

PESACH SEDER COMPANION

Rav Reuven Taragin



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I) Atmosphere of Leil HaSeder

Seder Night is a time when we should be feeling and generating many emotions.

First and foremost we tell the story of Yetziat Mitzraim with the goal of re-experiencing it. We reinforce this experience by acting out cheirut- behaving like free rich people.

Our experience of Yetziat Mitzraim is also meant to help us appreciate other miracles throughout the ages.

This appreciation is supposed to generate the following emotions and responses:

- 1) **Emunah**- The goal of telling the story of *Yetziat Mitzraim* is to generate faith in Hashem and His place in our lives and the world in general (Shemot 10:2). Hashem not just performs overt miracles, but is also the hand behind 'nature' (See Ramban Shemot 13:16 who explains that we are meant to learn from *Yetziat Mitzraim* that nature is not natural.)
- 2) **Shevach**- This appreciation should lead us to thank Hashem for both having taken us out of Mitzraim (*u'mesayem b'shevach*) and for everything else He has done and continues to do for us, the Jewish people, and His entire creation.
- 3) **Simcha**- The Zohar (Parshat Bo) emphasizes the importance of feeling great happiness when telling the story of *Yetziat Mitzraim*.
- 4) **Tefilah**- We are also meant to pray to Him on the Seder night asking that He continue helping us in the future. (See Rabbeinu Yonah [Berachot 4b] who explains the importance of juxtaposing *tefilah* immediately after *ge'ulah* in the fact that one expresses their recognition of Hashem as redeemer by directing prayer to Him.)
- 5) **Spirituality and In the Presence of / Closeness to Hashem**- The Zohar Chelek Bet, 40b) tells that Hashem and the heavenly angels 'descend' to hear us tell the story of Yetziat Mitzraim. (See Tosafot Berachot 42a for halachic implications. See also Pri Tzaddik [Pesach 16].) In this way Hashem continues what He began on the first Seder night in Mitzraim when he passed through Mitzraim personally. The Maharal (Haggadah) explains that we wear a kittel on the Seder night because we are like the Kohein Gadol who enters the kodesh hakadashim. We should appreciate our closeness with Hashem.
- 6) **Inter-Generational Mesorah**- The Seder Night is when we were taught about our people's past and when we pass these traditions on to our children. We should reflect on our relationship with our ancestors and help our children feel connected to them as well.

II) Kadeish

A) The 4 Kosot

1) Importance

Even though the four cups are only a Rabbinic requirement, their importance can be seen from how far we go to make sure that everyone has them. The Mishnah (Pesachim 99b) tells us that we allot from community *tzedakah* funds to ensure that even the poor have them.

The Rishonim learn from the Gemara (Nedarim 49b) that even one who dislikes wine and even one who might become (mildly) sick from drinking wine, needs to drink four cups of wine on the Seder night. Why is this Rabbinic *mitzvah* given so much importance?

The Maggid Mishneh (Chanuka 4:12) explains that their importance stems from their goal of *pirsumei nisa*. Celebration by drinking four cups of wine is the best Seder night expression of our freedom.

2) Four *Lashonot* of Geulah

The Yerushalmi (Pesachim 68b) explains that the four coups commemorate the four *lashonot* of Geula. The need to commemorate each *lashon* independently with its own cup emphasizes the independent significance of each *lashon*.

The first two *lashanot* relate to two physical aspects of the Exodus — the exodus itself, and our salvation (interestingly, the salvation is mentioned only after the exodus). The second two *lashanot* express the broader spiritual implications — the Exodus facilitated our redemption (*vega'alti* — a term that we see from here means more than just emancipation and salvation) and our relationship with Hashem (*velakachti*).

The Maharsha explains that the four *lashonot* are parallel to the four types of people who need to bring a Korban Todah. Each represents a different miracle for which *hoda'ah* must be expressed. According to this approach, the four cups can be seen as commemoration, celebration, and/or *hoda'ah*. (See Gra and Sefer Hamichtam who see the cups as forms of *hoda'ah*).

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach used this idea to explain why Chazal instituted commemorating the four *lashonot* specifically with wine (as opposed to matzah or some other object). Just like the Jews reached a new level with the fulfillment of each *lashon*, we, too, reach a new level of happiness with each cup of wine.

3) The Dream of the Sar Hamashkim

The Yerushalmi quotes another explanation for the number four in the name of Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Levi. He links the four cups to the four times the cup of Par'oh is mentioned in Sar Hamashkim's dream in Parshat Vayeshev. (See also Rashi Pesachim 108a.)

We see from here that the Seder Night reflection includes not just the servitude and exodus, but also how we got there. To realize that even the dreams of the Egyptian royalty (and the fly that fell into Par'oh's cup) were also part of Hashem's advanced planning and control over the smallest of world events.

4) Drinking The Four Cups

Usually when we make a *berachah* over a *kos* when doing a *mitzvah* (*Eirusin*, *Brit Mila*, *Pidyon Haben*), only a taste of the *kos* is required (because a *borei pri hagafen* was made).

Even kiddush, whose goal is to "remember (the day) over wine" (Pesachim 106a), only requires us to drink only a *moleih lugmav* (a cheekful, which is a *rov revi'it*).

The four cups on the Seder night are different because the goal is to drink wine as a sign of *cheirut*. The Spanish Rishonim, therefore, require one to drink most of the cup, and they require each person to drink their own cup (as opposed to being *yotzei* with someone else).

B) Kadeish

Rav Kook (*Olat Re'iyah* 2:224) says that we use the term Kadeish, instead of Kiddush, to remind us that the Jewish people have a responsibility to actively be *mikadesh* (sanctify) by setting the calendar and infusing time with holiness.

The basis for this idea is the Gemara's (Berachot 49a) explanation of the formulation of the Yom Tov *berachah* in Kiddush and Shemoneh Esrei — "*mikadesh Yisrael vehazmanim*." All *berachos* are supposed to close with a line that sums up the main point of the *berachah*; there can be only one idea, not two. This *berachah*, though, seems to violate that rule, by referencing both the Jewish people and time as sanctified by Hashem! The Gemara explains that both ideas are essentially one theme: Hashem sanctifies the Jewish people who sanctify time.

C) Kiddush

1) Zeman *Cheiruteinu*

- a) Zeman Cheiruteinu is the central characteristic of Pesach. We mention it in Pesach *tefilot/bentching* and also in our hopes for next year (*Leshana haba'ah bnei **chorin***). We drink four cups of wine and lean throughout the Seder to show that we are *bnei **chorin*** (free people).
- b) This is also how we describe the goal of Yetziat Mitzraim in our tefilot throughout the year. In *Tefilat Arvit* we mention that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim to eternal freedom (***cheirut** olam*). The Maharal explains that *Yetziat Mitzrayim* had an inherent **irreversible** impact on our national and personal identity.
- c) Chazal use the word *cheirut* (which does not appear in the Torah) instead of *chofesh*, the word the Torah (Shemot 21 and Devarim 16 and from there the State of Israel's national anthem) uses to refer to emancipation from slavery, because *Yetziat Mitzrayim* was not the end of our *avdut*. As we say later in the Haggadah, “*Veachshav keirvanu HaMakom la'avodato*.” This is also why the term “*avodat*” Hashem appears multiple times in the Torah (ex. — Devarim 13:5 and 11:13). Parshat Behar (25:42, 55) links the limitations on the slavery of a Jew to the fact that we are really Hashem's slaves because he took us out of Mitzrayim. This is how Chazal (quoted by Rashi) explain the reference to *Yetziat Mitzrayim* as the basis of the first of the ten commandments. *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is the basis of our commitment to Hashem; for this reason, the goal of *avodat Hashem* is emphasized throughout the *Yetziat Mitzrayim* process. The Yerushalmi (Pesachim 37a) explains that this is why we begin Hallel (in general and on the Seder night) by describing ourselves as “*avdei Hashem*.” Hashem communicated this message from the very beginning of the process by telling Moshe at the burning bush: the sign that I have been with you through this entire process is that it culminates with Bnei Yisrael serving me on Har Sinai (3:12). Similarly, Moshe's directive to Pharaoh was “*Shalach et ami **veya'avduni***.” (See Chinuch (306) who uses this *pasuk* to explain the “root” of the *mitzva* of *sefirat ha'omer*). The importance and urgency of getting to Har Sinai is why the Pesach, *matzah*, and *maror* needed to be eaten *bechipazon* (in haste). The Jews were not just leaving Mitzrayim, but in a rush to reach their destiny. *Yetziat Mitzrayim's* goal of a relationship with Hashem is why the four *lashonot* of redemption (6:6-7) focus not only on the exodus from Mitzrayim (*Vehotzaiti* and *Vehitzalti*), but also on the forming of a relationship with Hashem (*Vega'alti* and *Velakachti*). The Korban Pesach and ancillary *mitzvot* were a critical part of expressing the beginning of our *avodat Hashem* at the time of *Yetzi'at*

Mitzrayim. This is why they are referred to as “*avodah*” (ibid 12:25-6 and 13:5). Rav Hutner (Pachad Yitzchak Pesach 42) points out that Korban Pesach is the **only** (specific) mitzvah to be described as “*avodah*” (and it is described this way **three** times — Shemot 12:25-26; 13:5). He explains that since Korban Pesach was the first mitzvah we fulfilled, it cemented (and continues to cement each year) our identity as *ovdei Hashem*. This link between our *avodat Hashem* and Hashem taking us out of *Mitzrayim* is expressed by the *pasuk*: “*Ba’avur zeh asah Hashem li betzeiti miMitzrayim* (ibid 13:8)” which Rashi (quoting Chazal) explains to mean that Hashem took us out so we would perform these *mitzvot*. The Ibn Ezra (there) connects Rashi’s *peshat* to the goal of *avodat Hashem* emphasized at the beginning of the process (3:12). To emphasize the fact that *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is not about our becoming free, but about our committing ourselves to something meaningful, we use the term “*cheirut*” (*zman cheiruteinu, leshana haba’ah bnei chorin*) as opposed to “*chofesh*” on Pesach.

- d) Considering that our *avdut* to Hashem continued after *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, one wonders what we mean by *zman cheiruteinu*. There definitely was a change in status, as we say in the *brachah* of Hallel later in the Haggadah: “*Hotzi’anu mei’avdut lecheirut*.” The Kuzari (5:25) and Akeidat Yitzchak (Devarim 26:1) explain that commitment to Hashem is how we achieve true *cheirut*. The Mishnah in Avot (6:2) goes further in asserting that *cheirut* can **only** be achieved through involvement in Torah. The Meiri (Commentary to the Mishnah), Ibn Ezra (Bamidbar 6:7), and Rav Hirsch (Maaglei Shanah 3:40) explain that people who lack meaningful life goals end up being enslaved to their base physical desires. (See Kohelet 10:17, which seems to imply this.) This is how many explain the phrase “*pitachta l’moseirai*” that we say in Hallel (Tehillim 116:16): through committing ourselves to *avodat Hashem*, we free ourselves from the pursuit of meaninglessness. Rav Noach Weinberg explains that freedom is being able to pursue what you **really** want to do (your higher goals), not what you **feel** like doing (your momentary impulses).
- e) Many explain that *cheirut* refers to freedom of the soul (as opposed to *chofesh* — physical freedom). Rav Ephraim Oshri (Shu”t Mimaamakim 3:6:56) used this idea to explain why Jews in the Kovno Ghetto should recite the *brachah* of “*shelo asaniaved*” despite their physical enslavement to the Nazis. Rav Kook elaborated on this idea in a number of places (Olat Re’iya, Maamarei Hare’iya pg. 157) and added that *avodat Hashem* is true *cheirut* because it allows us to find the path that our soul is truly meant to follow (like the explanation the Rambam [Hilchot Geirushin 2:20] gives for the *halachah* of “*kofin lo ad sheyomer rotzeh ani*”).

2) Zecher LeYetziat Mitzrayim

The Chinuch (Mitzva 21) explains that the reason we have so many *mitzvot* that commemorate *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, and that we mention the *yetziah* so often in our *tefilot* and *berachot*, is because it is a major principle and pillar of our faith. It is a proof of Hashem's role as Creator and His continued involvement in world affairs.

