

הערות על ההגדה

NOTES ON THE HAGGADAH

PLUS IN-DEPTH ESSAYS ON
THE SEDER AND PESACH



2024/5784 Edition

What follows are my personal notes that I originally started preparing for our sederim for 2020, when the world suddenly found itself locked down and it was not possible to have guests for yom tov. After receiving requests for “notes on the seder” and “a few questions and answers which we could ask [at the seder table]” from some of the guests whom we had hoped would be with us, I decided to make my personal notes available for anyone who was interested. I have tried to translate things as much as possible, so as to make the notes more user-friendly. All errors are my own.

Based primarily on the Haggadah Shel Pesach Mesivta, the questions and answers below are what appealed to me and which I, likewise, thought our guests would enjoy discussing at the table – there are obviously many more questions and many other answers to discuss. The notes are written in a question-and-answer format as that’s how we’re meant to conduct the discussion at the seder and these notes are intended for use at the sederim. I have tried to include sources as much as possible. This is a work in progress, and I add a little more each year, as we all should try to add something new to our seder each year.

I hope these notes enhance your sederim and make them a more enjoyable experience.

More in-depth pieces that I’ve published on Pesach and the Haggadah can be found at the back of this book.

I welcome your feedback and suggestions: robsussman@gmail.com

Wishing you and your family a chag kasher v’sameach.

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Johannesburg, 5782 (2022)

(Updated 14 April 2024)

----FAST OF THE FIRSTBORNS----

Why do firstborns fast?

We don't fast in the month of Nissan except the firstborns who fast on *erev* (the eve of) Pesach and the *tzinuim* (modest ones) because of the matzos (i.e., the mitzvah of eating matzah) in order that they should enter Pesach with an appetite. (Meseches Sofrim)

It's a *zecher* (remembrance) for the *neis* (miracle) that Hashem killed all the firstborns of Egypt and saved the firstborns of Yisrael. (Tur)

On the night of Pesach on which the firstborns were saved, they were dedicated to serve in the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Temple). Much later, after the *cheit haeigel* (sin of the golden calf), because the firstborns sinned, Hashem transferred the *avodah* (service in the Temple) to the Levi'im (the tribe of Levi) – therefore, when we reach the night of Pesach, there is aroused upon the firstborns the accusation: why didn't they remain in their dedication (i.e., to serve in the Temple)? Therefore, they fast before Pesach in order to show that, from their side, they return in *teshuva* (repentance) and are fit to return to the *avodah*. (Rav Shternbuch)

***Makkos bechoros* (the striking of the firstborns) took place on Pesach so why don't the firstborns fast on Pesach?**

We move the fast to earlier because it's not possible to fast on Yom Tov.

What is the normal response to a *neis*? We make a yom tov and a simcha, a *seudas* (a meal of) mitzvah. So, why do we fast here?

It is like the fast of Esther; the Jews needed *rachamim* (compassion/mercy) like they did in the days of Esther and Mordechai. So, too, in Egypt, when Moshe came and said that, on the night of the 15th, the firstborn of Egypt would die, certainly the firstborn of Israel fasted in order that they would be saved – and, despite the promise that we wouldn't be harmed, nevertheless, we need *rachmei* Hashem. So, as a *zecher* (remembrance) to that fast then, so, too, the firstborns fast now. (Tur)

Why can the firstborns who are allowed to eat at a *siyum* (celebration at the completion of a tractate) continue to eat? Normally, for a *taanis tzibur* (communal fast), even though a person eats once, it doesn't mean he can continue to eat.

Normally with every fast, there are two things: a mitzvah to fast and an *issur* (prohibition) to eat – and all of this is on a *taanis* (fast) that is because of deprivation. But the fast of the firstborns is because of a *zecher* (remembrance) for a *neis* (miracle) – that they were saved from *makkos bechoros* (the striking of the firstborns), so there is no *issur* (prohibition) on eating, only a mitzvah to fast alone for *perumei nisa* (publicising the miracle). Since there is only a mitzvah to fast and after they have eaten, they can't again fulfil the mitzvah, therefore, it's permissible for them to eat the whole day.

---MATZAH---

Why is it *assur* (prohibited) to eat matzah on *erev* (the eve of) Pesach?

In order that on the night of the seder it will be dear to you. (B'hag)

In order that it will be recognisable that the eating of the matzah in the evening is *l'sheim* (for the sake of) mitzvah. (Rambam)

It's learned from the verse (Shemos 12:18), "In the evening, you will eat matzos." *Davka* (specifically) in the evening you will eat them, but not earlier! (Rokeach)

Why do we need two challahs for each meal on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

Because it says (Shemos 16:25), "They will gather *lechem mishna*" (two loaves of bread) – because the *man* (manna) didn't fall on Shabbos and instead a double-portion fell on *erev* (the eve of) Shabbos.

But Pesach complicates things...

The problem on Pesach is that the requirement to have two complete loaves clashes with the gemara's description of matzah as *lechem oni* (poor man's bread) – which implies a piece of bread (i.e., from a loaf), meaning a broken matzah.

The gemara (Brachos 39b) says that on Pesach:

מְנִיחַ פְּרוּסָה בְּתוֹךְ הַשְּׁלֵמָה וּבוֹצֵעַ

"Place a *prusah* (piece) inside a *shleimah* (whole [loaf]) and cut".

This is the source for dividing the matzah in half (at *Yachatz* – see below).

Rashi explains that the intention of the gemara is that we need a matzah *prusah* to bless on "*al achilas matzah*," but we need two complete matzos because of the blessing of "*hamotzi*" because Pesach is not inferior to the other Yomim Tovim that require that we cut two complete loaves – therefore, we need a total of three matzos.

Different ideas behind how these words can be understood:



NB: Without the *din* (requirement) of *lechem mishna* (i.e., requiring two loaves), it would be sufficient to just have one *prusah* (piece of bread) to satisfy *lechem oni* (poor man's bread).

Those who use two matzos consider the obligation of *lechem oni* (poor man's bread) to be a *miyut* (a limitation) – taking it out of the requirement to have two loaves that are *shleimos* (complete).

A proof for it only being two matzos is that the gemara (in Brachos quoted above) writes the phrase in the singular שלמה instead of שלימות.

Where do we see a proof from another Yom Tov that a part of something can be considered a whole so that one complete matzah with one broken one can equal two?

Succos! We need three walls, but two complete walls plus even a *tefach* (something the size of a handsbreadth – i.e., 3 – 4 inches) is sufficient!

