said to free them. Furthermore, according to the Rambam, one of the thirteen *Ikarei Ha'emunah* is that every Jew must believe that one day we will be redeemed from *galus* through Mashiach. Every Pesach we have this golden opportunity to increase our *d'veikus* to Hashem. As we relive the Exodus, we are reminded to have gratitude that we were freed from slavery, and through this we as individuals can unite and free ourselves from *galus*, ultimately bring *Mashiach*.



Naftali Frankel, '24

Bland, Sweat, and Tears

The fifth Mishnah in the last *perek* of *Meseches Pesachim*, which is most widely known for its appearance in *Maggid* at the *Pesach Seder*, consists of a statement by Rabban Gamliel, that anyone who does not verbalize the reasons for having the *Korban Pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror* at the *Seder* has failed to fulfill his obligation in these *mitzvos*. Regarding the last of these three *mitzvos*, the *maror*, the Mishnah states that it is eaten to commemorate the fact that the *Mitzrim* embittered the lives of our ancestors through backbreaking and arduous slave labor. In this vein, we attempt to symbolize the plight of our forefathers by eating bitter herbs.

In line with this idea, the *Shulchan Aruch* (O”C 475:1) writes that after dipping the *maror* in the *charoses*, the paste made to remember the mortar and brick through which *Bnei Yisrael* suffered, it is necessary to shake off the *charoses* before making the *bracha* and eating the *maror*. The *Tur* here quotes Rabbeinu Yonah, stating that the reason for this measure is to preserve the bitter taste of the *maror*. Similarly, two *se’ifim* later, the *Shulchan Aruch*, based on a statement by Rava in the Gemara in *Pesachim* (115b), rules that if one were to merely swallow the *maror* without chewing, he would not be *yotzei* in his obligation to eat the *maror*. This is because, without chewing, one would not experience the bitter taste of the *maror*, and would fail to truly appreciate the *passuk* of “*Vaymariru es chayei hem*”—“And [the Egyptians] embittered [*Bnei Yisrael*’s] lives” (*Shemos* 1:14). It is self-evident from these *halachos* that not only does the bitter taste of the *maror* have a technical effect on one’s fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, but it is also an essential aspect of both the physical and psychological experience of *achilas maror*.

Taking the above idea into consideration, it is worth exploring the way in which we carry out this *mitzvah*, and a glaring contradiction between our actions, and the *halachos* that govern them. In listing the vegetables that are fit to be eaten as *maror*, the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 2:6) mentions “*chazeres*” first. Interpreting the Mishnah, the Gemara (*Pesachim* 39a) translates “*chazeres*” into “*chasa*,” the Aramaic word for lettuce. Moreover, the *Shulchan Aruch* (O”C 473:5) records that using *chazeres* is the “*ikkur hamitzvah*”—the most ideal way of fulfilling the *mitzvah*. However, considering the rationale and guidelines mentioned

l’halacha, a blatant issue becomes apparent: How can we eat lettuce, a bland and occasionally sweet vegetable, as a remembrance of one of the most excruciating and bitter episodes in our history? This would seem to be a flagrant breach of the *halachos* mentioned in the Gemara and *Shulchan Aruch*!?

A possible answer to this question appears in the next statement of Gemara, which discusses the connection between the *chazeres* and the *Mitzrim*. The Gemara asserts that, much like lettuce, which is soft and pleasant when picked early, but hard and bitter when allowed to mature, the *Mitzrim* initially welcomed and paid *Bnei Yisrael*, only to later enslave and torment them. While this answer certainly provides an ideological basis on which to reconcile our use of lettuce, it fails to address the requirement to taste the bitter flavor of the *maror*.

Rather than focus on what lettuce lacks, to resolve our seeming contradiction, it is helpful to examine the special features of lettuce and what they represent. This concept can be seen from an anecdote involving the Chofetz Chaim. Until the last three years of his life, the Chofetz Chaim used horseradish for the *mitzvah* of *achilas maror*. However, after he suffered a severe nosebleed on Pesach that his doctor attributed to the effect of the sharp horseradish, he began to use lettuce instead. In explaining how the lettuce could serve as a remembrance of “*Vaymariru es chayei hem*,” the Chofetz Chaim specifically pointed to its lack of taste. He explained that the blandness of the lettuce is symbolic of the fact that, as part of the Egyptians’ torment of the Jews,

the men were forced to perform the tasks of women. To properly empathize with our forefathers who suffered from a lack of stimulation and apathy toward work that was not suitable for them, it is crucial to experience the blandness and lack of flavor that lettuce embodies. It is with this idea of the Chofetz Chaim that we can solve what seemed to be a contradiction between the consumption of lettuce as *maror*, and the need to experience a taste that mimics the hardships that *Bnei Yisrael* faced in *Mitzrayim*. By eating a food that lacks a distinct flavor, we can begin to understand the feelings of worthlessness and insignificance that our ancestors suffered. While it may have seemed that the blandness of lettuce could have disqualified it from being commemorative of *Bnei Yisrael*’s suffering in Egypt, it is actually this quality of the lettuce that allows us to realize the extent to which their lives were embittered.