The Ramban (Shemot 13:16), who is the source for the Chinuch's words, explains that we need to remember and teach future generations about the great miracles of the Exodus because Hashem does not perform them in each generation. He adds that we should use these great miracles to appreciate Hashem's role in nature as well. He strongly asserts that "anyone who has a portion in the Torah of Moshe recognizes that all parts of our natural lives are really miraculous."

As Albert Einstein said, "There are only two ways to live your life:

One is as though nothing is a miracle.

The other is as though everything is a miracle."

III) Maggid/Haggadah

A) Maggid- Sippur Yetziat Mitzraim

The main mitzvah we fulfill on the Seder night is the mitzvah of Sippur Yetziat Mitzraim. We see the centrality of this pmitzvah from the fact that Hashem identifies it as the goal of Yetziat Mitzraim while the process of the *makot* occurs (Shemot 10:2). Moshe, in turn, emphasizes the importance three (!) times in his words to the Jewish people while they were still in Mitzraim (Shemot 12:25-27, 13:8,14)!

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (The Story We Tell, Hamizrachi Pesach 5783) explains why:

“Freedom is the work of a nation, nations need an identity, identity needs memory, and memory is encoded in the stories we tell. Without narrative, there is no memory, and without memory, we have no identity.

The most powerful link between the generations is the tale of those who came before us – a tale that becomes ours, and that we hand on as a sacred heritage to those who will come after us. We are the story we tell ourselves about ourselves, and identity begins in the story parents tell their children.

That narrative provides the answer to the three fundamental questions every reflective individual must ask at some stage in their lives: Who am I? Why am I here? How then shall I live? There are many answers to these questions, but the Jewish ones are: I am a member of the people whom G-d rescued from slavery to freedom. I am here to build a society that honors the freedom of others, not just my own. And I must live in conscious knowledge that freedom is the gift of G-d, honored by keeping His covenant of law and love.

Twice in the history of the West this fact was forgotten, or ignored, or rebelled against. In the 17th and 18th century, there was a determined effort to create a world without identities. This was the project called the Enlightenment. It was a noble dream. To it we owe many developments whose value is beyond question and that we must strive to preserve.

However, one aspect of it failed and was bound to fail: the attempt to live without identity. The argument went like this. Identity throughout the Middle Ages was based on religion. But religion had for centuries led to war between Christians and Muslims. Then, following the Reformation, it led to war between Christian and Christian, Protestant and Catholic.

Therefore, to abolish war one had to move beyond identity. Identities are particular. Therefore, let us worship only the things that are universal: reason and observation, philosophy and science. Let us have systems, not stories. Then we will become one humanity, like the world before Babel. As Schiller put it and Beethoven set to music in the last movement of the Ninth Symphony: *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*, “All men will be brothers.”

It cannot be done, at least as humanity is presently constituted. The reaction, when it came, was fierce and disastrous. The 19th century saw the return of the repressed. Identity came back with a vengeance, this time based not on religion, but on one of three substitutes for it: the nation state, the (Aryan) race, and the (working) class.

In the 20th century, the nation state led to two world wars. Race led to the Holocaust. The class struggle led to Stalin, the Gulag and the KGB. A hundred million people were killed in the name of three false gods.

For the past 50 years, the West has been embarked on a second attempt to abolish identity, this time in the opposite direction. What the secular West now worships is not the universal but the individual: the self, the “Me,” the “I.” Morality – the thick code of shared values binding society together for the sake of the common good – has been dissolved into the right of each individual to do or be anything he or she chooses, so long as they do not directly harm others.

Identities have become mere masks we wear temporarily and without commitment. For large sections of society, marriage is an anachronism, parenthood delayed or declined, and community a faceless crowd. We still have stories, from Harry Potter to Lord of the Rings to Star Wars, but they are films, fictions, fantasies – a mode not of engagement but of escapism. Such a world is supremely tolerant, until it meets views not to its liking, when it quickly becomes brutishly intolerant, and eventually degenerates into the politics of the mob.

This is populism, the prelude to tyranny. Today’s hyper-individualism will not last. We are social animals. We cannot live without identities, families, communities and collective responsibility. Which means we cannot live without the stories that connect us to a past, a future and a larger group whose history and destiny we share. The biblical insight still stands.

To create and sustain a free society, you have to teach your children the story of how we achieved freedom and what its absence tastes like: the unleavened bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of slavery. Lose the story and eventually you lose your freedom. That is what happens when you forget who you are and why. The greatest gift we can give our children is not money or possessions but a story – a real story, not a fantasy, one that connects them to us and to a rich heritage of high ideals. We are not particles of dust blown this way or that by the passing winds of fad and fashion. **We are heirs to a story that inspired a hundred generations of our ancestors and eventually transformed the Western world. What you forget, you lose. The West is forgetting its story. We must never forget ours. With the hindsight of 33 centuries we can see how right Moshe was. A story told across the generations is the gift of an identity, and when you know who you are and why, you can navigate the wilderness of time with courage and confidence. That is a life-changing idea.**

B) Haggadah

The Story of Stories, The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah

Through the Haggadah, more than a hundred generations of Jews have handed on their story to their children. The word “*haggadah*” means “relate,” “tell,” “expound.” But it also comes from another Hebrew root: [a-g-d], to “bind,” “join,” “connect.”

By reciting the Haggadah, Jews give their children a sense of connectedness to Jews throughout the world and to the Jewish people through time. It joins them to a past and future, a history and destiny, and transforms them into characters in its drama.

Every other nation known to humankind has been united because its members lived in the same place, spoke the same language, and were part of the same culture. Jews alone, dispersed across continents, speaking different languages and participating in different cultures, have been bound together by a narrative, the Pesach narrative, which they tell in the same way on the same night. More than the Haggadah is the story of a people, Jews are the people of a story.

C) The Importance of Maggid to Family

The Secrets of Happy Families, Brue Feiler, New York: William Morrow, 2003

The more children know about their family's story, the stronger their desire of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem, the more successfully they believe their family functions...

The single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative.

He quotes (pg. 274) a study from Emory University that the more children know about their family's story, "the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem, the more successfully they believe their family functions."

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Spiritual Child, Hamizrachi 5783

A family narrative connects children to something larger than themselves. It helps them make sense of how they fit into the world that existed before they were born.

It gives them the starting point of an identity. That in turn becomes the basis of confidence.

It enables children to say: This is who I am. This is the story of which I am a part. These are the people who came before me and whose descendant I am. These are the roots of which I am the stem reaching upward toward the sun...

For some time now, along with many others in the West, we have sometimes neglected this deeply spiritual element of education. That is what makes Lisa Miller's recent book The Spiritual Child an important reminder of a forgotten truth. Professor Miller teaches psychology and education at Columbia University and co-edits the journal Spirituality in Clinical Practice. Her book is not about Judaism or even religion as such, but specifically about the importance of parents encouraging the spirituality of the child.

Children are naturally spiritual. They are fascinated by the vastness of the universe and our place in it. They have the same sense of wonder that we find in some of the greatest of the psalms. They love stories, songs, and rituals. They like the shape and structure they give to time, and relationships, and the moral life.

To be sure, sceptics and atheists have often derided religion as a child's view of reality, but that only serves to strengthen the corollary, that **a child's view of reality is instinctively, intuitively religious. Deprive a child of that by ridiculing faith, abandoning ritual, and focusing instead on academic achievement and other forms of success, and you starve him or her of some of the most important elements of emotional and psychological well-being.**

As Professor Miller shows, the research evidence is compelling. **Children who grow up in homes where spirituality is part of the atmosphere at home are less likely to succumb to depression, substance abuse, aggression, and high-risk behaviours including physical risk-taking and "a sexuality devoid of emotional intimacy."** Spirituality plays a part in a child's resilience, physical and mental health, and healing. It is a key dimension of adolescence and its intense search for identity and purpose. The teenage years often take the form of a spiritual quest. And when there is a cross-generational bond through which children and parents come to share a sense of connection to something larger, an enormous inner strength is born. Indeed, the parent-child relationship, especially in Judaism, mirrors the relationship between G-d and us.

IV) Yachatz — Stealing and Hiding the Afikoman

The Meiri connects this custom to the "*chotfin et hamatzot*" *minhag* mentioned by the Gemara (Pesachim 108b). He explains that the goal is to get the children to stay up, inquire, and ask questions.

Rav Dovid Feinstein (Haggadaht Kol Dodi 10:5) adds that the process of hiding the treasured *matzot* and negotiating to get them back helps the children appreciate how valuable the *matzot* are. Another implication may be that children learn not just from what we tell them, but also/mainly from what we hide.

V) Ha Lachma Anya

A) The Relationship Between The Three Segments

Ha Lachma Anya, the paragraph that opens Maggid, consists of three seemingly independent themes that relate to three different stages — an explanation of the *matzah's* origin in the Egyptian servitude (past), an invitation to the needy to join our seder (present), and an expression of confidence about the final redemption (future).

The connection between the mention of our slavery in Egypt and our belief in the final redemption is that our belief in Hashem as the past Redeemer is meant to inspire our belief in His future redemption as well (See Sma"k 1).

An explanation for the insertion of our charitable invitation in between is that *chessed* is how we transition from slavery to redemption. Firstly, free people are the ones **most able** to think about the needs of others. Additionally, it is the ability to think of others that helps one **become** and express true freedom. This is why Yeshayahu Hanavi (1:27) tells us that Yerushalayim is redeemed through "*tzedaka*." It is this *chessed* that makes us confident that we are deserving of redemption.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote: "The other element I found strange was the invitation to others to join us in eating the bread of affliction. What kind of hospitality is that, I thought, to ask others to share our suffering? Unexpectedly, I discovered the answer in Primo Levi's great book, *If This Is a Man*, the harrowing account of his experiences in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. According to Levi, the worst time of all was when the Nazis left in January 1945, fearing the Russian advance. All prisoners who could walk were taken on the brutal "death marches." The only people left in the camp were those too ill to move. For ten days, they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. Levi describes how he worked to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them dying. He then writes: 'When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of 23 with typhus) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working.' And so it was agreed. 'Only a day before,' says Levi, 'this would have been inconceivable. The law of the camp said: "Eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbour."' To do otherwise would have been suicidal. The offer of sharing bread 'was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from Haftlinge [prisoners] to men again.'

Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us. That is how we turn

affliction into freedom” (Sharing The Bread of Affliction, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Credo Column, The Times).

Rav Soloveichik wrote the following:

“The ceremonial of the Passover meal, centered around the paschal lamb, aims at the emergence of the new *hesed* community, for *hesed* is the characteristic mark of the free man.

The bondsman is not spiritually capable of joining the *hesed* community, because he is too much concerned with himself, too insecure, too fearful as regards the morrow, too humiliated to think of someone else, too frightened and too meek.

People who spent time in the concentration camps during the Holocaust tell me that something similar, something dehumanizing, happened to most of them. All emotions were extinguished, no compassion, no sympathy, no *hesed*, no concern for the ‘thou’ stirred in their bosom. Every human instinct, every noble emotion was nipped in the bud by grisly fear and horror... This is exactly what happens to a slave. Only free and proud people think of others and share with others.

The birth of the *hesed* community — of a nation within which people unite, give things away, care for each other, share what they possess — is symbolized by the paschal sacrifice. G-d did not need the paschal lamb; he had no interest in the sacrifice. He simply wanted the people — slaves who had just come out of the house of bondage — to emerge from their isolation and self-centeredness into the *hesed* community...” (Festival of Freedom (pg. 22)).

B) Hashata Avdi

Though we are not slaves in the present, we recite this line as the beginning of our reentry into and reexperience of the story of servitude in and redemption from Mitzraim.

C) LeShanah Haba'ah Bear'ah DeYisrael!

Our dream is not just a return to “Yerushalayim” but to Eretz Yisrael as well. This is a direct contrast with the words “*bear'ah deMitzrayim*” from the beginning of the paragraph.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook was asked, “How can we say this if we are already here?”