What could be the problem with taking two complete matzos plus one broken one?

According to the Gra, this is not *derech aniyos* (the way of poor people)!

Why 3 matzos? They allude to....

Zecher (remembrance) *lachmei todah* (the breads that went with the thanksgiving offering) – a *korban todah* was brought for four reasons (Rashi Vayikra 7:12 – a sea voyage, travel in the wilderness, being let out of prison, and being sick and recovering) and our forefathers went out from slavery (i.e., prison). And they would bring three types of matzah with the *korban todah* (together with one of *chometz*).

For the *korban todah* (thanksgiving offering) they would bake three matzos from one *isaron* (*omer* measure). There are those accustomed to make three matzos for Pesach from one *isaron* of flour as a *zecher* (remembrance).

As a *zecher* (remembrance) to Avraham telling Sarah when the *malachim* (angels) came (after his *bris milah* - circumcision) to quickly make three *se'in* (measures) (Bereishis 18:6) into cakes. And it was Pesach when this took place.

Keneged (corresponding to) Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

Keneged Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael.

Keneged chochma, bina, and da'as.

Keneged machshava (thought), *dibur* (speech), and *ma'aseh* (action).

----SEDER PLATE----

Why a shankbone?

Because the verse (Shemos 6:7) says, “וּבְזָרַע נְטוּיָה” (with an outstretched arm).

Why an egg (instead of a piece of meat) to represent the *korban Chagigah* (yom tov offering)?

Zecher (remembrance) *aveilus* (mourning) of the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Temple). (Kalbo)

Because Pesach falls out on the same day of the week that Tisha B'av will fall out on (later in the year). (Rema)

NB: When the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Temple) stood and Pesach fell out on *motzei* Shabbos, they didn't bring the *korban Chagigah*, so some don't have a *beitzah* (egg) on the seder plate when Pesach falls out on *motzei* Shabbos.

Others argue and say, don't change, because:

...it makes it look like it's a *chov* (an obligation) and we don't offer *kadshim b'chutz* (sacrifices outside of the Temple).

...out of a *Hashash* (concern) that we won't put the egg on the seder plate in other years.

...the *korban Chagigah* was not *pasul* (invalid) with being kept overnight, so they would be able to bring it *erev* (the eve of) Shabbos and consume it *motzei* Shabbos.

Principle by which our family arranges the seder plate:

אין מעבירין על המצות “We don't pass over mitzvos” – in other words, everything is arranged in order of use (i.e., what will be consumed first). The karpas and salt water are closest. Next the matzah (our plates generally don't allow space for this), then the maror and charoses, and finally the *zeroa* (shankbone) and *beitzah* (roasted egg). (Rema)

----FOUR CUPS OF WINE----

Four cups of wine are *keneged* (correspond to)? (see essay in the back of the book)

1. Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Benuya: Four expressions of salvation (Shemos 6:6-8)

וְהוֹצֵאתִי I will take you out

וְהִצַּלְתִּי I will deliver you

וְגָאַלְתִּי I will redeem you

וְלָקַחְתִּי I will take you

וְהֵבֵאתִי I will bring you (arguably a fifth expression – see Cup of Eliyahu below)

2. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: Four cups of Pharaoh (the word כוס “cup” is mentioned four times in the dream of the *sar hamashkim* (cupbearer) and the subsequent interpretation by Yoseph (Bereishis 40: 11, 13):

וְכֹס פֶּרֶעַה, בְּיָדִי; וְאָקַח אֶת-הָעֶנְבִּים, וְאֶשְׁחַט אֹתָם אֶל-כּוֹס פֶּרֶעַה, וְאָתַן אֶת-הַכּוֹס, עַל-כַּף פֶּרֶעַה
בְּעוֹד שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים, יֵשֶׁא פֶּרֶעַה אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ, וְהִשִּׁיבָה, עַל-כַּנָּה; וְנָתַתְּ כּוֹס-פֶּרֶעַה, בְּיָדוֹ, כַּמִּשְׁפָּט הָרָשׁוֹן, אֲשֶׁר הָיִיתָ
מִשְׁקָהוּ

3. Rabbi Levi: Four cups are *keneged* the four kingdoms/exiles:

Bavel (Babylonia)

Pras/Madai (Persia/Medea)

Yavan (Greece)

Edom (Rome)

4. The Rabbanan: Four cups of suffering that Hashem will pour out on the nations in the future – see: Yirmiyahu 25:15, 51:7; Tehillim 75:9, 11:6.

Other answers:

They're *keneged* the four times that the name *Elokim* is mentioned in their redemption (Shemos 11:24-25). (Sifsei Kohen)

Elokim = 86 which is the *gematria* of *cos*

See also *Zera Shimshon* on how we only served 1/5 of the 430 years decreed upon us, which equals 86, which equals *Elokim* – and that is why we have four *zeisim* (olive size pieces) of matzah at the seder (NB: some have five *zeisim* of matzah at the seder).

Why do we *davka* drink *yayin* (wine)?

If the reason for the Four Cups would just be the four *lashonos* (expressions) of salvation, then we could say that we should have Four Breads! This is why we also need the explanation from the Yerushalmi that it's *keneged* (corresponding to) the four cups mentioned in the dream of the *sar hamashkim* (the cupbearer). (Shla Hakodesh)

The filth that existed in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) came as a result of Adam HaRishon – as the fruit that he ate was grapes (according to Rebbe Meir – see Brachos 40a). Why four? Because of the chesed of Hashem that we only had 1/5 of the 430 years decreed – i.e., 86 years. So, we have one glass for every 86-year period from which He redeemed us. (Toras Chaim)

Our Sages teach:

היין אומר שירה אלא על היין - "We only say song over wine." (Arachin 11a) (Shoshanim L'Dovid)

Why red wine?

Rebbe Yehudah says that the wine needs to have the taste and appearance of wine. The Rashbam explains that by "appearance," Rebbe Yehudah means that it must be red. Rava explains that the reason for Rebbe Yehudah's position is *Mishlei* (Proverbs) (23:31), "Don't look at the wine when it is red." (Pesachim 108b)

Zecher (remembrance) the *dam* (blood) from Pharaoh *shechting* (slaughtering) Jewish children to bathe in their blood [RS: Pharaoh was stricken with *tzara'as* (a spiritual ailment) and his magicians told him that he must bath in the blood of 150 Jewish babies in the morning and another 150 Jewish babies in the evening. (Shemos Rabbah 1:34)]

Zecher the blood of the *korban Pesach* and the blood of *bris milah* (circumcision) – because it was in the *z'chus* (merit) of these two mitzvos that we were redeemed.