Eitan Rochwarger, '23

The Taste of a Mitzvah

The Gemara in *Pesachim* (119b) asks, “What is the *afikoman*?” The Rashbam and Rashi explain that the *afikoman* is the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *matzah*, while Tosafos argues that one has already fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *matzah* earlier in the *seder* and that the *afikoman* is the fulfillment of *Zecher Korban Pesach*.

Seemingly, Tosafos would make more sense because you’ve already eaten well over a *kezayis* and made

a *bracha* on *matzah* earlier in the *Seder*, how then, can we understand the opinion of the Rambam and Rashi?

The Avnei Neizer (*Orach Chaim* 381) is well known for his opinion that the *afikoman* can only be eaten until “*chatzos mamish*.” Rav Asher Weiss explains in the *halacha* section of his Haggadah (*siman* 8), that even though the *bracha* on *matzah* is in the beginning of the *seider*, the main part of the *mitzvah* can still be at the end, specifically by *afikoman*. He explains that this idea works for the Rashbam and Rashi because, even though the first eating is prefaced by the *bracha* of “*al achilas matzah*,” is not the actual fulfillment of the obligation due to, “*ein maftirin achar haPesach*.” On the other hand, for Tosafos, the main idea in the beginning of the *seider* is to fill up on *matzah* and, at the end, leave with the taste of *matzah* in one’s mouth. This explains why there’s no *bracha* on the *afikoman*. Nevertheless, according to both the Rashbam, Rashi, and Tosafos, both parts of eating *matzah* are needed in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *matzah/Korban Pesach*. The Rambam explains that after the meal we eat the *afikoman* in order to leave behind the taste of the *matzah* in our mouths (*Chametz uMatzah* 8:9). Yet, the Rambam also writes by leaning during the *seider* that one should lean when eating the first *kezayis*, and it’s praiseworthy to lean for second *kezayis* (Ibid 7:8). It’s important to note here that the Rambam holds that the second *kezayis* is also a part of the *mitzvah*, yet still doesn’t have an obligation to lean.

This then leads back to the question of why do we say, “*ein maftirin achar haPesach*?” The Baal HaMaor at the end of *Pesachim* explains two

reasons. The first one is to ensure we don’t eat the “*Korban Pesach*” with hunger in the way and the second reason is that, since *matzah* has a “weaker flavor” than an actual *Korban Pesach*, there will be less of an interruption before beginning *Hallel*.

Now, what about the Avnei Neizer’s *pshat* of “*chatzos mamish*?” The Mabit Levi quotes the Griz and explains that, in his Haggadah that follows the Avnei Neizer, as long as you have a *kezayis* of *afikoman* before *chatzos*, you fulfilled your obligation and can continue with your *seudah*. He adds that after one finishes the *seudah*, another *kezayis* of *matzah* should be eaten. The Beis Halevi says something similar to the Mabit Levi in his Haggadah. Although, the Minchas Yitzchak writes that if one eats the *afikoman* after *chatzos* he’s not fulfilling the *mitzvah* as *lechatchilah*.

All in all, the *mitzvah* of *afikoman*, as the Rambam seems to hold, is a remembrance to the *Korban Pesach* and is best to be eaten before *chatzos*.

Yet, maybe there’s something deeper here. Perhaps the Rambam and the various other *mefarshim* truly just want everyone to end off the *seider* night with the “taste” of a *mitzvah*. This is seen when the *Mishnah Berurah* says that if one forgets to lean, he shouldn’t go back to redo the *afikoman*, but if someone forgot to eat it he needs to return and do so. We see that the *mefarshim* are trying to teach us a fundamental *yesod*, that after a whole *seider* of recounting the *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and singing praises to Hashem, we end off with the taste of the *Korban Pesach*, which reflects back to *makkas*

bechoros, in our mouths. Let’s keep that taste in our mouths beyond just the *Seder* night and always keep Hashem in our minds.



Eitan Canter, '24

A Heartfelt Hallel: Embracing Our Dependence on Hashem

Whether it be during various moments of our day or through formal *tefillah*, expressing our gratitude towards Hashem is a central and almost instinctual part of our *yiddishkeit*. There is no more significant representation of this gratitude than the *tefillah* of *Hallel*, a carefully designed compilation of *Tehillim* that we say at various times throughout the year. The Gemara in *Pesachim* (117a) explains that *Hallel* is recited on two types of occasions. It is said “*al kol perek uperek, v'al kol tzarah v'tzarah shelo tavo aleihen*.” In practice, this means that *Hallel* serves to mark certain days that the Torah specifies as festive (The Gemara in *Eruchin* (10a) details exactly which days these are) as well as when we have a *tzarah* from which Hashem spares us.