He answered that you should still be davening for the others who haven’t made it yet. Maybe one can add that despite being here, we must still remind ourselves of the tremendous *zechut* we have to be back in Israel and *daven* for it to continue.

D) Hashata Avdi

Haggadaht Mah Nishtana, Y'min, England

“There is something ironic about saying immediately after the Mah Nishtanah, “**Once** we were slaves,” when just beforehand (in Ha Lachma Anya) we said the opposite: “**Now** we are slaves, next year let us be free.” Are we still slaves? Or was that strictly in the past?

Perhaps the point can be put best in a story: There was once a king who decided to pay a visit to one of the prisons in his realm. Amongst the prisoners there was one who caught his eye as being a man out of place. The man protested his innocence; the king decided to investigate his case; it turned out that he was telling the truth; and he was set free. The man was doubly grateful: he rejoiced not only in his freedom but in his restored sense of justice.

One day, though, forgetting everything, he committed a crime, was tried and found guilty, and thrown once again into prison. From time to time the king, unseen, would pay a visit to the prison; and he would hear the man saying to himself: Now I am here, but next year I will be free. The king knew that this is what all prisoners say. And he would pass on. But one night he came and heard the man say to himself: Today is the anniversary of the freedom the king once granted to me, and even now that I languish here I rejoice to remember it.

The king, overcome with the memory and with the man's undiminished gratitude, expressed not only in freedom but even in renewed imprisonment, issued a royal pardon. And the man was set free again,

This time he did not forget; and ever after he was loyal to the king's laws.

So may it be with us.”

By remembering our previous redemption even in the depths of our current exile, we hope that our King will choose to grant us pardon and return us to *cheirut* so that we can serve Him properly.

E) LeShanah Haba'ah Bnei Chorin!

Ha Lachma Anya ends with an expression of confidence that the redemption will occur within the next year. Interestingly, we describe two independent aspects of redemption — being in Eretz Yisrael and being “*benei chorin*” (free).

This duality teaches us that one is possible without the other and that each is independently significant (Beit David). We should therefore greatly appreciate the privilege to be able to visit, live in, and conduct a *seder* in Eretz Yisrael.

But are we free? “*Ein lecha ben chorin ela mi she'oseik baTorah*” (Avot 6:2): true freedom can only be achieved when a person frees themselves from foreign influences and knows who they truly are, who they are meant to be, and how they are to get there.

Thankfully, we are blessed with the opportunity to visit and live in Israel. May this opportunity inspire us to work towards achieving true *cheirut*!

F) David Ben Gurion's Address to the Special Commission of Palestine, 1947

“300 years ago, there came to the New World a boat, and its name was the Mayflower. The Mayflower's landing on Plymouth Rock was one of the great historical events in the history of England and in the history of America. But I would like to ask any Englishman sitting here on the commission, what day did the Mayflower leave port? What date was it? I'd like to ask the Americans: do they know what date the Mayflower left port in England? How many people were on the boat? Who were their leaders? What kind of food did they eat on the boat?

More than 3300 years ago, long before the Mayflower, our people left Egypt, and every Jew in the world, wherever he is, knows what day they left. And he knows what food they ate. And we still eat that food every anniversary. And we know who our leader was. And we sit down and tell the story to our children and grandchildren in order to guarantee that it will never be forgotten. And we say our two slogans: 'Now we may be enslaved, but next year, we'll be a free people.'...

Now we are behind the Soviet Union and their prison. Now, we're in Germany where Hitler is destroying us. Now we're scattered throughout the world, but next year, we'll be in Jerusalem. There'll come a day that we'll come home to Zion, to the Land of Israel. That is the nature of the Jewish people.”

VI) Mah Nishtanah

A) Two Requirements

Children asking questions accomplishes two independent Torah-mandated goals:

- 1) telling the story to our children (*Vehigadita levinchah* (Shemot 13:8)) and grandchildren (*lemaan tisaper beaznei bincha u'ven bincha* (Shemot 10) in order to pass our heritage forward;
- 2) teaching through question and answer (*V'haya ki yishalcha bincha...* (Shemot 12), as ideas mean more if they are answers to questions rather than unprompted lessons.

Though each goal stands alone (we ask questions even if there are no children, and we teach even children who don't ask questions; see Rambam [Hilchot Chametz Perek 7] who mentions each separately [halachot 2 and 3]), ideally we connect the two by having the child ask the questions.

B) Asking Questions

The Art of Asking Questions, The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah:

Religious faith has often been seen as naive, blind, accepting. That is not the Jewish way. Judaism is not the suspension of critical intelligence. To the contrary: asking a question is itself a profound expression of faith in the intelligibility of the universe and the meaningfulness of human life. To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer. The fact that throughout history people have devoted their lives to extending the frontiers of knowledge is a compelling testimony to the restlessness of the human spirit and its constant desire to go further, higher, deeper. Far from faith excluding questions, questions testify to faith — that history is not random, that the universe is not impervious to our understanding, that what happens to us is not blind chance. We ask not because we doubt, but because we believe.

Isidor Rabi won the Nobel Prize in physics in 1944. When he was asked why he became a scientist, he replied: “My mother made me a scientist without ever intending to. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: ‘So? Did you learn anything today?’ But not my mother. ‘Izzy,’ she would say, ‘Did you ask a good question today?’ Asking good questions made me a scientist.”

Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis (The Answers are Also Important, Hamizrachi Pesach 5783) adds:

“Maieutics is the name given to learning through asking challenging questions. The term comes from the Greek meaning “midwife.” **Socrates argued that inquiry is the greatest tool we have to give birth to knowledge.**

The bestselling author, Warren Berger, in his book, *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*, demonstrates that the most creative and successful people tend to be expert questioners. By mastering the art of inquiry, they raise the questions no one else is asking, and find the answers everyone else is seeking.

Significantly, questions also benefit those who are responding. This is beautifully articulated in the Talmud (Ta’anit 7b): “Just as a small piece of wood can ignite a large piece, so too, minor Torah scholars can sharpen great Torah scholars and enable them to advance in their studies. This is what Rabbi Chanina taught: I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned more than from all of them.”

C) Father and Child

The ideal is for children to ask the questions to their father and for the father to answer them. One can see this as part of passing our *mesorah* to the next generation. Additionally, it is a fulfillment of the last *pasuk* in Tanach, the end of Sefer Malachi, which describes the final *ge’ulah* as arriving once Eliyahu Hanavi brings fathers and children together: “*Hinei anochi sholeiach lachem es Eliyahu HaNavi lifnei bo yom Hashem hagadol vehanora. Veheishiv lev avos al banim velev banim al avosam...*” Parents and children connecting through their discussion of the past *ge’ulah* helps bring the future one.

D) Asking About the Contrast

Though the child reciting Mah Nishtanah asks about four aspects of the Seder night, he groups them all under the broader question of why the night is different.

Abarbanel and Malbim point out that the first two questions (*matzah/maror*) focus on aspects of slavery, while the last two questions (dipping/leaning) relate to aspects of freedom. One can suggest that this conflict aims to get the child to question the inconsistency he observes.

E) KULANU Mesubin

Why does the last question have the word *kulanu* when describing *heseibah*? The three previous questions are also done by everyone at the meal!

Here are two explanations for the significance of the fact that we are **all** doing *heseibah*:

- 1) *Heseibah* on Pesach expresses *cheirut* because **all types of people**, even the poor, do it. (Interestingly, the need for even a poor person to do *heseibah* is the **first** *halachah* mentioned by the Mishnah in Pesachim regarding the Pesach seder.)
- 2) Doing *heseibah* together brings everyone together (See Berachot 43: and 46:). This is even more significant on the seder night which is meant to revolve around the *korban Pesach* that was eaten by a *chaburah* (Rav Soloveichik).

VII) Avadim Hayinu

A) Mat'chil Begnut

The Mishnah teaches that the mitzvah of *sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* should be accomplished by first retelling the *genut* (negative) of our exile in Egypt, followed by the *shevach* (positive). Shmuel (Pesachim 116a) tells us to fulfill this mandate by starting with Avadim Hayinu: “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem our God took us out from there with a strong hand and outstretched arm.”

We begin with the negative because:

- 1) We do not fully appreciate the positive without beginning with the negative (Maharal, Netzach Yisrael 1);
- 2) The negative strengthens our humility and, through that, enhances our thanks to Hashem (Maharsha, Pesachim 116a);
- 3) The *avdut* was important in its own right because it helped us develop the ability to subjugate and commit ourselves — character traits ultimately important to our *avodat Hashem* (Olat Re'iyah 2:20).

B) Avadim Hayenu LeParoh

The Torah chooses this three- word phrase, as opposed to the brief two words phrase- ‘avdei Par’oh’.

Rav Solveichik (quoted by Rav Shalom Rosner, Hamizrachi Pesach 5783) explains why: “There is a fundamental difference between עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים and עבדי פרעה. *Hayinu leParoh*, we were to Pharaoh, means a social reality, an external physical state in which we found ourselves. We were subjugated to servitude, but it didn’t go to our core.

Avdei Paroh, servants of Pharaoh, on the other hand, would have meant an identification, an internal connection between us and Pharaoh, between us and his ideals and values. That was not the case. As the Midrash tells us, we didn’t change our names, clothing, etc. On the outside, it might not have been noticeable but G-d knew we were Avadim leParoh and not Avdei Paroh.”

C) Hashem Elokeinu

The word Elokeinu does not appear in the *pesukim* upon which this piece is based (Devarim 6:21). The Haggadah may add it to emphasize that we left slavery in Mitzrayim in order to enter into a relationship with Hashem, which is highlighted by the usage of the name Elokeinu, *our* God. We emphasize this point in the *berachah* of *ge'ulah* of Arvit: “*Veemunah kol zot vekayam aleinu ki hu Hashem **elokeinu** ve'ein zulato **va'anachnu Yisrael amo.***”

The Rambam (Sanhedrin 25:1–2) cautions Jewish leaders to treat the Jewish people with respect because “even Jews who are uneducated and behave inappropriately are descendants of the Avot and part of the people who Hashem took out of Mitzrayim.” The relationship we entered into with Hashem when He brought us out of Egypt fundamentally changed every single Jewish person, bringing them to a higher stature due to their relationship with the Almighty.

D) Zero'ah Netuyah

The words “*zero'ah netuyah*” also do not appear in this *pasuk* in Devarim. It could be that they were added because they connote Hashem's constant *hashgachah*. This idea is even more important for Jews in *galut* (for whom the Haggadah was composed).

Rav Kook (*Olat Re'iyah* pg. 279) saw the “*zero'ah netuya*” (still outstretched) as representative of the fact that Hashem has more good in store for us.

E) Ve'afilu Kulanu Chachamim

Why is it a mitzvah for Zekeinim and Chachamim to talk about *Yetziat Mitzrayim* if they know all about it already?

There are two ways to answer this question:

- 1) There is always more to learn. Rav Soloveichik explained that the Mishnah about Rebbe Elazar Ben Azarya is brought by the Haggadah to make exactly this point. The Rambam (Peirush Mishnayos on this Mishnah in Berachot 12a) explains that this was Rebbe Elazar Ben Azarya's point in saying that he was “like 70 years old.” Even though he had learned so much, it was Ben Zoma (someone without *semicha*) and not he (the Nasi) who was able to prove the need to commemorate *Yetziat Mitzrayim* at night. (Maybe this is why Ben Zoma is the one who taught “*Eizehu chacham? Halomed mikol Adam.*”)

2) Leil HaSeder is about more than just the conveyance of information, it is also about:

- a) (re-) experiencing it (The Sefat Emet (Pesach 5637 b”h Bakol) saw this re-experience as facilitating the eventual *ge’ulah*);
- b) expressing appreciation (*shevach* and *hallel*) for it (Avudraham).

E) Lesaper BEYetziat Mitzraim

We would have expected the concept to be formulated as ‘*lesaper et*’ or ‘*al Yetziat Mitzrayim*. Why is it formulated “*beYetziat Mitzrayim*”?

Rav Soloveichik explained that the actual formulation of “*lesaper beYetziat Mitzrayim*” is meant to emphasize that people need to speak about themselves as part of the story. Whereas “*et*” would put the focus on the story itself, “*b*” emphasizes the people telling the story.