Zecher makkos dam (the plague of blood).

Why don't we make a bracha on the mitzvah of drinking the four cups?

Rishonim (early authorities) answer that we don't make a bracha on them because we don't drink them *b'bas achas* (at one time), but with *hafsakos* (interruptions).

What if a person doesn't have enough wine for all four cups?

Drink what you have because the gemara says that each cup is a separate mitzvah, so the fact that you don't drink them all is not *m'akeiv* (i.e., doesn't prevent you from doing each individual mitzvah). (Rabbeinu Dovid)

Others say that we only say each is its own individual mitzvah to get around the danger of drinking/eating in pairs (see Pesachim 110a) – but otherwise, not having enough is *m'akeiv* (does prevent you from doing the mitzvah).

Some say that if you only have enough for two cups then:

Kiddush is *d'oraisa* (a Torah mitzvah) (as well as being part of the *d'rabbanan* mitzvah of the four cups).

And then the issue is whether to drink the second in order, thereby not passing over a mitzvah – or to drink the other cup with *bentching* (aka *birchas hamazon*, or Grace After Meals).

Why do women drink the four cups when it's a *mitzvas asech shel zman grama* (a time bound mitzvah from which women are normally exempt)?

Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi says because the women were also involved in this *neis* (miracle) – meaning they were also in *galus* (exile) and redeemed from it. (Kiddushin 29a)

There are Rishonim who say that women are obligated because it was in the merit of *nashim tzidkaniyos* (righteous women) that Yisrael was redeemed.

----MISCELLANEOUS THINGS AT THE SEDER----

Why do we lean?

It's a *zecher* (remembrance) of our being free.

It's part of the obligation to see/show oneself as if he went out from Egypt, "Remember that you were a slave..." (Devarim 5:14). (Rambam)

We do special/different things at the seder so that...

To arouse the children so that they won't fall asleep.

In order that the children will ask on the changes/differences.

Why do men wear a *kittel* at the seder?

It's taught that an *avel* (mourner) doesn't behave with *derech chirus* (like a free man), therefore, he wouldn't wear a *kittel* – so it seems that wearing a *kittel* is because of *derech chirus* (behaving like a free man). (Taz)

Because a *kittel* is the *begeg* (clothing) of *meisim* (dead people) – so we wear it on the night of the seder to subdue the heart in order that it shouldn't be arrogant because of the *simcha* (joy) and the *chirus* (freedom) of this night. (Taz)

When we were in Yerushalayim, during the time that we ate the *korban Pesach*, the special clothing that was reserved for davening in was made from white linen. Since we are behaving like it's *zman* (the time of) Pesach – therefore, we wear a *kittel*, which is a white *begeg* (piece of clothing). (Netziv)

----KARPAS----

Why do we eat karpas?

It's not our normal way to eat a vegetable before a *seudah* (meal) – we do so in order that the children will take notice of it and ask.

Some say that what the kids will notice is the dipping – not just the eating of the vegetable.

The first dipping (i.e., the karpas) is not a *shinoi* (change) – as it was the way to do so the entire year. The *shinoi* is the second dipping (maror in charoses) and it's upon this dipping that the children are meant to ask. (Maharal)

We eat the vegetable before the *seudah* in order to *patur* (exempt) the bracha on the maror that we eat after the matzah. (Tosafos in the name of Rabbi Yoseph) But Tosafos asks: the gemara says that it's so the children will ask, not to *putar* the maror. The Maharal answers that the *ikur* (primary purpose) is that the children will ask, but *Chazal* made it with a vegetable, instead of a fruit or something else, in order to *patur* the maror so as to not add an extra bracha.

What are we meant to answer the children about the karpas?

We are eating vegetables before the *seudah* because it is a *zecher* (remembrance) of the beginning of the servitude: לִקְשֹׁשׁ קֹשׁ לְתֶבֶן ("to gather stubble for straw") (Shemos 5:12). (Rokeach)

Dipping before the meal is the way of freedom, like free men who dip before the meal in order to draw their appetite to the food. (Maharil, Bach)

There isn't an answer to the child's question! The primary intention with the first dipping is to make changes in order that the children will ask and, thereby, come to ask on other things. Therefore, we make changes even where we don't have answers for their questions in order that, from this, they will ask on other changes! (Pri Chadash)

Why do we wash before karpas? (And in some homes, only the person leading the seder washes)

Background (this is a bit complicated, feel free to skip it):

Why do we wash our hands before consuming bread? *Chazal* (our Sages) were *m'saken* (enacted) washing hands before eating bread because of the connection to *terumah* (the food that was reserved exclusively for consumption by the Kohanim). Rashi explains that *stam yadayim* (ordinary hands) have a default status of *shnius l'tumah* (second degree impurity), even if they had not come in contact with any *tumah* (impurity), and, as a consequence, they *pasul* (invalidate) *terumah* because unlike *chulin* (ordinary food that everyone can consume), which only becomes impure to the second degree and no further, *terumah* can become impure to *shlishi l'tumah* (third degree impurity). So, *Chazal* were *m'saken* that we should wash our hands by *chulin* (i.e., bread) in order that people would become habituated in this.

NB: *Terumah, min HaTorah* (according to the Torah), is only by: grain, wine, and oil

The gemara teaches that anything that was immersed in liquid needs *netilas yadayim* (washing of the hands). Why? Because *stam yadayim* (ordinary hands) are *shnius l'tumah* and they *m'tamei* (cause to become impure) a liquid to become a *rishon l'tumah* (first degree of impurity) – because anything that can *pasul* (invalidate) *terumah m'tameis* (causes to become impure) *mashkim* (liquids) to be a *rishon l'tumah* (first degree of impurity).

Today, we are all *tamei* (impure) and our food is *tamei* as well so there is no obligation to wash for a thing that was immersed in liquid, but *rov* of the *Rishonim* hold for washing hands for a thing that was immersed in a liquid – and include it in the obligation from *Chazal* to wash before bread.

[Problem with *chulin* (ordinary food that everyone can consume) is that normally *stam yadayim* (ordinary hands) have no effect on it – it's the liquid that causes the problem. The *stam yadayim* make the liquid a *rishon l'tumah* (first degree of impurity), which, in turn, makes the *chulin* a *sheini l'tumah* (second degree impurity).]

The seven liquids are: blood (*dam*), water (*mayim*), dew (*tal*), wine (*yayin*), honey (*d'vash*), oil (*shemen*), and milk (*chalav*).