We are all familiar with the popular tunes and words of *Hallel*, but have you ever thought about why these sections of *Tehillim* were specifically chosen? The Gemara in *Pesachim* (118a) explains that these paragraphs contain five key themes: *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, *Krias Yam Suf*, *Matan Torah*, *Techiyas Hameisim*, and the *Chevlo shel*

Mashiach (the birthpangs of *Mashiach*). When looking at these central ideas, one immediately seems out of place. Thinking about all of the amazing things Hashem has done for us, such as taking us out of Egypt, across the sea of reeds, and giving us the Torah, can all inspire feelings of gratitude towards our creator. The *Techiyas Hameisim* that will ultimately occur is also something about which we can be incredibly excited. What about *Chevlo shel Mashiach*? A common thread for all of these themes is that they are steps that will ultimately lead up to the *geulah*. However, the Gemara does not say that the coming of *Mashiach* is a major theme, which would seemingly make more sense in such a joyous *tefillah*, rather it is the pains that will precede the ultimate redemption that are spotlighted. The Gemara further explains that the paragraph of *Lo Lanu* alludes to these future struggles. Why are these struggles something we should be thinking about at a time of *simcha*?

A closer look at *Hallel*, which is generally seen as a *tefillah* of joy, praise, and thanks, reveals even more to question. As we recite the words “*Ana Hashem hoshiah na*” or “*Ana Hashem hatzlichah na*”, phrases which seem to be cries for help, not a joyous sentiment. What place do words like these or the allusions of *Lo Lanu* have in a *tefillah* seemingly intended to mark a time of extreme happiness and thanks?

If you view *Hallel* as merely an expression of thanks then these questions are indeed very strong but perhaps there is more to *Hallel* than meets the eye. Rav Aharon Zeigler in his series “Halachic Positions of Rav Yosef Dov Solevetchik,” suggests in the name of the Rav a slightly different way of viewing the familiar *tefillah*. Of

course, praise of Hashem is a central idea. The first two paragraphs are complete praise towards Hashem with really no hint at any sort of *bakasha*. However, as you begin the *tefillah* of *Lo Lanu* there is a bit of a shift in theme. This shift continues and only increases in strength. You start to see not just praise, but also a cry out to Hashem. *Hallel* becomes not only an appreciation for what Hashem has done for us but also a recognition of how much we constantly depend on Him. We are in constant need of Hashem’s aid so while we may be thanking Hashem for a particular miracle or victory, we are also recognizing how close to peril we were and always are. It is two distinct ideas that may seem contradictory at first, but in reality, are complementary in creating a stronger relationship with *Hakdaosh Baruch Hu*. There is cause for excitement in the moment, but our needs do not end. At the very moment we feel most excited we must also feel a sense of vulnerability. Perhaps this could also explain why the *Chevlo shel Mashiach* are highlighted as a theme. As we look forward to our ultimate *geulah* the pains that will accompany it are a reminder that we must keep crying out to Hashem at every step of the way. Even at the moments just preceding our greatest redemption, we will need to cry out to Hashem for help.

This Pesach as we recite the *Hallel* with joy, remember to keep in mind both our never-ending gratitude and dependence on the *chesed* of Hashem.



A Transformative Perspective of Chad Gadya

Chad Gadya is many people’s highlight of the *seder*, but what is it actually about? When looking at the words, it is quite puzzling trying to figure out what goats, sticks, and oxen have to do with the *Seder*. The *Leil Shimurim Haggadah* written by the Aruch Hashulchan presents a creative interpretation of the real meaning of *Chad Gadya*. The explanation begins with a parallel to *Parshas Mitzrayim* and the story of the sale of Yosef. The Aruch Hashulchan explains that the story of the sale of Yosef, which involved the brothers slaughtering a goat in order to convince Yaakov that Yosef was killed, is the beginning of a direct parallel between the events of *Bnei Yisrael* in *Mitzrayim* and the sequence of events described in *Chad Gadya*. First, “*Vayimkeru es Yosef layishmi'eilim b'esrim kasef*” – “They sold Yosef for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites” (*Bereishis* 37:28). The brothers sold Yosef for twenty pieces of silver, each profiting two pieces, or *zuz*, the same amount that the goat in *Chad Gadya* was worth. While this comparison is interesting, initially it does not seem to actually match with the story of *mechiras Yosef*. The brothers each profited two *zuz*, while the common understanding is that the goat in *Chad Gadya* was bought for two *zuz*. In other words, one is a story of profit while the other is a purchase and therefore a monetary loss. However, the Aruch

Hashulchan explains, this is not actually the case. In Aramaic, there aren't two separate words for buying and selling like there are in Hebrew. Instead, there is only one word, *lezabein*. With this in mind, the verse in *Chad Gadya* starts to match. "*Dezabben abba bitrei zuzei*" can be understood as a sale, not a purchase. The *abba* in the verse, says the Aruch Hashulchan, is a reference to Yosef, who was called *Avreich* (*Bereishis* 41:43), a word that Onkelos translates as "*abba limalcha*". *Dezabben abba bitrei zuzei* is not a father buying a goat for two *zuz*, but rather *abba*, none other than Yosef, being sold for the brothers each to profit two *zuz*!

The *piyut* continues, "*V'asa shunra, v'achlah l'gadya*" – "then came a cat and ate the kid". The Gemara in the ninth *perek* of *Berachos* lists what seeing certain things signifies if seen in a dream. Concerning a cat, the *Gemara* says that if one sees a *shunra*, a cat, in a dream, it should be interpreted as either a *shira na'eh*, a good thing in the form of a good song being composed, or *shinui rah*, a change for the bad (The *Gemara* explains that the interpretation is dependent on what a cat is called in the place where the dream is had). The Aruch Hashulchan explains that seeing a *shunra* in a dream refers to people who would be subjects of a *shira na'eh*, having a *shinui rah*, change for the worse. The brothers of Yosef, who were good people, took a turn for the bad and ended up selling Yosef into slavery. The *shunra* eating the *gadya* represents the brothers slaughtering a goat and using the blood to trick their father about Yosef's true fate.