VIII) Amar Rebbe Elazar

Though the Haggadah seems to quote this Mishnah because of Rebbe Elazar's opinion that we need to remember *Yetziat Mitzrayim* at night, not just during the day, the Haggadah also elaborates on the Chachamim's *drasha* of "kol" teaching us the *din* of continuing to remember the Exodus during the *yemot haMoshiach*. Why develop this opinion if it is only tangential to the reason the Mishnah is being quoted?

One can explain that this *derashah* is mentioned to link the coming of Moshiach to our commemoration of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. Pesach night is not just about our first *geulah*, but our forthcoming one as well.

The Sefat Emet [Pesach 5637] and the Lubavitcher Rebbe infer this point from the language of the *derashah* which used the phrase "*lehavi* (as opposed to the standard "*lerabot*") *yemot haMoshiach*." The Rebbe explains that this language teaches that it is our commemoration and appreciation of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* that will ultimately bring (*lehavi*) *yemot haMoshiach*.

IX) Baruch HaMakom Baruch Hu

Though the Haggadah focuses almost exclusively on *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, it mentions *Matan Torah* as part of what we are thankful for because it was the ultimate goal of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and represents how we are able to achieve real freedom. This is how the Sefer HaChinuch (306) explains the root of the mitzvah of Sefirat Ha'Omer: as highlighting the connection between *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and *Matan Torah*.

This is why the "ot" Hashem tells Moshe to tell Pa'roh is that the goal of taking the Jews out of Mitzrayim is so that they can serve Hashem at Har Sinai.

It is why Moshe's continuous demand to Pa'roh is "*Shalach et ami vaya'avduni*" and why the Jews had to eat the *korban* Pesach and leave Mitzrayim *bechipazon* (commemorated by the *matzah*) — they had somewhere important to go!

X) Arba Banim

A) Keneged

The word “*keneged*” is often used to mean “in relation to.” Literally, the word means “opposite,” or even “anti.” Using this word in context of teaching the four sons indicates that even though educating children requires patience and working *with* the child’s desires, sometimes there *needs* to be opposition as well. The Haggadah’s response to the *ben rasha* exemplifies this approach.

B) Arba

Why does the Haggadah (based on the Torah which includes four *pesukim* that describe explaining to one’s child) choose *davka* four children?

- 1) The Maharal (Gevurot Hashem 60) explains that four is the basic degree of distinct separation (like the idea of four directions). See Bereishit (2:10) — the first time the concept of separation appears in the Torah — where it describes four directions.
- 2) On a deeper level, the Abarbanel explains that the four children represent the four reasons/ways questions are asked: out of lack of knowledge (*tam*), to gain a deeper understanding (*chacham*), as an attack (*rasha*), the one who doesn’t know how to ask/gain knowledge (*she’aino yodei’a lishol*).

The Sefat Emet (Pesach 5634 K’neged) adds that every Jew has all four types of questions from time to time.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (in his Haggadah) writes that “It may be that the ‘four children’ are not different people but successive stages in the development of a child. We begin by being unable to ask. We accept the world as given. The next stage in intellectual growth is curiosity (the “simple” son). We ask questions with no ulterior motive. We simply want to learn. This is often followed by a period of testing and challenging the values we have received (the “wicked” or adolescent son). The Hebrew word for adolescent, *na’ar*, also means “to shake off.” The teenage years are ones where we develop our own identity by putting received values to the test. This can sometimes lead to rebellion as a form of self-exploration. The culmination of cognitive growth is “wisdom,” the point at which we have both internalized the values of our heritage and are sufficiently mature to see their objective merits. Although the Haggadah uses the word “wise,” Rabbinic tradition preferred the phrase “*talmid chakham*,” a “wise disciple.” Wisdom, in Judaism, is not a state, but a process of constant learning. That is why it lies as much in the questions one asks as in the answers. Every answer is itself the prelude to a deeper question, and thus there is constant growth as we move to new levels of understanding.”

C) Dibrah Torah

The Abarbanel explains that it is the fact that the Torah addresses different types of children/people/questioners that makes it relevant to all people in all times.

In this way, this piece of the Haggadah elaborates on the piece before it, which thanked Hashem for giving us the Torah.

Commentary on The Four Children, The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah:

“Yet there is a message of hope in this family portrait. Though they disagree, they sit around the same table, telling the same story. Though they differ, they stay together. They are part of a single family. Even the rebel is there, although part of him does not want to be. This, too, is who we are. The Jewish people is an extended family. We argue, we differ, there are times when we are deeply divided. Yet we are part of the same story. We share the same memories. At difficult times we can count on one another. We feel one another’s pain. Out of this multiplicity of voices comes something none of us could achieve alone. Sitting next to the wise child, the rebel is not fated to remain a rebel. Sitting next to the rebel, the wise child may share his wisdom rather than keep it to himself. The one who cannot ask will, in time, learn how. The simple child will learn complexity. The wise child will learn simplicity. Each draws strength from the others, as we all draw strength from belonging to a people.”

D) Echad.. V’Echad

We can explain the significance of the reference to each of the children as ‘echad’ based on the explanation given by Rav S”R Hirsch to the similar formulation used to describe Moshe’s two children (Shemot 18:3-4). He explains that the Torah only refers to the second as the second when describing sheep. Humans and especially children should always be considered special as the one and only.

E) The Rasha

1) Harsh Response

Why do we treat the Rasha so harshly? While the Haggadah faults the Rasha for separating himself from the nation with his question, “What is this *avodah* for **you**?” the Chacham also addresses us as “you” (“*etchem*”)!

- a) The Orchot Chayim explains that the Chacham described Hashem as “Elokeinu” which shows his sense of belonging.

- b) The Beit Halevi focused on the verb used (by the Torah) to introduce the Rasha's question: "*V'haya ki yomru...*" The Rasha is not looking to receive an answer; he is **saying** — telling us. As Rav Chaim Soloveichik put it, he has *answers*, not questions.
- c) The Yerushalmi (which quotes the Rasha as referring to *mitzvot* as a "*tircha*") seems to see the problem in the Rasha's view of *mitzvot* as "*avodah*." Many complain about the difficulty of being observant and think that if Judaism were made less difficult, more people would be observant. In truth, this is not the case. Meaningful things require work.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains: "Throughout a century of reflection on how to sustain Jewish identity in an open, secular society, the case has often been made that we need to make Judaism easier. Why make the barriers so high, the demands so steep, the laws so rigorous and demanding? So, one by one, the demands were lowered. Shabbat, kashrut and conversion were all made easier. As for the laws of *taharat hamishpacha*, in many circles outside Orthodoxy they fell into abeyance altogether. The assumption was that the less demanding Judaism is to keep, the more Jews will stay Jewish. To show that this is a fallacy, I once asked a mixed group of observant and non-observant Jews to list the festivals in order of difficulty. Everyone agreed that Pesach was the hardest, Shavuot the easiest, and Sukkot somewhere in between. I then asked, which festivals are kept by the greatest number of Jews. Again, everyone agreed: Pesach was kept by most, Shavuot by the least, with Sukkot in between. There was a pause as the group slowly realised what it had just said. It was counterintuitive but undeniable: the harder a festival is, the more people will keep it. The proof is Yom Kippur, by far the most demanding day of all, and by far the best attended in synagogue (What Does Avodah Mean to You).

2) L'fi Shehotzi Et Atzmo Min Haklal, Kafar B'Ikar

The Ritva and the Avudraham see the Rasha as a *kofeir b'ikar* (heretic) because he sees only us (and not himself) as obligated by the commandments.

The simple implication of the statement, though, is that the problem lies not in his philosophical worldview, but in the very fact that he separates himself from the Jewish people (See Rambam [Hilchot Teshuva 3:11] who describes the severity of doing so).

Hashem's relationship is with us as a people, not with independent individuals. By severing himself from the Jewish people, the Rasha cuts himself off from his relationship with Hashem as well.

XI) Mit'chila Ovdei Avoda Zara

A) Rav's Opinion

Earlier in Maggid, right after Mah Nishtanah, we read Avadim Hayinu, Shmuel's presentation of the *genut* and *shevach* of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. This piece, "We were once worshippers of idols, and now Hashem has drawn us close to His service," is the *amora* Rav's opinion (Pesachim 116a) of how we fulfill "*mat'chil b'genut*." The Avudraham explains that Rav feels that we need to relate to the spiritual slavery behind the physical slavery, why we needed to be slaves in the first place, and the ultimate goal of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

In order to free ourselves of idol worship, we needed to be enslaved so we could appreciate Hashem as our redeemer from slavery.

B) V'achashav — And Now

The piece speaks about Hashem drawing us to his service "*achshav*." Our connection with Hashem is not just something that happened in the past. It is being formulated and strengthened at this moment on the Seder Night as well.

The Ohr Hachayim understood this to be the implication of the pasuk in Bamidbar (23:22) which describes Hashem as taking us out of Mitzraim in the present.

Both Rav Kook (Yisrael U'techiyto 28 and Olat Rei'yah [pg, 26, 279]) and Rav Soloveichik describe the redemption as a process that began with *Yetziat Mitzraim* and continues uninterrupted till Moshiach's arrival.

Rav Soloveichik described it this way- "The exodus from eretz Mitzrayim took place on the fifteenth night of Nissan and was complete.

But mi-Mitzrayim is a long process. Who knows how long it will take until the Jew will be liberated not only me-eretz Mitzrayim but from Mitzrayim as well.

Basically the g'ulat ha-Mashiah is a continuation of the g'ulat Mitzrayim, of the redemption from Egypt. What took place immediately within one night is me-eretz Mitzrayim. But mi-Mitzrayim is a long road which the Jew has been traveling for three thousand five hundred years without yet arriving at his destination (Rav Soloveichik on the Haggada).

The Gra (Avnei Eliyahu on the Siddur) uses this idea to explain the present tense formulation of the *beracha* "*Boneh Yerushalayim*." One can explain the formulation of the *beracha* '*Goel Yisrael*' in a similar way.

C) Avodato

Yetziat Mitzrayim is not about going from slavery to a freedom characterized by lack of purpose, but rather from being *ovdei avoda zara* to being *ovdei Hashem*.

In many places the Torah encourages us to serve Hashem (Devarim 11 and 13) and speaks of the implications of our being *ovdei Hashem*. (See the piece on Z'man Cheiruteinu [within Kadeish])

XII) V'hi She'amdah

A) V'Hi

The Shibalei Haleket explains that “*hi*” refers to the *havtachah* (the promise mentioned in the preceding piece) that Hashem fulfilled through *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

Once we have expanded the storyline beyond the narrow emancipation narrative to the broader notion of Hashem’s fulfillment of his promises to us and the Avot, we can see parallels in every generation.

In 2016, Natan Sharansky celebrated the 30th anniversary of his release from the Gulag after nine years in prison. At the dinner of gratitude that Sharansky made at the time (as he does every year on the date of his release, Rosh Chodesh Adar,) he told the following story:

Over a decade ago, Sharansky was invited by President Bush to the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, and the speakers that morning — politicians, celebrities, etc. — were asked to relate the event in their lives where they most felt God’s presence. Christians call it “bearing witness.”

All the stories were inspirational, some led to born-again moments in their lives, but all followed the same basic pattern. Some shared a low moment when they felt God’s presence lift them up, and others spoke about a dramatic moment when they felt divine intervention saved their lives. A fighter pilot related that a malfunction caused his engines to fail and he was plunging to earth — and he felt a heavenly force intervene, restarting his engines without any explicable reason, as if there was some superior force above him.

When it came time for Sharansky to speak, he said that Jews look at these experiences differently. We look for God’s presence not in the life of the individual but in the life of the nation, i.e., what God does for us as a people. (Sharansky knew well that not everyone present that morning was a lover of Israel.)