So ... why do we wash for the karpas?

So that the children will ask! This is one of the *shinuyim* (changes).

Reasons and hints for karpas:

Zecher (remembrance) to the *k'sones pasim* (coat of many colours) that Yaakov made for Yoseph and through which developed everything that resulted in our fathers descending to Egypt. Yoseph's brothers dipped the wool coat in blood (to make their father think that Yoseph had been eaten by a wild animal). (Rabbeinu Manoach) [We see from *Esther 1:6* that *karpas* means wool! (Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein)]

כַּרְפָּס is an acronym for: ס' פרך (meaning **60 myriad** did avodah that was **oppressive**) (Magen Avraham in the name of the Maharil)

It's an acronym for: כָּל־סוֹס וְרֶכֶב פָּרָעָה, "Every horseman of Pharaoh" (Shemos 14:9)

Since they drowned in the *Yam Suf* (Reed Sea), we *toivel* (dip) in salt water as a *remez* (hint) that every horse and rider of Pharaoh drowned in the sea (i.e., salt water). (Haggadas M'Taamei Yitzchak)

----YACHATZ----

Which matzah should we break? (One of my daughters once asked this at the seder arguing that we should break the top one because of the same reason brought by the Bach below!)

It's actually a *machlokes Rishonim*. The Tur says to take the middle matzah (which is our common practice) and so, too, the Shulchan Aruch. The Bach in the name of the Smag and the Rokeach says to break the top one because of the principle of *על המצות אין מעבירין* (not to pass over a mitzvah). Rabbi Eliezer Ben Yoel HaLevi says just the opposite of this – the *mitzvah rishona* (first mitzvah) is to bless *hamotzi* on the *shleimah* (complete) matzah – which is why we should break the middle one! And with the last one we make the *korech* (Hillel sandwich).

Why should the bigger half be for the *afikomen*?

Because it's the *ikur* (primary) mitzvah that's eaten last (in place of the *korban Pesach*).

Why do we hide it?

So that the children will ask.

And some say that we do it in order to avoid accidentally eating it in the middle of the *seudah* (meal) and winding up in a situation where we don't have any matzah left to eat for the *afikomen*.

----MAGGID----

What is the source for the mitzvah *d'oraisa* (Torah) of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over the going out from Egypt)?

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, “And you shall tell your son on that day....” (Shemos 13:8)

The mitzvah is *lav davkah* with children. It's also *bein adam l'chaveiro* (between man and his fellow man) – and even *bein adam l'atzmo* (between a man and himself – particularly *shiach* (applicable) this year when so many will be forced to make a seder alone, Hashem *yerachem*) – nevertheless, it's implicit that there is a special mitzvah to tell it over to children and, as we see from the Four Sons, to speak it over to each one according to his level of understanding.

What is different about the *chiyav* (obligation) of *zecher yetzias Mitzrayim* (remembering the going out from Egypt) on the night of the seder vs. all the other days of the year?

On the night of the seder, the *ikur* (primary) mitzvah is to tell over at length and with expanding on things, to increase with telling it, the *nissim* (miracles) and *nifla'os* (wonders) that Hashem did for us – and with a deep understanding that causes it to enter well into the ears and the heart. (HaPanim Yafes)

On all other days of the year, a man can fulfil the mitzvah of *zecher yetzias Mitzrayim* with merely thinking about it, but, on the night of the seder, he must speak it with his mouth. (Chasom Sofer)

On all other days of the year, there is no mitzvah to tell the matter over to his child, but on the night of the seder, it is a mitzvah to tell his child. (Minchas Chinuch)

There are three requirements that differ on the seder night:

--Must be question and answer format.

--One needs to tell over the development of the *neis* (miracle) – from *g'nus* (shame) to *shevach* (praise).

--One needs to give the reasons of the mitzvos of Pesach, matzah, and maror. (הגר"ח)

Why don't we make a bracha over the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*?

Because it's a mitzvah without a limit, that with *dibur b'alma* (mere speech) one fulfils his obligation, but all who increase in it are *m'shubach* (praiseworthy). (Avudraham)

Because there is no *shiur* (measure) and even with *dibur echad* (one word) one fulfils his obligation. (Rashba) (NB: Many commentators ask on this answer.)

Since we already mentioned *yetzias Mitzrayim* in Kiddush, therefore we don't make a bracha. (Rabbeinu Peretz, Avudraham and others)

We are *patur* (exempt) because of mentioning *yetzias Mitzrayim* in *Krias Shema* (at Maariv) and the brachos before and after it. (Shibali Haleket)

When we say *asher galanu* at the end of Maggid (just before drinking the second cup), that is a bracha on the mitzvah of *sipur* (telling over) because it mentions Pesach, matzah, and maror. (Shibali Haleket)

Hashem doesn't rejoice at the downfall of the wicked, but on the *neis* (miracle) of the *geula* (redemption), we do make a bracha, *asher galanu*. (Yalkut Yoseph)

Since the mitzvah is to tell it over to others, it is, therefore, dependent on their wanting to listen and, since they might not want to, the bracha would, in that case, be *l'vatala* (in vain). (Machne Chaim)

Since we interrupt the mitzvah with the *seudah* (meal) and other things – it's not done *b'bas achas* (at once), so we don't make a bracha on it. (Shevach Pesach)

HALACHMA ANYA

Why do we start with HaLachma Anya (this is the bread of affliction)?

This was *m'saken* (enacted) immediately after the *churban Bayis Sheini* (destruction of the Second Temple) to remind us that, when the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple) stood, a person had to be included in a *chabura* (a group) to take part in the *korban Pesach*, whereas now, in *galus* (exile), there is no *korban Pesach*. We begin this way to show that this *seudah* (meal) is not like the *seudah* at the time of the *Beis HaMikdash* – now we can invite people at the last minute because there is no *korban* for them to be counted upon and it's not a time where someone who wasn't included in the *chabura* can't eat with us. We then can continue with words of *nechama* (comfort) and a *tefilla* (prayer) that we should be redeemed. (Maasei Hashem)

Why is it written in Aramaic?