Chad Gadya continues with "*V'asa chalba v'nashach l'shunrah*" – "then came a dog and bit the cat". The *Medrash* in *Shemos* explains that Hashem punishes *reshaim* through

the use of a *mateh*, a stick, because *reshaim* are compared to dogs (*Tehillim* 59:7) who are disciplined with sticks. As such, Pharaoh, who can now be described as a *kelev*, a dog, afflicted *Bnei Yisrael* as a result of the *shinui rah* described above. The next step, of the stick hitting the dog, is a *remez* to the *mateh*, stick, of Moshe, which was used to hit the *chalba* known as the *Mitzrim* and bring the *Makkos*.

Next, "*V'asa nura v'saraf l'chutra*" – "then came a fire and burnt the stick". The Aruch Hashulchan explains that the *mateh* of Moshe had the name of Hashem carved into it. The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 69b) describes a story of the *chachamim* davening to Hashem that there should no longer be a *yetzer hara* for *avodah zarah*. They were successful, and a lion made of fire representing the *yetzer hara* for *avoda zara* was seen exiting from the *Kodesh Kodashim*. This fiery display, says the Aruch Hashulchan, is a reference to the impact that idol worship had on the name of Hashem carved into Moshe's stick. Fortunately though, "*V'asa maya v'chava l'nura*" – "then came water and extinguished the fire". Though *avodah zarah* is compared to fire, the Torah in multiple places is compared to water (see *Yeshaya* 55:1, *Bava Kamma* (82a) – *ein mayim ela Torah*). The *mayim* of Torah is the exact antidote to the destructive fire of *avodah zarah*.

Then, "*V'asa tora v'shasah l'maya*" – "then came a bull and drank the water". The *Medrash* in *Bereishis* says that the Greeks told the Jews to write "*al keren hashor*", "on the horn of an ox", that they had no share in Hashem and Judaism. This attempted assimilation was the *tora*, the bull, in the form of the

Greeks, attempting to drink the *maya*, water (which has been compared to Torah), of the Jews. Fortunately for the Jews, they had a *Shochet*. "*V'asa hashocheit v'shachat l'tora*" – "then came the *shochet* and slaughtered the bull". These *shochetim* were none other than the *chashmonaim* of the Chanukah story, who metaphorically *schechted* the *tora* that was Antiochus and the Greeks.

However, "*V'asa malach hamaves v'shachat l'shocheit*" – "then came the angel of death and slaughtered the *shochet*". Unfortunately, the *malach hamaves*, in the form of Rome, came and put *Bnei Yisrael* back into *galus*. It is our hope, however, to see the fulfillment of the final step in the sequence. "*V'asa HaKadosh Baruch Hu v'shachat l'malach hamaves*" – "then came Hashem and slaughtered the angel of death". *Im yirtzeh Hashem*, the *galus* will soon be over and the *Beis Hamikdash* will be rebuilt *b'meheirah b'yameinu*.

With this newfound understanding of *Chad Gadya*, one can further appreciate Hashem's master plan. Although we have been exiled and nearly wiped off the face of the planet many times, Hashem has still kept his chosen nation alive and thriving. *Chad Gadya* portrays the ups and downs of Jewish history, while only mentioning Hashem at the end, "*V'asa malach hamaves v'shachat l'shocheit*", teaching that Hashem is ultimately on top of everything and is the only path to success.

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Beyond the Seder:

Insights on Chol HaMoed and the Second Days



Noah Segelnick, '24

The Harmony of Shabbos Chol Hamoed: Uniting Spirituality and Physicality

The phrase “*Chol Hamoed*” is difficult to understand: *chol* is defined as weekday, something that is secular; while *moed* literally means “appointed time,” what we call a holiday. Yet, these two terms seem to work together during the intermediate days of *Pesach* and *Sukkos*. One may explain that *Chol Hamoed* means that the regular *chol* is being elevated to a higher level of *kedusha* because of the

moed it coincides with. Nevertheless, this explanation can not be used to understand the more difficult term “*Shabbos Chol Hamoed*,” a time where not only is there the combination of *chol* and *moed*, but on top of that there is the *kedusha* of Shabbos. If the day is Shabbos, then, by definition, it cannot be *chol*, and if it is *chol*, it cannot sustain the *kedusha* of Shabbos.

One way to explain this phrasing is that it is just the most convenient way of referring to the Shabbos that coincides with the intermediate days of the Yom Tov. However, in *Meseches Beitzah* 17a, this particular day is called, “*Shabbos shechal b’chol hamoed*”—“Shabbos that falls on *Chol Hamoed*.” This phrase sounds off because Shabbos does not occur at any time besides for its set time on the seventh day of each week. What does it mean that it occurs on *Chol Hamoed*? It must be that this phrasing is hinting to

something out of the ordinary that only happens when Shabbos and *Chol Hamoed* exist simultaneously. It must be that the Shabbos becomes a greater Shabbos and the *Chol Hamoed* becomes a greater *Chol Hamoed*.