He told the audience that you — all Bible-believing Christians — know of the Jews enslaved in Egypt, and how Pharaoh refused to free them, and the plagues, the miracles, and the Red Sea. It was God’s mighty hand and outstretched arm that redeemed us from Egypt and founded our nation. But not long ago — just a few years ago — there was a mighty, evil empire that intimidated the entire world. And everyone was afraid to challenge them. Nations sought accommodation, détente, some arrangement whereby the world would keep the peace and no one would interfere in the domestic affairs of this evil empire.

There was one small group of Jews who arose, reasserted their Jewish identity and reclaimed their membership in the Jewish nation. It was a small group at first — dozens, then hundreds, then thousands — but small compared to the gargantuan size of their enemy of whom everyone else was afraid. And then Jews across the world heard of them and rallied for them, and pressured

governments, and then blow after blow rained on the Soviet Union until it collapsed from within and the Iron Curtain fell and the Jews were liberated, again.”

Everyone burst into applause, and he continued. “For Jews, that is how God manifests His presence — in the life of our nation. He reveals Himself through what happens to the Jewish people.” He then told his audience that night that this demonstration of God’s presence in the life of the Jewish people was greater than anything any one of them had ever experienced in their lives as individuals. (Rabbi Steven Pruzansky)

B) Shelo Echad Bilvad

The Sefat Emet explained this unique formulation as intending to remind us that we are in danger when we are not unified. An example of this was at the time of Purim, when Haman described us as an “*am mefuzar u’mefurad*.”

C) VeHakadosh Baruch Hu Matzileinu Miyadam

Is it true that Hashem always saves us? We know that the nations of the world have succeeded in killing millions of our people — most recently in the terrible European Holocaust.

The emphasis is the word “*l’chaloteinu*” — many have attempted to **annihilate** us.

They may have succeeded at killing some of us, but, miraculously, we continue to exist.

In the words of Tolstoy: “**The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter, nor torture of thousands of years could destroy**, he whom neither fire, nor sword, nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth...

Such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself”

(Jewish World, London, 1908, Leo Tolstoy).

In the words of Pashal: “This people are not eminent solely by their antiquity, but are also **singular by their duration, which has always continued from their origin till now**. For, whereas the nations of Greece and of Italy, of Lacedaemon, of Athens and of Rome, and others who came long after, have long since perished, these ever remain, and **in spite of the endeavors of many powerful kings who have a hundred times tried to destroy them, as their historians testify, and as it is easy to conjecture from the natural order of things during so long a space of years, they have nevertheless been preserved**” (Pensee, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Ency. Britannica, 1952 — Paragraph 620, p. 285).

XIII) Tzei U'lemad

A) The Details

As opposed to the previous *mat'chil begenut* section of the Haggadah, which presented the basic storyline, the *Tzei U'lemad* section adds detail by quoting the Midrash on each clause of the *pesukim* taken from the commemoration of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* recited by one who brings *bikkurim* (Devarim 26). That passage is unique because it is both the longest recitation about *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and because it includes not just the story, but also thanks to Hashem.

B) Mah Bikeish Lavan Ha'arami La'asot

The Maharal (Gevurot Hashem 54) asks why the Haggadah focuses specifically on Lavan (whose intentions are not clear in the Torah) as opposed to Eisav, who clearly stated his intention to kill Yaakov. The Maharal explains that Lavan's hatred was baseless. Though Yaakov and his family were his own flesh and blood and he had no reason to hate them, he still did. This is a model for the uniqueness of anti-semitism in Mitzrayim and throughout the ages.

Prof. Michael Curtis of Rutgers University described it this way:

“The uniqueness of anti-Semitism lies in the fact that no other people in the world have ever been charged **simultaneously**:

With alienation from society and with cosmopolitanism.

With being capitalistic exploiters and also revolutionary communist advocates.

The Jews were accused of having an imperious mentality, and at the same time they're the people of the book.

They're accused of being militant aggressors, at the same time as being cowardly pacifists.

With being a chosen people, and also having an inferior human nature.

With both arrogance and timidity.

With both extreme individualism and community adherence.

With being guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus and at the same time held to account for the invention of Christianity...

Everything and its opposite becomes a reason for anti-Semitism (Anti-Semitism in the Contemporary World, Ch. 1).”

C) Vayehi Sham LeGoy — Melamed Shehayu Metzuyanim Sham

- 1) **Vayehi Sham LeGoy** — The Gra explains that the word “goy” inspires the *derashah* because it signifies more than the word *am*. Like the word “*im*,” “*am*” means “a people who happen to be together.” “*Goy*,” on the other hand, entails a shared identity.
- 2) **Melamed Shehayu Metzuyanim Sham**

The danger of assimilating into Egyptian society inspired the Jewish people to strengthen their unique identity by living separately (Rashi/Ritva) and maintaining Jewish names and clothing. Chazal (Mechilta Bo 5/ Vayikrah Rabbah 32:5) tell us that this is why the Jewish people merited redemption.

Thankfully, we are now reunited as a people back in Eretz Yisrael. We need to make sure that we protect and maintain our unique Jewish identity here as well.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes: “The Hebrew word for distinctive, *metzuyan*, is derived from the same word as Zion. In modern Hebrew it means excellent. It signifies something that stands out from its surroundings. The word *tsiyun* means a signpost. Zion is not just a place. It is a way of life.

Jews are called to moral excellence, to have the courage to stand out from their surroundings, to be different and to be a signpost in the wilderness from whom others get their bearing and sense of direction. Zionism is not only a matter of where we live, but also how we live.

Judaism is the great counter-voice in the conversation of mankind. To be a Jew is to be willing to think and act differently, to swim against the tide. It is to be part of society but also apart from it, to live not only in the “now” but with the wisdom of the past and a vision of the future.”

D) Vanitz'ak- The Tefilah of the Seder Night

Many (mainly) Chassidisheh *sepharim* understand that we, too, on the Seder night are meant to follow the lead of our ancestors in Mitzraim and cry out to Hashem and pray for what we need. They add that *tefilot* on the Seder night have a special *segulah* to be answered. The Rebbe Riya'tz of Chabad emphasized the centrality of tefilah in general and on the Seder night in specific by pointing out that the reason we have not yet been redeemed is not because we lack Moshe to lead us, but because of the lack of proper prayer.

Many (mainly) Chassidisheh *sepharim* connect this theme (also) to the line in the Haggadah that introduces the Mah Nishtanah: “*kan ha'ben sho'eil*.” In addition to referring to the child who asks

the four questions, these *sepharim* explain that the words also hint to the fact that this is a point when we should all ask Hashem for what we need.

Rishonim also speak about the Seder night being a time of *tefilah*. The Maharil (Hilchot Haggadah) explains that we use specifically an egg to represent the Korban Chagigah because the Aramaic word for egg (*bei'ah*) also means *tefilah*. The Rema (Darkei Moshe 476:2) uses the tefillah aspect of the Seder night to explain why we wash our hands before Karpas.

The Seder night as a time of *tefilah* makes sense in light of the Midrashim that speak about the Seder night as a time when the heavens shower *berachah* upon this world (See Targum Yonatan Bereishit 27:1, Pirkei D'Rebbi Elazar 32, and Medrash Panim Acheirim 2:1).

In light of all these sources, it is strange that we do not find prayer in the Haggadah- a text that consists mainly of *shevach* and *hoda'ah*. Though we express our belief in future redemption, we formalize it as fact, not prayer. Why is this?

The explanation lies in the formulation of the (afore-mentioned) Rema who describes the *tefilah* on the Seder night as “speaking about Hashem’s glory and praise.” The re-experience of yetziat Mitzraim is meant to bring us to a higher level of appreciation for Hashem’s role in our lives as the one responsible not only for the great miracles, but also for our day-to-day existence and survival (See Ramban Shemot 13:16). This appreciation inspires us to focus on *hallel* and *shevach*. This focus is on a different (higher) form of *tefilah*. Our right to request things from Hashem hinges upon our true recognition of our dependency upon Him for our needs. The Seder night’s broad and meaningful *shevach* and *hoda'ah* is a higher form of *tefilah*.

E) Et Ha'dchak

What kind of pressure is this line referring to?

The Ritva explains that the Egyptians pressured us to convert to their cultural norms and ideology. The Jews indeed stopped circumcising their children and served *avodah zarah* to the point that Hashem had to speed up the redemption.

The Netziv explains that the Egyptians pressured us physically and emotionally to damage our self-esteem.

In a similar vein, the Ramchal writes (Mesilat Yesharim Perek Bet — Midat Hazehirut) that Pharaoh pressured the Jews with incessant labor to keep us from having the space to think for or about ourselves.

He explains that the Yetzer Hara uses this same tactic by constantly distracting us with trivial tasks so that we do not have the time to reflect properly on the more significant aspects of life.

F) The Chiddush of Keriyat Yam Suf

The Rambam does not have this section in his Haggadah, presumably because he believes the Haggadah is meant to focus on *Yetziat Mitzrayim* exclusively.

We include it because it helps us understand both the nuances of the miracles in Mitzrayim and the *chiddush* of the Yam Suf stage that completed the process.

Though the Tannaim debate how many miraculous aspects there were in the Mitzrayim miracles, they agree that there were five times the number of miracles at Yam Suf.

This is derived from the *pesukim* that describe the miracles in Mitzrayim as “*etzbah Elokim*” and those at Yam Suf as “*hayad ha’gedolah*,” a hand being five times more than a finger.

A finger points or indicates, while a hand shows complete and absolute control. In Mitzrayim, Hashem proved His existence and power. At Yam Suf, He showed His complete control and protection (to the exclusion of the Egyptians) over the Jewish people.

XIV) The Ten Makkot

Commentary to The Ten Plagues, The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah

“The plagues occupy the borderline, so common to the Torah, between the natural and the supernatural. Commentators have been divided between those who emphasize their miraculous character and others who have sought to provide a scientific account of the disasters in terms of a series of chain reactions to an initial ecological disaster, possibly the appearance of algae in the Nile, which turned the water red and caused the fish to die.

Which view speaks more compellingly to us will depend on whether we understand the word “miracle” as a suspension of the laws of nature, or an event that occurs within nature but that, by happening when and to whom it does, reveals a providential pattern in history.”

XV) Makat Bechorot

Makat Bechorot stands out from the other *makot* in a number of ways: 1) it is the only one called ‘*makat*’; 2) it is the only one we have special *mitzvot* that commemorate it; 3) it is mentioned by Hashem already in Parshat Shemot as the *makah* that will free the Jews from Egypt.

Makat Bechorot also stands out as the fourth *maka* in the group of ‘*B’acha”v*’ (as opposed to the first two groups that only have three). It is also set aside from the other *makot* in that Parshat Hachodesh (12:1-28) appears in between the warning about and the occurrence of *makat bechorot*. What is its unique significance?

Makat Bechorot was how Hashem accentuated the unique status of the Jewish people as his first born child. Hashem makes this point in His explanation for why He kills the Egyptian first-borns as punishment for not freeing the Jews (Shemot 4:22-23). Though the Jews were excluded from all the *makot*, our exclusion from *Bechorot* was meant to express our unique father-son relationship with Hashem.

The significance of the statement made by *Makat Bechorot* also explains why Hashem performed it personally and why the Jewish people had to sacrifice the *korban Pesach* in order to be spared.

XVI) Dayeinu

A) Hakarat Hatov

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Chief Rabbi Haggadah

“This series of praises, with the refrain ‘*Dayenu*,’ enumerates the kindnesses of God to His people on the long journey from slavery to freedom. The word ‘*duy*,’ meaning enough, echoes the phrase from Malachi (3:10), recited as part of the haftarah for the Shabbat before Pesach, ‘I will pour you out a blessing *ad bli day*’ which the sages translated as ‘until your lips are exhausted through saying, Enough.’

This song is a *tikkun*, a making-right, for the ingratitude of the Israelites in the wilderness.

At almost every stage of the way they complained: about the water, the food, the difficulties of the journey, the challenge of conquering the land. It is as if the poet were saying: Where they complained, let us give thanks. Each stage was a miracle. Each would have been enough to convince us that there is a providence at work in our fate.

As Hegel points out, slavery gives rise to a culture of resentment, a generalised discontent; and the Israelites were newly released slaves.

One of the signs of freedom is the capacity for gratitude. Only a free person can thank with a full heart.”