Because if we said it in *lashon hakodesh* (the holy language of the Torah), the *shedim* (demons) would hear our announcement, "Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat," and they would enter our homes. Therefore, we say it in Aramaic because they don't understand it. (Rashi)

This part was not in the arrangement of the mishna. Instead, it was *m'saken* (enacted) by the *Amoraim* (the Rabbis of the gemara). Therefore, they did it in Aramaic because everyone was familiar with it – and so [those who are unlearned] will come and ask in order that they are able to fulfil the mitzvah of *v'higadeta* (telling over). (Ritva)

If we said it in *lashon hakodesh*, the angels would understand and realise that we are praising Hashem – and they will come and accuse us, saying that we aren't fit to be redeemed. (Avudraham and Ritva)

Chazal (our Sages) *darshan* (explain) a midrash that we weren't exiled to Bavel until we ate *chometz* (flour from any of the five grains: wheat, rye, spelt, oats, or barley combined with room temperature water and left uncooked for more than 18 minutes) on Pesach. Therefore, they established it in the *lashon* (language) of *Bavel* (Babylonia) in order to warn children at the start of the Haggadah of the *cheit* (sin) that caused our *galus* (exile) and to learn to be careful about it. (Shibali Haleket)

This is the declaration to the poor so that they will enter our homes and eat from our tables – and the poor don't understand *lashon hakodesh*. (Abarbanel)

Why is matzah called *lechem oni* (Pesachim 115b) "poor man's bread" or "the bread of affliction"?

לחם שעונים עלי דברים הרבה, "Bread over which we recite (*onim*) many things" (i.e., Hallel and the Haggadah). (Gemara and Rashi)

The word *oni* is written without the letter vov, so it can be read *ani* (i.e., a poor person). What makes it *oni*? It's the way of a poor person to have only a piece of bread or a partial loaf, not a complete loaf. This is why we break the matzah in two and make a bracha (*al achilas matzah*) on the broken matzah because it's the way of a poor person to have only a piece of bread, as opposed to an entire loaf, to eat.

When a poor person goes from door to door, he's given a piece of bread, not a loaf, therefore, we call the matzah לחמא עניא (*lachma anya*).

The matzah itself is poor and thin, since it lacks salt, pepper, and hot water. The Maharal says that – by contrast – matzah *ashira* (wealthy matzah) has oil and honey which enrich the taste of the bread. *Lechem oni* is just flour and water. (Ohr Zarua)

It's the food of the poor since it is difficult to digest and also, if one eats a little, he feels satiated for a longer time than from *chometz*. (Abarbanel)

Some say it's from *lashon* עינוי, suffering or hardship. The Sifrei brings that Rebbe Shimon says that it's called *lechem oni* because of the suffering that they suffered in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt).

Because matzah afflicts the *guf* (body) and damages it; it's heavy and isn't digested quickly. In contrast, *chometz* is light and digested quicker. (הר"י ישראל)

Since the *issur* (prohibition) *chometz* on Pesach is even on a *mashahu* (a small crumb) – therefore it is a great hardship to make matzah in accordance with the *halacha*. (Azur Eliyahu)

***Rishonim* (early authorities) ask how we can say דִּי אֲכָלוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, “that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt” because our forefathers only ate matzah after yetzias Mitzrayim?! (See Shemos 12:34, 39)**

We don't find any place – not in the written Torah, not in the mishna, and not in the gemara – that the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians) fed the *Bnei Yisrael* (Children of Israel) matzah. And in fact, it says explicitly (Bamidbar 11:5), “We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic,” and (Shemos 16:3), “...where we sat by the meat pot, where we ate bread to satiation....” (See also Sotah 11b where it describes how Hashem would cause fish to enter the pitchers of the Jewish women when they went to draw water.) (Maharal)

We ate *lechem tza'ar* (bread of suffering) like poor people. (Ramban)

The reason we eat matzah is because our forefathers did not have sufficient time for their dough to rise. (Abarbanel)

It wasn't possible for the *Bnei Yisrael* to make it out of the *t'chum* (boundary) of Egypt in one day – so we wound up eating matzah in Egypt! (הר"י ישראל)

There are those who say we ate matzah with the *korban Pesach* in Egypt – and we see in the Mechilta D'Rebbe Yishmael that, with the going out from Egypt, they carried with them the leftover matzos and maror.

Why davka on Pesach do we say, “Whoever is hungry let him come and eat”?

The announcement is for the people in our house – because a man needs to be hungry on *erev* (the eve of) Pesach in order that he will eat matzah *b'tei'avon* (with an appetite) so we announce all who have starved themselves on *erev* Pesach in order to eat matzah *l'tei'avon* – let him come and eat immediately. (Rashi)

Some take it literally – noting that *leil* (night of) Pesach is a huge expense and the poor don't have what to buy for their needs – therefore, we say this, whoever is hungry and doesn't have what to eat, come and eat with us. (Avudraham)

We invite poor people to join us on the night of Pesach as a *zecher* (remembrance) for the *korban Pesach* on which several people (i.e., a *chabura*) would be designated. (הרמ"פ)

All who are hungry is a continuation of the *kinah* (lamentation) that we mourn after the *churban* (destruction of our Temple), and we say this is *lachma anya* (poor man's bread or bread of affliction) on this *seudah* that is made in sadness and not with *simcha* and with groups designated on a *korban Pesach*, as in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash* – and all who are hungry come, let them come and eat – since there isn't any *korban Pesach*, even one who was not designated to be a part of our group earlier may come and eat! (Maaseh Hashem)

Why do we announce this at our table and not at our door, with the door open?

It's an announcement for those in the home who have made themselves hungry the whole day in order to eat matzah *l'tei'avon* (with an appetite). (Shibali Haleket)

The *minhag* (custom) of the wealthy in prior days was when they sat to eat, especially on Shabbos and Yom Tov, they would open their mouths and call out in a loud voice, "Whoever is hungry, come and eat," in order that the poor going round from door-to-door would hear and enter without any shame and eat until they were satisfied. (שנים מי יודע)

Nowadays, the majority of our neighbours are goyim and doing so would primarily bring goyim. Therefore, we provide for the poor of Israel before Pesach [referring to the mitzvah of *maos chitim* "money for wheat," otherwise known as *kimcha d'pischa* "flour for Pesach"] in order that they won't need to go door-to-door. We still say this in order to not change the *minhag* that was done by our fathers. (Avudraham)

Why after Kiddush? Because, before Pesach, the poor have been given sufficient funds for the four cups and are able to fulfil the mitzvos of the day, so they are able to make Kiddush, but we make an announcement because, perhaps, there are a small number of poor people who lack a bit to eat in order to fill their hunger [i.e., they have for the mitzvos – wine and matzah – but they lack for the *seudah* (meal)]. (ברכת השיר)

Why do we say, "Now, we are here; next year may we be in Eretz Yisrael. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free?"