In fact, there are a couple of aspects of *tefillah* that are different on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed*. There are some people who recite *Adir Adireinu* on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed* despite the fact that *Adir Adireinu* is neither recited on a normal Shabbos nor on weekday *Chol Hamoed*. This practice can actually teach an important lesson. When Shabbos and *Chol Hamoed* work together, they create something—the reciting of *Adir Adireinu*—that neither of them could have accomplished on their own. Similarly, when two people work together, they could accomplish way more than either of them could have done individually. Essentially, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

In addition, *Shir Hashirim* is read on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed Pesach*. Regarding *Shir Hashirim*, Rabbi Akiva in the Mishnah (*Yadayim* 3:5) states that all of the *kesuvim* are holy, but *Shir Hashirim* is the holiest of the holy. This comment is a little surprising, as at first glance, *Shir Hashirim* seems heavily focused on man's mundane desires. But, when one reads *Shir Hashirim* with a critical eye, it becomes clear that *Shir Hashirim* is all about man's affiliation with Hashem. The *Sfas Emes* writes that during this time of celebration, Jews must channel their physical desires into ways of bettering their service of Hashem. This is why we read *Shir Hashirim* on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed*. Just as *Shabbos Chol Hamoed* is a combination of seemingly contradictory items but raises the *kedusha* of each individual one, *Shir Hashirim* teaches that if one takes their physicality and uses it to serve Hashem, that service will similarly be enhanced.

The *haftarah* for *Shabbos Chol Hamoed Pesach* is about Yechezkel's *nevuah* of the Dry Bones. Yechezkel relates a scene in which the bones of the dead come back to life. This is supposed to be a call to the Jewish people to keep going strong despite a difficult past. The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (92b) records a debate about if this *nevuah* should be taken literally or figuratively. In this conversation, Rabbi Yehuda ben Beseira declared, "I am a descendant of those people, and here are the *tefillin* of my grandfather, who was one of them." The mention of *tefillin* here is significant. It shows that he remained true to his familial tradition, and that only by doing so could he consider his ancestors' bones as having come back to life.

If a Jew is unable to transmit the *mesorah* to the next generation, it is as if he is reduced to just a heap of bones upon his death. This idea shows that without spirituality, physicality is meaningless; only by combining physicality with spirituality does it retain any meaning.

All in all, *Shabbos Chol Hamoed* represents the importance of working together. Only when *Shabbos* and *Chol Hamoed* work in unison do either of them merit the recitation of *Adir Adireinu*. Also, both *Shir Hashirim* and the *haftarah* of *Shabbos Chol Hamoed Pesach* express the idea that when spirituality and physicality work in unison, they are both elevated. Hopefully, we can all take away this very important lesson: whether it is in one's *Avodas Hashem*, or one is working with their peers, teamwork does indeed make all the difference.



Matan Marmer, '25

Can Desires Be Worse Than Actions?

In the fourth *perek* of *Maseches Megillah*, the Gemara lists the many different public Torah readings that occur on various *chagim* and events throughout the year. The Gemara (31a) says that on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed*, the Torah Reading is the aftermath of the episode of the Golden Calf. Rashi explains that this portion is consistent with the theme of *Shabbos Chol Hamoed* in that it mentions *Shabbos* and the *Shalosh Regalim*, and it includes the *passuk*

of "*es chag hamatzos tishmor*," (Shemos 34:18) which is used by the Gemara in *Chagiga* as the source for the more lenient version of *issur melacha* on *Chol Hamoed*.

After mentioning the *Regalim*, the Torah mentions the *mitzvah* of *aliyah leregel*, the commandment to go to *Yerushalayim* on each of the *Shalosh Regalim* and bring an *olas reiyah*. In the following *passuk*, the Torah says something peculiar, "No one will covet your land when you go up to appear before your G-d, Hashem, three times a year" (Shemos 34:24). In this *passuk*, Hashem is telling *Bnei Yisrael* that when they do the *mitzvah* of *aliyah leregel*, when everyone will be in *Yerushalayim* and no man will be in the rest of their land, none of the *goyim* are going to want their land. The Ibn Ezra points out that this favor that Hashem will do for us contains the extra security that not only will Hashem make sure that no one will take the land, but He'll go as far as making sure that no one is going to even want their land despite it being the perfect time to attack.

From the Ibn Ezra's point, we see a very important *yesod*. Desire leads to action. If one doesn't want something, even if they have the perfect opportunity, they won't try to get it. This *yesod* that action is the culmination of desire can also be seen by the *lav* of *lo sachmod*. The Rambam in *Hilchos Gezeila v'Aveida* (1:9) explains that the way to violate the *lav* of *lo sachmod* is by desiring something that someone else has, and then convincing that person to give or sell you that item willingly. Even though one received the item willingly, the desire of wanting something that wasn't his and that wasn't up for sale makes receiving the item a sinful action. The Rambam says something that

further proves this *yesod*. He says that one who transgresses *lo sachmod* does not receive lashes, because it is a *lav she'ain bo ma'aseh*, a transgression without an action. If the Torah says something is not allowed but doesn't specify the punishment for one who does it, then the punishment is lashes. However, the rule is that if the sin that was committed did not involve an action, the transgressor doesn't receive lashes until he actually goes through with the action. This Rambam, however, seems to be problematic as the *lav* in the Torah is only on desiring an item and not the actual action, as there is no sin in doing the action. The answer is that when violating *lo sachmod*, although the desire leads to the action, there is no sin within the action itself. The only sin, namely the desire, is only revealed once the action is performed.