B) Thanking For EACH Thing

Dayeinu is a song that appropriately responds to the details studied in the Tzei U’lemad section because it is built to exhaustively emphasize the significance of EACH of ALL the things Hashem did for us.

The Dayeinu song emphasizes the full list of Hashem's kindnesses to us from the moment of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* till the pinnacle of the building of the Beit Hamikdash.

The specificity teaches us that we need to appreciate and express thanks for each step along the way. This is how the Chinuch (306) explains why we start the count towards Shavuot on the second, as opposed to the first, day of Pesach. We want to make sure that people have the first day to be fully focused on the celebration of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* (without yet thinking about what came next).

So much goes on in our lives and in the world around us that we often lack appreciation for how much we need to be thankful for. Dayeinu should inspire us to thank Hashem and those in our lives for each specific thing they have done for us (Have we thanked our mother/wife for the many things they do in general, and especially have done to prepare for Pesach?)

C) Sipuk Tzarcheinu

Interestingly, we mention *sipuk tzarcheinu* in addition to the *monn*. By doing so, we emphasize that what Hashem gave us was all that we needed.

Sometimes we feel we need things that we do not have. It is important for us to realize that Hashem gives us everything that we actually need.

We express our recognition of this in Birkot Hashachar when we describe Hashem as “*she’asah li kol tzarki*.” This is the only one of that series of *berachot* formulated personally (“*li*”) and in past tense because we want to emphasize that what we need has already been created by Hashem.

We make this point when we include “*Vedorshei Hashem lo yachseru chol tov*” (Tehillim 34:11) in our *bentching*.

It is just a matter of us recognizing this reality

D) Hichnisanu L'Eretz Yisrael

This message is critical in our times, when Hashem has blessed us with our return to Eretz Yisrael and an independent State of Israel, but things are still very incomplete. We need to express thanks for what we have already received by saying, “*Ilu hichnisanu l'Eretz Yisrael velo banah lanu et Beit Habechirah, dayenu!*”

XVII) Rabban Gamliel

A) Importance — Lo Yatzah Yedei Chovato

Surprisingly, Rabban Gamliel asserts that without speaking about the *korban Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*, one does not fulfill his obligation. Why is speaking about these objects so important?

The answer becomes clear when we appreciate the passage that follows Rabban Gamliel's teaching in the Haggadah (as well as the Mishnah and the Rambam¹): "*Bechol dor va'dor*."

This paragraph describes the obligation to not only recount the story of the Exodus, but to see oneself as having personally left Egypt.

By discussing the *korban Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*, we are able to transcend time and feel like we are experiencing Exodus ourselves. They are tangible *mitzvot* that allow us to not only talk about the Exodus, but to re-experience it ourselves.

B) Pesach

The *korban Pesach* commemorates Hashem's having been "*posei'ach*" over the homes of the Jewish people.

The verb *poseiach* is generally translated as "skipping over," (see Melachim I 11:21 where the word appears this way) which is why the name of the holiday is translated as "Passover."

This makes sense according to the way the Haggadah presents *Makat Bechorot*- that it was Hashem who personally passed through Mitzraim to kill them.

Sefer Shemot (12:23), though, describes a *mashchit* as the one who did the killing and whom Hashem prevented from entering the Jewish homes. If so, it would make sense to translate the word *poseiach* as 'protected' (see Yeshayahu 31:5), meaning Hashem protected the Jewish homes from the *mashchit* who was killing the Egyptian firstborns.

C) Matzah

Rabban Gamliel explains that the *matzah* commemorates our speedy departure from Egypt.

The problem, however, is that the Jews were commanded to eat it while they were still in Egypt, *before* the departure occurred! The Avudrahams learn from here that *matzah* has a second significance — it is the *lechem oni*, the "bread of poverty" that reminds us of our enslavement. (We reference this other symbolism at the beginning of *magid* when we recited *Ha Lachma Anya*.)

¹ Note that the Rambam's version of the Haggadah begins the paragraph of *Bechol* with a (connector) *vav*.

The Ramban (Devarim 16:3) believes that *matzah* symbolizes both aspects.

Tosafot explains that the poverty facet of *matzah* dictates its physical makeup (simple flour and water, broken pieces at the seder, etc.) while the freedom component expresses itself in how we consume the *matzah* (e.g. *heseibah*). We take an objective symbol of slavery and eat it as free men.

It is interesting that the *matzah* commemorates seemingly contrary parts of the story.

The Seforno (Devarim 16:3) explains that redemption was in exchange for slavery.

The Shela"h (Bi'ur Aggada, Mesechet Pesachim) explains that this extreme transition helps us identify the Hand of Hashem in action (like in the *neis* of Purim).

Both the slavery and the redemption are critical aspects of the story and of Hashem's plan for Am Yisrael. As Rav Yissocher Frand writes: "The message in this is that in order to be a free person, we do not need anything. If a person specifically needs "bread" as opposed to *matzah* to consider himself free, then he is not a free person. A person who NEEDS the physical pleasure of bread to give him his sense of freedom is not really free. Rather, he is a slave to his physical needs.

The Master of the Universe emphasizes that freedom has nothing to do with externals. It is entirely a phenomenon of one's internal awareness. I can eat the same piece of *matzah* that I ate as a slave and also eat it now as a free person. This is true freedom (Matzah: The Bread of Affliction and the Bread of Redemption)."

D) Maror

The Sefat Emet (Pesach 5653) explains that we eat *maror* and remember the bitterness of our slavery in order to emphasize that the bitterness was also part of Hashem's plan.

Though deeply painful, the slavery also benefited Am Yisrael in two ways:

- 1) It helped us enter into the covenant with Hashem ((Pesach 5632)
- 2) The bitter suffering strengthened us as a people and gave us the ability to survive similar situations in the future (Pesach 5647).

Rav Kook (Ma'amar Hador pg. 107) explains that the fact that our ancestors (and we) feel the bitterness of slavery demonstrated that the enslavement in Egypt was unnatural to us and ensured that we would one day be free.

A nation that is disgusted with its present state and refuses to reconcile with its current situation has the potential to change its destiny. Historically, the Jewish people refused to reconcile with exile. This was the foundation for our people's miraculous return to Eretz Yisrael after almost 2000 years.

XVIII) Bechol Dor Vador

A) Unique Goal: MY story

This piece depicts the unique goal of the Seder night. As opposed to the rest of the year, when we *commemorate Yetziat Mitzrayim*, on the Seder night, we are meant to *re-experience* it. *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* is our founding moment as a nation, and it is critical that we connect with it on a personal level.

At earlier stages the Haggadah located the relevance of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* in the fact that without our ancestors' redemption, we would still be slaves (the *Avadim Hayinu* paragraph) or that similar salvations occur in each generation (the *Vehi She'amda* paragraph).

This segment creates a stronger relevance and contrasts itself with the earlier attempts. It is “not only our ancestors who were redeemed, but we, too, with them.” “In every single generation” we experience *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and not merely similar salvations.

(See the Rambam's version of the Haggadah, which emphasizes that we leave *Mitzrayim* at this moment of the Seder.)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes that “There is a profound difference between **history** and **memory**. History is his story — an event that happened sometime else to someone else.

Memory is MY story — something that happened to me and is part of who I am.

To be a Jew is to know that over and above history is the task of memory. More than any other faith, Judaism made this a matter of religious obligation. Pesach is when we recount not our history but our collective memory as a people, where the past does not die but lives, in the chapter we write in our own lives and in the story we tell our children” (History and Memory, The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah (Essays) p. 38).

B) Ata/Dor Vador

The Rambam has the word “*ata* — now” as part of the formulation. This seems to imply that we relive the Exodus not by viewing ourselves as living in the past, but rather, as seeing *Yetziat Mitzrayim* as occurring now, in our time.

The formulation emphasizes generations (as opposed to years, days, etc). This is because each generation has its own types of challenges (as described the same way in *Vehi She'amda*) and its own way of seeing themselves as leaving Mitzrayim (See Olat Rei'yah 2:283).

The most significant, unique aspect of the Seder night mitzvah (called *sippur*) as opposed to the daily/nightly mitzvah (called *zechirah*) is that on the Seder night we are meant to (re-) experience *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

C) Lir'ot/Lehar'ot

The Rambam also has the text of “*lehar'ot*” (to show) as opposed to “*lir'ot*” (to see). One can understand the significance of this in the need to teach others as opposed to just envisioning ourselves.

Rav Jonathan Sacks understood this to be of significance for the storyteller as well: “Most texts of the Haggadah reproduce the language of the Mishnah:

‘In every generation each individual should see [*lir'ot*] himself as if he had personally left Egypt.’ Maimonides, however, writes that each individual should show [*lehar'ot*] himself as if he had left. This is because Maimonides holds that there are two separate commands of reciting the Haggadah: [1] to tell ourselves the story; [2] to tell our children the story. Seeing is part of the first mitzvah, showing is part of the second.

For us to feel the full impact of the drama we have to internalise it. For us to show it to others, we have to externalise it by, for example, reclining as we drink the wine.

In general, Judaism reverses the usual order of emotion and action. In other cultures, feeling leads to doing.

In Judaism, doing leads to feeling. We are commanded to act in certain ways in order eventually to feel in certain ways.

Thus, showing our freedom to others is one of the best ways of coming to see it ourselves” (The Chief Rabbi’s Haggadah (Essays) p. 29).

This piece connects to another of Rabbi Sacks’s piece’s, where he related to the importance of *na’aseh venishma*:

““The modern Western mind tends to put things in the opposite order.

We seek to understand what we are committing ourselves to before making the commitment.

That is fine when what is at stake is signing a contract, buying a new mobile phone, or purchasing a subscription, but not when making a deep existential commitment.

The only way to understand leadership is to lead.

The only way to understand marriage is to get married.

The only way to understand whether a certain career path is right for you is to actually try it for an extended period.

Those who hover on the edge of a commitment, reluctant to make a decision until all the facts are in, will eventually find that life has passed them by.

The only way to understand a way of life is to take the risk of living it.

So: *na’aseh venishma*, “We will do and eventually, through extended practice and long exposure, we will understand” (Covenant and Conversation, Mishpatim 5776).

XIX) Lefikach Anachnu Chayavim Lehodot

A) Lefikach

The word “*lefikach*,” which introduces the part of *hallel* sung as part of *maggid*, indicates that our *chiyuv* to say *hallel* at the seder is based upon the fact that we ourselves have experienced *Yetziat Mizrayim*, which was described in the *Bechol Dor Vador* paragraph that leads into *lefikach*). This explains why the paragraph refers to “the One who performed miracles for our ancestors and for **us** by taking **us** out of Egypt.” The *berachah* at the conclusion of the first part of Hallel also expresses this idea when it blesses Hashem for having redeemed “us and our ancestors” (note that we are mentioned **before** our ancestors!).

The Ran quotes Rav Hai Gaon who explained that we do not recite a *berachah* on the *hallel* said at the Seder because it is not a “*keriya*” (like the one said on regular Yamim Tovim), but, rather, a *shirah*. On the Seder night, we spontaneously respond to our salvation like our ancestors who said *shirah* after having experienced salvation and great miracles at Yam Suf.

B) L’hallel

Usually this series appears (ex- when we say it as part of “Korbanot” in the morning) with the ‘*chah*’ at the end of each word.

It appears differently here because the paragraph is not actually us giving praise; rather, we are explaining to our sons and those at the Seder that we will be giving praise.

XX) Hallel HaMitzri

A) General

The first part of *hallel* (recited before the meal) is called *Hallel HaMitzri* because it focuses specifically on *Yetziat Mitzrayim* (that we have just experienced). This is why we read up until the second perek — “*B’tzeit Yisrael MiMitzrayim.*”

B) Hallelu Avdei Hashem

This phrase is in the opening pasuk of *hallel* because it expresses our recognition and appreciation of the result of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* — becoming *avdei Hashem*. We sing to Him with this identity.

C) Beit Yaakov Mei’am Lo’ez

This phrase’s description of the Egyptians as a people of a foreign tongue reinforces the idea that the Jews merited redemption because they preserved their own language as opposed to that of the surrounding Egyptians.