After we invite the poor to eat at our table, we say *hashta hacha* (now, we are here), that davka this year we say, "come and make the Pesach," and invite them to eat with us. But next year, when we are redeemed, we won't be able to say this because the Pesach can only be eaten by those for whom it was designated (i.e., the *chabura*) at the time that it was *shechted* (slaughtered) by the Kohen. (Yavetz)

Since we began the Haggadah with HaLachma Anya, and with this we remember the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt and the difficulty of their servitude – we conclude with *divrei nechama* (words of consolation) that next year we should be redeemed. (פירוש קדמון)

Why the double language – now we are here; next year may we be in the land of Israel. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free men?

The *derech* (way) is to begin by asking for something small and, afterwards, for something big. Therefore, we ask to be in Eretz Yisrael next year and, afterwards, add and ask to be free men. We see this by Dovid HaMelech (King David) who began by asking for *mechila* (forgiveness) for his unintentional errors (שגיאות) – see Tehillim 19:13 – then he asked on his intentional errors (מזידים) – 19:14 – and, afterwards, on his (errors committed in) rebelliousness (פשע) – 19:14. (Rashbatz)

Why does the paragraph end in *lashon hakodesh* (the holy language of the Torah), specifically the phrase: לְשׁוֹנָה הַבְּאָה בְּיָ חוֹרִין?

Because if it was said it in Aramaic, the goyim would hear this and understand that the Jews wanted to go out from their lands, and it would be a *sakana* (danger) because the Jews would have been thought to be planning a rebellion against the king. (Kalbo, Rokeach, and others)

Because it is a *bakasha* (a request) that Hashem will take us out from slavery to freedom, therefore, we say it in *lashon hakodesh* in order that the *malachei hashares* (ministering angels) understand our words and ask for *rachamim* (compassion, mercy) upon us. (Shibali Haleket)

Why don't we ask to go up now?! Why only next year?!

The intention is that next year, we will do the mitzvos of this night – Pesach, matzah, and maror – in Eretz Yisrael [which it would already be too late to do now, as the time for bringing the *korban Pesach* has passed]. (Divrei Yoel)

Why do we fill our second cup at this point?

In order that the children will ask why we are drinking a second cup before the seudah. [This is the question that the children are supposed to ask at this point – not the Mah Nishtana, see essay on The Four Questions in the back of this book.] (Rosh, Tur, Shulchan Aruch)

MAH NISHTANA (see essay at the back of the book)

Why do we use the phrase הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, it should be הַלַּיְלָה הַזֹּאת? (i.e., the masculine form of “this” instead of the feminine to match the gender of the word “night,” which is feminine)

This is the intention of the question mah nishtana: Why did the verse in the Torah change the gender:

וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם, בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה “I will pass through the land of Egypt **on this night**...” (Shemos 12:12)

Certainly, there is “on this night” changes above and beyond other nights – therefore, the verse changed the *lashon* (language) to *lashon zachor* (masculine) [as a hint to this]. (Haggadas Tzuf Amorim)

How can we say כָּלוּ מָרוֹר (only maror) [NB: not every Haggadah has this text]?

Tosafos doesn't include the word *kulo* (entirely or only in this context) because we eat other vegetables – at the very least with the first dipping (i.e., karpas).

What the *Rishonim* (early authorities) meant by *kulo* is that the maror is raw, without bread and without being cooked – it is entirely or purely maror.

How can we say on all other nights אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבְּלִין (we don't dip)? We do dip!

On all other nights, we don't dip even once before the *seudah* (meal), but on this night we dip twice before the *seudah*. (Ritva and Rashbam)

Why do we dip twice?

Once before the *seudah* (meal) *keneged* (corresponding to) what was before their going down – this is the dipping of the כִּתְנֵת פָּסִים (the coat of many colours) (Bereishis 37:31). This was the very reason that the *Bnei Yisrael* went down to Egypt!

וַיִּקְחוּ, אֶת-כִּתְנֵת יוֹסֵף; וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים, וַיִּטְבְּלוּ אֶת-הַכִּתְנֵת בַּדָּם *“And they took Yoseph's coat, and shected (slaughtered) a goat, and they dipped the coat in the blood.”*

The second time as a *zecher* (remembrance) of Pesach *Mitztrayim* (Egypt) (Shemos 12:22):

וּלְקַחְתֶּם אֲגֻדַּת אֶזֶב, וּטְבַלְתֶּם בָּדָם אֲשֶׁר-בַּסֶּף, וְהִגַּעְתֶּם אֶל-הַמַּשְׁקוֹף וְאֶל-שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת *“And you shall take a bundle of hyssop, and dip it in the blood in the basin [from the korban Pesach], and touch them to the lintel and the two doorposts.”* (Maaseh Hashem)

Why do we speak about reclining and eating אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסַבִּין (“we eat either sitting or reclining”) – but not reclining and drinking the four cups? Surely, we must recline for those, too!

There is no need to mention it because we learn that drinking is included in eating! (הר"י אלחאדב)

What were the original four questions of the mah nishtana? Which one wasn't asked? Which one do we no longer ask?

Originally, they asked:

שְׂבָבָל הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בָּשָׂר צָלִי, שְׂלִיק, וּמִבְשָׁל, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ צָלִי *“On all other nights, we eat roasted, boiled, and cooked meat, but on this night, only roasted.”* (Mishnah Pesachim 10:4)

They didn't ask about the reclining – which we substitute in place of the above question, which is no longer asked – because that wasn't a difference for them – that was how they normally ate.

Why doesn't the mah nishtana ask about the charoses and the four cups of wine?

Chazal (our Sages) were only *m'saken* (enacted) the four cups after they lacked the *korban Pesach* due to the *churban* (destruction of the Temple) – this is why the four cups aren't mentioned in the mah nishtana. (Sfas Emes)

We don't ask on charoses because we only ask on what was different between this night and other nights and on all other nights, they were permitted to dip in charoses or something else. So, too, with the four cups – on all other nights a person is permitted to drink, so this isn't a difference that is unique to this night. (Rashbatz)

The first two questions are on *d'oraisa* (Torah) mitzvos – matzah and maror; the second two questions are on *d'rabbanin* (from the Rabbis) mitzvos – dipping and reclining – in order to teach that we are obligated to be as careful with rabbinic mitzvos as we are with Torah ones. And they chose dipping and reclining because they occur at the beginning of the seder. (Maaseh Nissim)

There are three categories of differences: adding, subtracting, and exchanging. Adding is *keneged* (corresponds to) the dipping; subtracting is *keneged* the matzah; and exchanging is *keneged* the maror. We ask about reclining because it is a *shinai gadol* (significant change) and it is the *derech* (way) of a free man. Since all the categories were covered, they didn't ask any more questions. (Maaseh Hashem)

The *ben* (child) asks only on things that he sees the whole year – and he's used to seeing a cup of wine for Kiddush and a cup for *bentching* (aka *birchas hamazon*, or Grace After Meals). (Mishne Halachos)

What is the answer to the questions asked in the mah nishtana?