Humans naturally have a desire for things that they can't have, but we must try to limit these desires so they do not lead to action. The question is, how do we humans do this when it is in our nature to want things that aren't ours? The answer to this question relates back to Pesach. On Pesach, one of the main *yesodos* is that Hashem is in charge of the world and runs the world. A certain phrase, slightly different every time, appears in many places in the Pesach story. Certain times, when Moshe is telling Pharaoh about a *makkah*, he says that Hashem is doing it "*l'ma'an teida ki ein k'Hashem elokeinu*," (Shemos 8:6) or "*l'ma'an teida ki ein k'Hashem b'kerev ha'aretz*," (*Ibid* 8:18) or "*ba'avur har'oscha es kochi ulma'an saper shmi b'chol ha'aretz*" (9:16). In each of these instances Moshe is making the point that

Hashem is all powerful and in charge of the world. If we know that Hashem runs the world, then even if we have natural desires for things, we immediately realize that since Hashem runs the world, he provides us with all that we should have. Using this idea, we can limit our desires for things because, in reality, we have exactly what we need.



Sing-Along

Water towers over you to your right and left as you hurry forward along with the rest of the shuffling crowd. The ground is completely dry and solid under your feet. The grand corridor with walls of sapphire blue comes to an end and you emerge onto the bank of the sea. The remainder of the nation comes out too and with a miraculous elegance, the water falls down in curtains, crashing back into place. To your amazement, the army of the Egyptians washes ashore defeated. Your people's cruel slave masters are no more. In the midst of such a revelation of G-d's glory the sound of a song begins to rise in the air. You sing with the throngs of the nation in praise of G-d Almighty.

We are familiar with this story. We tell it over in full flare at our *Pesach seder* each year. And this serves as the story's grand finale, the Splitting of the Sea and *Shiras Hayam*, the song we sang to G-d for our miraculous salvation from slavery in Egypt. Az *Yashir* even makes it into our daily liturgy, concluding the *pesukei dezimra* (literally "verses of

praise") section of *Tefillas Shacharis* each morning.

But are we familiar with how we sang the song as a whole nation? Was it like a concert where the performer starts a popular tune and the crowd can't help but sing along? Did we offer the lyrics ourselves or did we follow Moshe *Rabbeinu's* lead and repeat after him? Or was our collective symphony offered in some different format all together?

The Gemara in *Maseches Sotah* (30b) presents three possibilities as to how we sang as a collective at the Red Sea:

דַּרְשׁ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: בְּשַׁעַר שְׁעָלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הַיָּם, נִתְּנוּ עֵינֵיהֶם לומר שִׁירָה. וְכִיצַד אָמְרוּ שִׁירָה – כְּגִדּוּל הַמִּקְרָא אֶת הַלֵּל, וְהָן עֹבִינְךָ אַחֲרָיו רִאשִׁי פְּרָקִים. מִשָּׁה אָמַר "אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ", וְהָן אֹמְרִים "אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ", מִשָּׁה אָמַר "כִּי גָאָה גָאָה" וְהָן אֹמְרִים "אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ".

Rabbi Akiva interprets the verses of the Torah and explains that when the Jewish people rose out of the Red Sea they wished to offer song. And how did they sing? According to Rabbi Akiva they sang after the manner of an adult leading the congregation in the Hallel service with the congregation responding with the beginnings of the passage such that Moshe said "*Ashira laHashem*" and the people responded "*Ashira laHashem*", Moshe continued "*Ki Ga'oh Ga'ah*" and the people responded "*Ashira laHashem*" and so forth.

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַגְּלִילִי אֹמֵר: כִּקְטָן הַמִּקְרָא אֶת הַלֵּל, וְהָן עֹבִינְךָ אַחֲרָיו כֹּל מָה שֶׁהָאָ אֹמֵר. מִשָּׁה אָמַר "אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ" וְהָן אֹמְרִים "אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ", מִשָּׁה אָמַר "כִּי גָאָה גָאָה", וְהָן אֹמְרִים "כִּי גָאָה גָאָה".

Rabbi Eliezer the son of Rabbi Yosi the Galilean argues with Rabbi Akiva's explanation, and states that the recital of *Shiras Hayam* was in

the manner of a *child* leading the congregation in the *Hallel* service where the congregation would respond with the entirety of what the leader announced such that Moshe said “*Ashira laHashem*” and the people responded “*Ashira laHashem*”, Moshe continued “*Ki Ga’oh Ga’ah*” and the people responded “*Ki Ga’oh Ga’ah*”, saying not only the first phrase of the poem in joyous celebration to every remark of Moshe, but, rather, repeating Moshe’s words in full.