Speaking Hebrew — *lashon hakodesh* — has always been a basic part of Jewish identity. We should take advantage of having returned to Eretz Yisrael and having experienced a “rebirth” of our ancient language by learning and speaking it.

XXI) Birkat Hage'ulah

A) Kein Yegi'einu...

Based on the opinion of Rebbe Tarfon and Rebbe Akiva in the Mishnah (Pesachim 10:6), this *berachah* has two parts: thanking Hashem for the *ge'ulah* experienced in the past (Rebbe Tarfon) and expressing confidence in the *ge'ulah* Hashem will bring us in the future (Rebbe Akiva).

The personal feelings shared by Holocaust survivor Rabbi Yonah Emanuel, *zt"l*, at the *brit* of his grandson powerfully express this idea:

"I would like to tell you what happened to me on this day forty years ago. What happened that day I was unable to share until now. I did not share it with my wife, not with my children, not with anyone — I was unable. Now for the first time, at the *brit* of my grandson — Aharon Chananel, I feel that I can tell the story.

Erev Pesach 1945 I went out early in the morning, as I had done every day for two years, for back-breaking work in the Bergen Belsen Concentration Camp. I returned at night, as I had every night for two years, broken and worn out. I was 19 years old, my father was no longer alive, my older brother Elchanan was no longer alive, my younger brother Shalom was no longer alive, and my younger sister Batya was no longer alive. Bergen Belsen was not a death camp, but rather a work camp. Jews died from the backbreaking work, the terrible cold, and the hunger and disease. Many hundreds of Jews died on each day during that period.

I went to my mother's barracks where she lay very sick and I sat beside her and began reciting the Haggadah. Though we did not have wine, we did not have *matzah*, and we did not have bread, there was one thing we had a lot of — *maror*. We had a tremendous amount of *maror* in our hearts.

I recited the Haggadah quietly, not knowing if Mother was listening or not. When I got up to the words "*kein Hashem Elokeinu veilokei avoteinu yagi'einu l'moadim u'leregaim acheirim haba'im likrateinu l'shalom, semeichim bevinyan irecha vesasim ba'avodatecha*" I felt for the first time that I did not believe what I was saying. Would any of us reach additional *moadim* and *regaim*? Would any of us come to see Yerushalayim? Would any of us ever be happy again? I broke out in tears and stopped in the middle of the *berachah* and the Haggadah. I was unable to continue.

Could I have imagined, that Seder night of 1945, a smidgen of what is going on here today, could I have imagined that I would get to Eretz Yisrael with my sister and my two brothers, that I would have the *zechut* of living in a Jewish State, that I would have the *zechut* of having a family and raising seven children, that after forty years I would be the *sandak* at my grandson's *brit* in Yerushalayim? If I could have imagined even a bit of this, maybe I would have been able to complete the *berachah* and the Haggadah

(Written up by Mrs. Miriam Vitman, his daughter (and my neighbor)).

Jewish history is full of lows. Nevertheless, we have survived and will survive forever because our faith in Hashem rooted in the past gives us faith in Him in the future.

B) Ge'ulateinu and Pedut Nafsheinu

Why do we need both formulations?

The Avudraham says that the first phrase refers to *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, while the second refers to the future *ge'ulah*.

Many Achronim understand the second phrase to be describing a different type of redemption — that of the soul.

The Netziv (Imrei Shefer pg. 44) explains that *pedut nafsheinu* refers to the internal struggles we have with our own *yetzer hara*.

Rav Chaim Soloveichik (Haggadat Beit Halevi pg. 189) understands the phrase as referring to one's self-image as free. *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* accomplished two goals: freeing us from servitude to others and helping us see ourselves as inherently free people. The former is situational and reversible, the second is internal and eternal.

Rav Kook (Olat Re'iyah) explains that freedom is a mindset. The Jewish People achieved this mindset through *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and Matan Torah.

In his Maamarei HaRe'iyah (157) Rav Kook elaborates that real slavery is a mindset (not a social question). *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* turned us into a people who would always be free and able to transcend whatever physical limitations others place upon us.

This is how Rav Oshri (Rav of the Kovno Ghetto) explained (Shut Mima'amakim 3:6:56 pg 56) why people enslaved by the Nazis should continue saying the *berachah* of *Shelo Asani Eved*.

XXII) Koreich

The Chizkuni (Shemot 12:11) explains that we wrap *Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror* together in order to connect between the three stages/aspects of the story that these three objects represent. *Maror* reminds us of the enslavement, *Pesach* reminds us of the salvation, and *matzah* of the *yeti'ah*. The linkage between the three helps us appreciate that all of them are important, significant for us to learn from, and part of Hashem's plan.

XXIII) Birkat Hamazon

A) Al Shehinchalta Laavoteinu Eretz Chemdah Tovah U'rechavah

It is interesting that we thank Hashem for Eretz Yisrael before doing so for Yetziat Mitzraim even though the latter occurred first.

One possibility is that we do this because we want to start with what the Torah (Devarim 8:10) identifies as the goal of Birkat Hamazon- thanking for Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Yisroel Reisman quotes another explanation in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav Moshe explained that sometimes we don't fully appreciate the stages of a process until we have reached the final goal. Only after reaching Eretz Yisrael (and thanking Hashem for it) do we fully appreciate the significance of Yetziat Mitzraim. This should obviously make Yetziat Mitzraim even more meaningful to us in Eretz Yisrael today.

B) Rachem Na Hashem Elokeinu- Bakashah in Birkat Hamazon

Though the central goal of Birkat Hamazon is *hoda'ah* (See Devarim 8:10), we also include *bakashot* (requests). As we genuinely recognize that Hashem is the one responsible for all that we have, we naturally want to ask Him to bless us with more. See Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah (Berachot 2b in the Rif) who use this idea to explain why we juxtapose *tefillah* to *birkat hage'ulah*.

C) Kimo Shenitbarchu Avoteinu... Bakol, Mikol, Kol

The word "*kol*" is a central word throughout Birkat Hamazon. The three words used here- "*bakol, mikol, kol*" represent the three formulations of the word *kol* mentioned in relation to the three Avot (Bakol- Avraham [Bereishit 24:1], Mikol- Yitzchak [ibid 27:33], Kol- Yaakov ibid [33:11])

The gemara (Bava Batra 16b) connects between the three *berachot* and understands them to mean that Hashem gave the Avot a taste of Olam Haba'ah.

Rashi explains Yaakov's words as him saying that he had everything he wanted. This was in contrast to Eisav (who said "Yeish li rov" [ibid 33:9]) who always wanted more than he had.

The Ramban (ibid) adds that the tzaddikim don't desire the life's 'extras' that they don't need (See also Kli Yakar ibid 33:9).

This is the intention of the "*She'asah li kol tzarki*" berachah we recite each morning.

The Sefat Emet (Vayishlach 5631) adds that one truly connected to Hashem, sees whatever he has as everything. He knows that he has everything Hashem wants him to have and his relationship with Hashem satisfies him. This is why we say later in Birkat Hamazon that "*dorshei Hashem, lo yachseru kol tov.*"

D) Baruch Hagever

The Sefat Emet (Parshat Terumah 5631) quotes his grandfather (The Chiddushei HaRim) who explains that the *pasuk* (Yirmiyahu 7:17) teaches us that Hashem's "being there" for us hinges upon the amount we rely upon Him.

XXIV) Kos Shel Eliyahu/Chamishi

The Mishneh Berurah (480:10) explains the custom to pour this cup and associate it with Eliyahu as an expression of our belief that just as Hashem redeemed us from Mitzrayim, so will He redeem us again by sending Eliyahu Hanavi.

The Gra connects the additional cup to a debate amongst the Rishonim (based on a version of the Gemara [Pesachim 118.]) about whether we need to have a fifth cup.

The Ra'avad (on the Rif [Pesachim 26:]) and the Da'at Zekeinim (Shemot 12:8) connect the need for this fifth cup to the fifth lashon of *ge'ulah* that refers to Hashem bringing us to Eretz Yisrael — *veheiveisi et'chem el ha'aretz* (Shemot 6:8).

Obviously, there is even more room to emphasize this “fifth” cup today as we celebrate the Seder having been returned by Hashem to Eretz Yisrael.

The Netziv (Shemot 6:7) links the fifth cup to the *pasuk*'s mention of the Jewish people knowing Hashem. This was *Yetziat Mitzrayim*'s ultimate goal.

XXV) Shefoch Chamat'cha/Opening the Door

The Rema (480:1) explains that we open the door because it is *leil shimurim* (and therefore we are not afraid of having the door open), and that in the merit of showing this faith, Mashiach should come and take vengeance on the nations.

We can add that we open the door at this point in the night (*chatzot*, right after eating the *afikoman*) because it is the time when Hashem struck the *bechorot* in Mitzrayim while protecting our own firstborns. By saying these *pesukim* and opening the door, we show our faith that Hashem will perform similar miracles again in the future. Our display of faith at that time of the night should be what gives us this merit.

Many ask why we need to open the door for Eliyahu Hanavi. Is he unable to get in without the door being open? The Nefesh Chayah answers that we open the door to show our belief that Eliyahu Hanavi visits and our interest in him doing so.

XXVI) Hallel Post Seudah

The Ba'al Hama'or explains that *hallel* after the meal aims to give thanks on a full stomach (see Ta'anit 25b that speaks about the significance of such a *hallel*). Having celebrated our redemption with a festive *yom tov* meal, we now channel the satiation and *simchah* towards Hashem.

The post-*seudah hallel* differs in content as well.

The Abarbanel explains that this *hallel* is future-oriented. Having garnered faith through experiencing *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, we are now able to express confidence about *techiyat hameitim* and *yemot hamoshiach*.

Another new aspect of this *hallel* is praise of Hashem for aspects of existence often assumed to be natural. The gemara in Pesachim explains that this *hallel* is called *Hallel Hagadol* because it describes Hashem providing sustenance for all living beings.

As the Ramban (Shemot 13:16) explains powerfully, G-d's use of clear miracles during *Yetziat Mitzrayim* was meant to help us appreciate His role in everything in our world. Essentially, the difference between "miracle" and "nature" is semantic, as both are the work of Hashem.

Post-*seudah*, we are meant to use the *Yetziat Mitzrayim* experience as a springboard to help us both believe in future redemption and see Hashem's hand in even the most mundane daily experiences.

XXVII) Second Part of Hallel

A) U'vsheim Hashem Ekrah

In the *Ahavti* paragraph (Tehillim Perek 116) of *hallel* (which continues with *Mah Ashiv*), we find the phrase “*u'vsheim Hashem ekrah*” in the context of both travail and sadness (“*tzarah v'yagon*”) as well as celebration of salvation (“*kos yeshu'ot esah*”). Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht, *zt”l*, explained that (spiritually) healthy and stable people are able to call out to Hashem in a consistent way in all types of circumstances.

Rav Goldvicht added that the recipe of how to achieve this type of stable consistency can be found in the Gemara in Berachot (21b) which derives the need to say *birkot haTorah* from the *pasuk* of “*ki shem Hashem ekra, havu godel leilokeinu*.” *Keviut itim leTorah* facilitates spiritual stability and a consistent relationship with Hashem.

The Baal Shem Tov connected this idea with the *pasuk* (Tehillim 16:8) of “*Shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid*” (which the Rema presents at the beginning of his comments on the Shulchan Aruch as the “*klal gadol baTorah*”). A person is able to remain calm- react equally (the same way) to all circumstances- if Hashem is before him. A person knows that their relationship with Hashem remains constant and Hashem is behind whatever is occurring.

The happiest people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything. Friedrich Nietzsche said it this way- “He who has a why in life can bear almost any how.” (Twilight of the Idols, Maxims and Arrows, 12).