The *Rishonim* (early authorities) imply that saying *Avadim Hayinu* ("We were slaves...") answers each and every question. Everything that we do is to teach about the going out from slavery to freedom.

Avadim Hayinu only answers the question about why we recline, but the other questions are only answered later with the statement from Rabban Gamliel regarding Pesach, matzah, and maror. (Shibali Haleket)

AVADIM HAYINU

Requirement of the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over the going out):

We need to begin with our *g'nus* (shame) and end with our *shevach* (praise). There is a *machlokes* (argument) in the gemara (Pesachim 116a) as to what we should say to fulfil the *g'nus*: Rav says that we begin with *הָיוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ עֹבְדֵי עֲוֹלָה וְזָרָה הָיוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ* (initially, our forefathers were idol worshippers). Shmuel says that we begin with *עֲבָדִים הָייִנוּ* (we were slaves). The Ritva maintains that they agree that both need to be said, it's only a question of which should come first.

What's the *shevach* (praise) with which we end?

We say *Avadim Hayinu* (we were slaves) – Hashem took us out from there, and *Ovdei Avodah Zarah* (our forefathers were idol worshippers) as the *g'nus* – and we conclude with the *shevach*: וְעַכְשָׁיו לְקָרְבָנוּ הַמְקוֹם לְעִבְדוֹתוֹ, “Hashem drew us close to His service”. (Rambam)

It's a *shevach* of Hashem (i.e., not of us)! This refers to the bracha of גָּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל (that we say at the end of Maggid, right before making the bracha of *b'rei p'ri hagafen* and drinking the second cup). (Midrash Sechel Tov)

Would we really still be slaves to Pharaoh?

We see empires rise and fall, but all of this is done for our sake, so that we will exist forever, but without [our going out], Egypt would have never fallen – ever! (Imrei Sefer)

The only reason that we see nations being freed from the yoke of other nations is because of the influence of *yetzias* (the going out of) Yisrael from Mitzrayim. (Ber Yoseph)

I've heard it said in the name of Rabbi Reuven Leuchter that if Hashem says that we would still be slaves, then that is what the reality would be – finished!

בְּלִנּוּ חֲכָמִים, בְּלִנּוּ גְבוּרִים, בְּלִנּוּ זְקֵנִים – what's the difference between *chochomim* (wise men), *n'vonim* (men of understanding), and *z'keirim* (elders)?

Chochomim – those who understand first principles. *N'vonim* – those who can take out from the *chochma* (wisdom), learning a thing from a thing. *Z'keirim* – one who acquires knowledge from his challenges. Torah is the level that is above everything, and it must be received from an *ish ne'eman* (a faithful man). (Maharal)

Why does it need to say that even *chochomim* (wise men) are obligated in the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over the going out from Egypt) – since when is *chochma* (wisdom) a reason for someone being exempt from mitzvos?

We find that *Shevet* (tribe) Levi was not enslaved in Egypt because of *rov ma'alsam and chochmasam* (because of their great virtue and wisdom). Therefore, one could think that *anshei ma'alah* (virtuous men) would not be obligated in the mitzvah! (Chukas HaPesach)

One might have thought that it only applies to [those who are unlearned], but that a *Talmud chochom* (Torah scholar) is exempt because what benefit is it to him to tell it over. (Etz Chaim)

See essay at the end of the book: *How Do We Fulfil the Mitzvah of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim?*

Why is someone who speaks at length about *yetzias Mitzrayim* (the going out from Egypt) *m'shubach* (praiseworthy)?

The way of the world is that when a miracle is done for someone, he tells it over a lot and gets very excited about it, but when it's done for others, he only tells it over a couple of times and doesn't elaborate. Therefore, it's evident from a person's words that one who increases and elaborates on

yetzias Mitzrayim is connected to the miracle and this is because his forefathers stood at Har Sinai and had this *neis* (miracle) done for them. Therefore, he is *m'shubach*. (Maaseh Ydei Yotzer)

RABBIS IN BNEI BRAK (see essay at the back of the book)

Why does the Haggadah bring the incident of the Rabbis in Bnei Brak?

It serves as proof that even *chochomim* (wise men) and *z'keirim* (elders) are commanded. (Ritva)

It serves as proof that all who elaborate are *m'shubach* (praiseworthy). (Ritva)

The Abarbanel asks why did these *Tannaim* (Rabbis of the mishna period) push off their sleep to stay up all night and discuss *yetzias Mitzrayim*?

Because this night is *leil shimurim* (a protected night), the *Bnei Yisrael* didn't sleep at all this night when they went out from Egypt because the first part of the night they were involved with making matzos and Pesach, and the latter part of the night they were involved with the *yetzia* (going out) [RS: It's unclear what he means by this, as it's clear from the Torah that we went out in the morning and were, in fact, forbidden from leaving our homes that night] – and, according to the obligation that a man must see/show himself as if he went out from Egypt, therefore, they did like the actions of those who went out from Egypt, involved with the mitzvos of matzah, maror, and *zecher* (remembrance) *korban Pesach* as their forefathers did in Egypt. And, afterwards, the entire rest of the night they talked about the *yetzia*. (Abarbanel)

There was not *tza'ar* (suffering) for them in this (i.e., staying up all night discussing the *yetzia*) because the mitzvah was very dear to them and the time was very short for them, so they did not perceive it until sunrise. (Maharal)

They wouldn't have stopped discussing it if their students hadn't come! (Vayagid Shmuel)