רבי נחמיה אומר: כסופר הפורס על שמע
בבית הכנסת, שהוא פותח תחילה והן עונין
אחריו.

Rabbi Nechemiah offers yet a third possibility. The song commenced as a cantor who leads an abridged version of the *tefillah* from the start of the blessings of *Kriyas Shema*, a format in which the leader begins and the members of the assembly join in, reciting the entirety of the prayers as one.

The Gemara, in typically Talmudic methodology, asks, “*bemai kamiflegi?*”, what is at the root of the debate of these sages? And proceeds to explain how each *Tana* reads the introductory verse of *Shiras Hayam*, “*Az yashir Moshe...*” (*Shemos* 15:1), yielding such divergent possibilities. The Gemara does not, however, address what the implications of each of these great Rabbi’s suggestions may be. That the Gemara leaves as our task.

Rabbi Gidon Rothstein, in a presentation which I had the privilege to hear, noted the explanations of this Gemara from the Maharsha and the Maharal, both masters of the aggadic sections of the Gemara from the 16th and 17th centuries respectively. In so doing, Rabbi Rothstein developed understandings of both the event of *Shiras Hayam* itself and

models of spiritual leadership and devotion to those who are leaders.

In order to proceed further, we must note two underpinnings of the Gemara’s discussion about *Shiras Hayam*. Firstly, in a moment of salvation, there may be a *halachic* obligation to recite *Hallel*, to praise G-d for His greatness. It is readily evident from the Gemara in *Maseches Megillah* (14a) that the *Shirah* was a form of *Hallel*. The Gemara also seems to indicate that there is some form of obligation to praise G-d partially independent of the *Shirah* and partially predicated upon it. The second point to note is that *Shiras Hayam*, the Song of the Sea was a gargantuan accomplishment – to intuit the perfect tribute to G-d and as of yet ungiven words of the Torah – which could only have been achieved through *prophetic* means.

And now for the plunge into the depths of our Gemara!

As we saw before, Rabbi Akiva describes the scene as the adult leading the congregation in the *Hallel* service. Now, when it comes to a *gadol*, an adult, leading others in prayer, *halachically*, the adult can be *motzi* the others via the principle of *shome’a ke’oneh* (one who hears is as if they have spoken), his recital of *Hallel* can fulfill the assembly’s obligation granted that they are listening. They might even chime in with an “*amen*”, do their best to keep focus on the words of the leader, and show their participation in a less assertive manner. Carried over to *Shiras Hayam*, Moshe Rabbeinu is the leader of the congregation of all of *Am Yisrael*; as he receives a form of prophecy granting him the proper words to laud G-d in this

monumental moment, the people fulfill their obligation of *Hallel* by listening to him and acknowledging his words of praise. This is model #1 of leadership and devotion: the leader is on a higher plane than the people and the people accept that fact and joyfully submit themselves to the leader’s guidance.

Next, let’s analyze the suggestion of Rabbi Eliezer that the Song at the Sea was like a child leading the congregation in *Hallel*. There is a critical difference here in that *halachically* a child has no obligation of *Hallel* and cannot be *motzi* the *kahal*, the assembly, with his recital. His leading the people is pragmatic in nature so that those who do not know the words can repeat phrase by phrase after the child calls them out. Translated to the Red Sea, Moshe Rabbeinu was, of course, an adult, so the more full participation of the nation repeating the *Shirah* line by line was not because the people could not fulfill an obligation of *Hallel* through listening to his recitation. They were acting *as if* Moshe’s song was not enough because they longed to *sing themselves*. The nation felt a need to express praise to God personally and were not content with just listening. They were not prophets of renown and did not have a way to formulate the gratitude they felt and glory they beheld so they listened to the song Moshe prophetically composed, but then they sang it in full form themselves. This is a second model: sometimes, people have too much emotion and simply listening to the leader is not enough; they defer to the wisdom of their director and then join in with all the enthusiasm they feel.

Before we move on to understand the third view, it is important to note that there is a slightly different

version of Rabbi Nechemiah's statement in the Tosefta. Our Gemara in *Sotah* seems to indicate that after Moshe began the singing, all of the people joined in as one for the rest of the *Shirah*. Here's the Tosefta (*Sotah* 6):

ר' נחמיה אומר [כבני אדם שקורין] שמע
בבית הכנסת...משה פותח בדבר [תחלה]
וישראל עונין אחריו וגומרין עמו משה אמר אז
ישיר וישראל אמרו אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה
[וגו'] משה אמר עזי וזמרת יה וישראל אמרו זה
אלי ואנוהו משה אמר ה' איש מלחמה וישראל
אמרו ה' שמו

To Rabbi Nechemiah in the Tosefta's report, *Shiras Hayam* was not simply a chorus of the entire nation begun by Moshe, but it was an involved responsive song.