Though the same phrase appears by both sadness and salvation, the former Slonimer Rebbe (quoted by the Tolner Rebbe quoted by Rav Frand) points out that there is an important difference. The *pasuk* regarding raising the cup of salvation and invoking the Name of Hashem is all one *pasuk*. When a person has witnessed salvation, he must immediately make a *l'Chaim*! However, the *pasuk* regarding bad occurrences in life ends with the words “troubles and sorrow I will find.” The words “And I will invoke the Name of Hashem” do not appear until the next *pasuk*. This implies that there is not total equality between the requirement to bless G-d for the good and the requirement to bless Him for the bad. When good occurs, it is easy to say “*Baruch Hashem*”; when times are bad, indeed we must try to say “*Baruch Hashem*“, but it is not in the same *pasuk*, because that is a very difficult thing to demand from a person and it requires (time and) effort.

B) Daloti V'li Yehoshi'a

The Sefat Emet (Sukkot 5650) explains that people are saved when they realize that they are poor and in need of salvation (See Devarim 7:7).

C) He'emanti Ki Edaber, Ani Aniti Me'od

The Rebbe Mikabrin explains that the pasuk teaches us that a Jew facing challenges is meant to believe that Hashem will help me reach better and happier times when I will speak about this suffering in past tense.

D) Ana Hashem Ki Ani Avdecha

A group of Gerer Chassidim approached the Imrei Emet with a question. They told him that the Sefat Emet (the Imrei Emet's grandfather) had told them that if they had *kavanah* when saying the *pasuk* of “*Ana Hashem*” in Hallel, they would see great salvation. They had been doing so while reciting the *pesukim* of “*Ana Hashem hoshiya na*” and “*Ana Hashem hatzlicha na*”, but had not yet seen the promised salvation.

The Imrei Emet smiled and responded that they had not misunderstood his grandfather's instructions. The *Anah Hashem* they needed to have *kavanah* for was not the *pasuk* of “*Ana Hashem Hoshiyah na*”, but, rather the *pasuk* of “*Anah Hashem ki ani avdecha*.” That is the best form of prayer.

E) Anah Hashem

People often mistranslate the word “*Anah*” in this *pasuk* as “please”. The word here is spelled with a heh, not an aleph, and means “to where” (See, for example, Bereishit 37:30).

The simple explanation of the *pasuk* is that it expresses the willingness to follow Hashem anywhere and the recognition that it is Hashem who decides where we are heading (See the similar usage of the word in Shemot 21:13 and the *derasha* of Chazal in the Gemara, Makot 10b).

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe explained the *pasuk* differently. Spending Pesach in Lakewood in 1940 after having escaped the Nazi occupation one month earlier he explained the *pasuk* as a statement that wherever I may be, whatever situation I may find myself in, I am your servant and I am ready to serve you.

F) Avdecha Ben Amatecha

Rav Menachem Mendel MiVitepsk explains that there is a difference between a slave who is the son of a slave and one who is not.

One who was born free and later became a slave is not a real slave. He remembers being free and longs to return to that state.

One born into slavery only knows this state. He saw his mother live a life of slavery and has that as his model. Dovid HaMelech identifies himself as this type of slave- one fully committed to *avodat Hashem*.

G) Kol Goyim.. Ki Gavar ALEINU Chasdo

It seems strange that all the nations praise Hashem for his kindness to us (the Jewish people).

Many suggest that the Goyim are better able to praise Hashem for this kindness because, having attempted to hurt us, they truly know just how much Hashem truly does for us.

H) Hodu Lashem Ki Tov

Rav Shlomo Kluger (Yeri'ot Shlomo) explains the pasuk to mean that in truth everything Hashem does is for the good. It is only in man's eyes that some of these things seem bad. In truth, things will end up being for the good, but only if man realizes and expresses this.

This is what the *pasuk* calls upon us to do. To recognize that what we are experiencing is for the good as Hashem's "kindness is eternal."

I) Yomru Na Y'rei Hashem

As opposed to the kohaniim who are described as "Beis Aharon," the y'rei Hashem are described without a bayit. (See also Tehillim 135:19-20). This is understandable because yirat shamayim is not something one inherited. It depends upon our individual effort.

J) Min Hameizar

Tefila “*min hameizar*” reminds us of the Sefer Shemot’s description of the Jewish people’s *tefillah* in Mitzraim- “*Vayiz’aku Vata’al Shav’atam el HaElokim min ha’avodah.*”

Rabbeinu Bachaye (ibid) and the Ohr HaChayim (ibid) both learn from that pasuk that tefillah at a time of suffering is the ideal form of *tefillah* and most accepted by Hashem. (See Ohr HaChayim who quotes the Min Hameitzar *pasuk* as well).

K) Anani Bamerchav Kah

The Rokeach (His Siddur) explains that man calls out to Hashem “*min hameitzar*” asking Hashem to help him out of his dire straits. Hashem answers him “*bimerchav*” by helping him see that he is actually in the clear and not in dire straits.

L) Odecha Ki Anitani

It is interesting that the pasuk of thanks also mentions the *inuy* (suffering). It implies that the thanks is in some way also connected to the *inuy*.

There are two ways to explain the connection based on two different ways to understand the usage of the word “*ki*”:

- 1) The Bnei Yisascher translates the word “*ki*” as “when” and explains the *pasuk* as teaching that when one experiences difficult times, he should praise and thank Hashem for all of the good times. Our appreciation for Hashem’s help in general merits His help in the current situation as well.
- 2) The simple translating of the word “*ki*” is “because”. Understanding the word this way implies that we thank Hashem for the *inuy* (suffering). The Be’er Mayim Chayim explains the *pasuk* this way and explains that suffering is part of our growth process. (This idea is similar to one of the explanations of why we eat Maror). See also Seforni (Bereishit 41:4) who sees this idea in Hashem’s explanation to Yaakov about the goal of *shibud Mitzraim*.

M) Ana Hashem Hoshi’ah Na

In addition to thanks, our Hallel also includes our request for assistance. True thanks to Hashem rooted in the recognition of his role as provider and savior should lead to us asking for His further assistance. So we find in Birkat Hamazon and the juxtaposition of tefila to ge’ulah in Shacharit and Arvit.

XXIX) Hallel Hagadol

A) Notein Lechem Lechol Basar

The Gemara (Pesachim 118a) quotes Rav Yochanan who calls this *perek* of Tehllim Hallel Hagadol (Rashi and the Rashbam connect the name to this *pasuk*) and explain that G-d's greatness is that he continuously provides sustenance for all of his creations.

More than creation of heaven and earth, greatness is providing for others. As Rav Yochanan himself explains in Megilla (31a)- "Wherever you find mention of G-d's strength, you find mention also of Hashem's humility (concern for even the smallest of creatures)."

XXIX) Nishmat

A) Eivarim Shepilagtah Banu, Hein Heim Yodu..

The Chatam Sofer asks how this line relates to the earlier part of Nishmat which asserted that "even if our mouths were like the seas etc.", we would not be able to properly thank Hashem. After we recognize that we are unable, why do we try to use our limbs to do so?

Rav Melech Biderman answers that it is only when a person tries to use others' ability to praise Hashem, that he is unable. What Hashem really wants is for us to use the limbs and ability He has given us to praise Him.

B) U'vimakhalot Rivivot Amcha Beit Yisrael

Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook (Comment in Olat Re'iyah 2:428) that after we mention the straight ones, tzaddikim, chassidim and kedoshim, we cliax with the masses of the Jewish people because these masses are the highest level and able to succeed even where the most holy individuals cannot.

We find the Jewish people mentioned as the climax in the berachah at the end of Hallel (earlier in the Haggadah) as well.

XXX) Yishtabach

A) Shevah and Hoda'ah

As opposed to the berachah of Baruch She'amar (which opens Pesukei D'zimra) and the Halleluka's which focus solely on hallel and shevach, the berachah of Yishtabach interweaves hallel and shevach together with hoda'ah. In this way the Yishtabach berachah summarizes Pesukei D'zimra which also mentions hoda'ah (in the Hodu pesukim and Mizmor l'Todah).

XXXI) Nirtzah

Nirtzah is not mentioned in the Gemara. Rav Dovid Feinstein (Haggadat Kol Dodi 21:1) connects it to the *halachah* (quoted by the Shulchan Aruch) that one should continue the Seder until he is overcome by sleep.

The Shela"h explains that the word *Nirtzah* shares the same root as the word “*merutzeh*” — we hope that Hashem is happy with the Seder night *mitzvot* we have fulfilled.

Many connect the word to the concept of “*ritzuy mei'avonot*” (cleansed from sin) the Torah describes as being achieved through offering a *korban*. We hope that we achieve this result by having offered the *Korban Pesach*/observed the *mitzvot* of Pesach.

Interestingly, the word is formulated in the passive. We are passive because we have done all that we can and, like the Jews in *Mitzrayim* on the first *leil haSeder*, we await Hashem's salvation.

Rav Kook (Olat Re'iyah pg. 299) connects the passive formulation to the fact that one who connects with and internalizes *ratzon Hashem* pursues what is right and good in a natural, spontaneous way, without the need for concerted or even conscious effort.

Rav YY Jacobson (Hamizrachi Tzav 5783) describes it this way:

We conclude the seder with the final and very strange step of “Nirtzah:” We acknowledge that G-d has accepted our Passover service. This is enigmatic. **All the other 14 steps of the seder connote an action of some sort:** Kiddush, washing hands, dipping a vegetable, breaking the matzah, saying the haggadah, etc. **What is the significance of this 15th step where we do nothing, but simply believe that G-d was pleased with our seder?**

In truth, this is the climax of the seder. One of our false ego's favorite lines is: “You are not good enough.” You commit to learning Torah twenty minutes a day, and your false ego comes and says: only twenty minutes? What can you learn already in twenty minutes? You spend fifteen dollars and buy your wife flowers; your ego says: that's all you spend on your wife?! You gave someone collecting money for charity ten dollars, afterwards your ego says: you are not good enough, why didn't you give him twenty dollars?

Any project we do, there is that little voice inside that comes and says: “Not good enough.” Remember this rule: This is the voice of the yetzer hara, of the negative inclination, of the false ego.

Of course we should always improve, and there is always room for improvement. But this isn't the intention of our ego. It has one intention--to make us feel dejected and take the life out of life. For how does it make you feel when you think "not enough"? Does it inspire you or paralyze you? Does it motivate you or crush you? It makes you a smaller person, it makes you think less of yourself; it makes you think that your actions are worthless. It drains you from your vitality and zest. It ultimately causes you to do less, not more. It has nothing to do with the truth or with G-d; it is a creation of a false ego.

The Jewish way must be different. Once something was done, we say: I have done the best I could have done in the moment. I trust that my sincerity will be seen.

XXXII) Chad Gadya

A) The Basic Message

The end of any process is the most significant part. Yom Kippur has Ne'ilah and the Pesach Seder has the Chad Gadya song. Why is this how we end the Seder?

There are many allegorical interpretations of the significance of the Chad Gadya song. On the most basic level, the message is that there is ultimate justice in the world. One who sees the goat devoured by the cat wonders if this is true and so at each stage. Those who wait and watch long enough see that each one is punished accordingly and it ultimately leads back to Hashem behind the scenes at the top of the chain. The Chad Gadya song expresses the emunah the Seder night has helped us develop.

B) Hope

One Little Goat, The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah:

"So, having earlier expressed the Jewish hope, 'Next year in Jerusalem,' we end our Seder night with the universal hope that the Angel of Death will one day be defeated by the long-overdue realisation that God is life; that worshipping God means sanctifying life; that God's greatest command is 'Choose life' (Devarim 30:19); that we bring God into the world by reciting a blessing over life.

I find it almost unbearably moving that a people that has known so much suffering can summon the moral courage to end this evening of Jewish history on a supreme note of hope, and write it into the hearts of its children in the form of a nursery rhyme, a song. For what we give our children on this night of nights is something more and greater than the bread of oppression and the taste of Jewish tears. It is a faith that in this world, with all its violence and cruelty, we can create moments of redemption, signals of transcendence, acts of transfiguring grace.

No people has risked and suffered more for a more slender hope, but no hope has lifted a people higher and led it, time and again, to greatness. So we end the night with a prayer and a conviction. The prayer: 'God of life, help us win a victory over the forces of death.' And the conviction? That by refusing to accept the world that is, together we can start to make the world that ought to be."