Rabbi Nechemiah – in both versions – indicates that it was not only Moshe Rabbeinu who was the one to receive the prophecy at the sea, but the *whole nation* who were able to produce the lyrics of the *Shirah* which is part of the text of the Torah. Moshe here has the role as the leader of the congregation either given a polite deference only at the start or a constant back and forth, but either way the people do not really need him at this moment. For the time being, all the people have the divine inspiration necessary to praise G-d. Thus a final model of leadership emerges. Not always is the leader head and shoulders above the rest of the crowd. In this case, the people honor their great leader but are themselves fully capable of completing the task at hand and will even take part in the creative process.

So we return to where we started. The water falls back into place just as G-d choreographs. And we begin to sing. Be it letting Moshe, the only qualified person among us, take the reins in full, or following his

directives and the conductor's baton he metaphorically waves, or receiving the kind of clarity of prophecy typically only Moshe can achieve and bursting forth with the *Shirah* ourselves, we join together as a people and we sing to G-d on high.



What's In A Name? Appreciating Acharon shel Pesach

The last day of Pesach in *Chutz La'aretz* is unique. No other holiday has an official "*Acharon shel chag*". The seventh day is called "*Shevi'i shel Pesach*," so shouldn't the eighth day simply be called "*Shemini shel Pesach*?" While it's true that Shemini Atzeres has its own name, it is different in that it is considered a Yom Tov unto itself. On Shavuot, the second day is simply called the second day or "*Yom Tov sheini shel galuyos*".

I share two beautiful explanations by Rabbi Daniel Glatstein in his sefer *Maggid Harakia*.

Pesach is a holiday on which the emphasis lies on the miracles, highlighting our passive role. As the name of the *chag* implies, we stress G-d passing over our homes as He smote the Egyptians. Barely did Hashem give us two *mitzvos* to be involved in to deserve to be taken out—the blood of the *Korban Pesach* and the blood of *Bris Milah*.

It is clear that we had little merit to be entitled to Hashem's intervention. Indeed, it was all from Hashem—this is what is known in mystical works as "*isarusa d'le'eila*," a spiritual awakening from above, or a gift from *shamayim*. In a way, just as a person is embarrassed when having to rely on handouts from others because he would much rather earn his keep for himself, so too we are embarrassed that we had to receive what's known as "*nahama d'kisufa*," or bread of embarrassment. In contrast, on the last days of Pesach we celebrate the splitting of the sea. This was our spiritual arousal, which took the form of Nachshon jumping in, showing complete faith in G-d.

This Yom Tov celebrates our "*isarusa d'lesata*," a miracle inspired from below and injected with human effort. We therefore call it *Acharon shel Pesach* because it is a prayer that in the *zechus* of our initiative at *kriyas yam suf*, we pray that this should be the last time we need to rely on the "bread of embarrassment" to deserve *geulah*.

We can suggest another explanation for the title "*Acharon shel Pesach*" based on the Mishnah in *Brachos* (1:5) that is quoted in the Haggadah, which discusses why the Torah commands us to remember the day we left Egypt all the days of our lives. What is derived from the seemingly superfluous word "all?" This Mishnah is quoted at the *Seder* for the opinion of Ben Zoma, that we are obligated to make mention of the Exodus not only by day, but also at night. However, there also exists the opinion of the Chachamim, who derive from the word "all" that, in addition to the current world, the *mitzvah* of mentioning the Exodus will also apply during the future days of *Mashiach*. The Gemara (*Berachos* 12b) questions this teaching of the Chachamim based

on *pesukim* in *Yirmiyah* (23:7-8), which imply that mentioning the Exodus from Egypt will be discontinued completely in the days of *Mashiach*. Instead, the Gemara answers, the redemption from the dominion of foreign kings will be primary, and the mentioning of the Exodus from Egypt will be secondary to it. By calling this day "*acharon*," we offer a prayer that this should be the last time that the Exodus will be the primary miracle mentioned. We wish to arrive at the time of *Mashiach* when the Exodus' miracles and redemption will pale in comparison to the final *geulah*.

I thought that both of these ideas are extremely relevant and timely for *Yizkor*, which is recited on *Acharon shel Pesach*. We acknowledge that we owe so much to our ancestors who paved the way for us, but what they gave us

could be considered "*nahama d'kisufa*." We need to take those foundations and that *mesorah*, and build on them to become even better and more strengthened in our commitment to *mesorah*, to Torah, to *mitzvos*, to the Jewish people, and to G-d. Furthermore, just as when *Mashiach* comes, we will not totally abandon the recognition of the miracles of the Exodus, so too, regardless of our own accomplishments (and *Baruch Hashem* we have much to be proud of), we must always acknowledge and recall our roots. We must always remember the *mesiras nefesh* of our forebears from whence we come.

These are two important messages to bear in mind as *Pesach* ebbs away and *Yizkor* is recited in shul. Always remember to build on what

our parents provided for us, and regardless of how far we go in our growth in *Yiddishkeit* as individuals, as a community, and as a nation, we must always remember the foundations from which we come. We stand on the shoulders of giants —our parents, grandparents and ancestors who paved the way for us.

Bezchus keeping these things in mind, may this *Acharon shel Pesach* be the last time that we rely on a handout for our *geulah*. May we accrue many merits so that we can deserve the ultimate *geulah* of *Mashiach*, when the miracles of the Exodus will fade into the background and even greater miracles of the days of *Mashiach* will be heralded *bimheirah b'yameinu*.

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