In Pesachim (120b – see also Brachos 9a), Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and Rabbi Akiva have a *machlokes* over when the *korban Pesach* can be eaten until. Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah holds that just as the firstborns were killed at midnight (during *makkos bechoros*), so, too, the *korban Pesach* had to be finished by midnight. Rabbi Akiva holds that the original *korban Pesach* was eaten *b'chipazon* (in haste), so we have until the time of haste, which Rashi explains is until the *boker* (morning) and the Rashbam explains the *lashon* of *chipazon* refers to their going out from Egypt in haste, which he says took place at *amud hashachar* (dawn), which he bases on the *pasuk* (Shemos 12:22), *לֹא תֵצֵאוּ אֶיֶשׁ מִפֶּתַח בֵּיתוֹ עַד-בֹּקֶר*, “No man shall go out from the door of his house until morning.” Rava says that according to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, one who consumes matzah after midnight (i.e., the *afikomen*) has not fulfilled his obligation. (The gemara explains that Rava says this explicitly lest someone think that the timeframe which was the subject of the *machlokes* only applied to the *korban Pesach* and not to the matzah we eat as a *zecher* for it.) Interestingly, we see that the group of five rabbis in Bnei Brak – which included both Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah – who were together for the seder followed the opinion of Rabbi Akiva and stayed up all night discussing *yetzias Mitzrayim* and not just until *chatzos* (midnight). [RS]

YETZIAS MITZRAYIM B'LAYLA

How old was Elazar ben Azaryah?

He was 18 years old and since he was appointed to replace Rabban Gamliel as *Nasi* (Prince), a miracle was done for him and 18 rows of his hair became white in order that he would look old and be fit for being the *Nasi* [seemingly, the only thing he lacked was age – as he was chosen to be the *Nasi* because of his wisdom, his lineage, and his wealth]. (Brachos 12b, 27b, 28a) (See essay at the back of this book)

Why was Ben Zoma able to convince the *Chochomim*, but Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was not?

Under Rabban Gamliel's tenure as *Nasi*, a guard was placed at the door to the *beis medrash* (study hall) and only the very best of the best students were allowed to come inside. On the day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah assumed the position of *Nasi*, however, he removed this guard, and every student was given permission to enter. So many students came that they needed to add many more benches – according to one opinion, 400 more benches, and according to another opinion, 700 more benches.

The result of allowing in all these students was an entire *mesechta* full of teachings – *mesechta Eduyot* (lit: Testimonies) – that was transmitted and recorded. In fact, so great was the learning that took place on that day that there was no halacha that hung in doubt and which was not fully explained. Rashi comments (Brachos 12b) that it was this very same day that Ben Zoma came to the *beis medrash* and made his argument that we find in our Haggadah regarding the obligation to recall the exodus from Egypt each and every night!

Rabbi Shmuel Alter (Likutei Vassar Likutei on Avos 4:1 and Brachos 12b) explains that the statement made by Ben Zoma that day which convinced the Sages to listen to Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was the one found in Pirkei Avos 4:1, "Ben Zoma said, 'Who is wise? He who learns from every man...'", thus convincing them to accept the argument of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah despite his tender years. (*With thanks to Aron Ziegler for showing me this.*)

BARUCH HAMAKOM, BARUCH HU

Why do we say בָּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם. בָּרוּךְ הוּא, "Blessed is The Place (i.e., Hashem), Blessed is He"?

We need to make a bracha on the Haggadah like every positive commandment and the bracha of *asher galanu* at the end of Maggid is the sealing of the bracha – and we open the Haggadah with Baruch (i.e., *Baruch HaMakom*) in accordance with the rule of a *bracha arucha* (a long bracha), which opens with Baruch and gets sealed with Baruch. (Shibali Haleket)

Saying *Baruch HaMakom, Baruch Hu* is *birchas haTorah* (blessing over the Torah) before we *darshan pasukim* (explain verses). (Rokeach)

FOUR SONS (see essay at the back of this book)

Chochom is not the opposite of *Rasha*. *Tam* is not the opposite of a *Sh'eino yodei'a lishol*.

For each, there are two possibilities: ask or not ask. And, if he asks, three ways: (1) to ask in order to show his wisdom and knowledge; (2) to ask since he doesn't believe in the thing and mocks; (3) to ask since he doesn't know the thing.

Chochom – asks in order to show his wisdom

Rasha – asks in order to mock

Tam – asks because he doesn't know

Sh'eino – doesn't ask (Abarbanel)

Why does it call him a *Chochom* and not a *Tzaddik*?

Because in order to overcome the *Rasha*, it's not enough to be a *Tzaddik*, he needs to also be a *Chochom*; he needs to know how to recognize the cunning of the *Rasha* and to reveal the mask on his face. (בהגדת מהר"י ט"ב)

The question/answer of the *Chochom*...

Rashi explains that the *Chochom* asks why we eat the *korban Chagigah* before we eat the *korban Pesach*? The Pesach is the *ikur* (primary) mitzvah and it should be eaten first! The father answers, but since we can't add anything for dessert after the *korban Pesach*, we are not able to taste anything after eating the *korban Pesach* – therefore, we eat the *korban Chagigah* first, before the *korban Pesach*.

The *Chochom* asks why do we give the children roasted grain and nuts before the *seudah* (meal)? And the father answers that this night is different from all other nights because we are not able to eat anything after the *seudah* because אֵין מַפְטִירִין אַחֲרֵי הַפֶּסַח אֶפִּיקוֹמֵן, “we don't add afikomen (dessert) after the *korban Pesach*” - in order that the taste of the *korban Pesach* and the matzah will remain in our mouth. (Rashbatz)

What is meant by הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים (*eidus, chukim, and mishpatim*)?

Eidus = Things that have a reason that they testify on the redemption from Egypt – like eating matzah and maror – *zecher* (remembrance) that the Egyptians embittered their lives.

Chukim = *Hilchos* (laws of) Pesach that don't seem to have an agreed reason – for example the *issur* (prohibition) of breaking the bones of the *korban Pesach*.

Mishpatim – Like the *issur* (prohibition) of an *aral* (uncircumcised man) eating from the *korban Pesach* and so other *hilchos* (laws of) *chometz* and matzah (Ritva)

The *chochom* is asking on each and every mitzvah – why the Bnei Yisrael were commanded in it – and the *chochom* wants to know the reason for everything. (Maharal)

FROM ROSH CHODESH

Why do we say **יָכוֹל מֵרֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ**, “one might think that the obligation begins from Rosh Chodesh Nissan,” after the Four Sons?

After we say that you must open the discussion for the *Sh'eino yodei'a*, we then say that you don't need to open it from Rosh Chodesh. (Rashi)

Since we brought the *pasuk* (verse) **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, בְּיוֹם הַהוּא**, “You shall tell your son, on that day,” we *darshen* (explain) it. (Ritva)

The *Sh'eino yodei'a* needs the matzah and maror in front of him to understand. Therefore, it's *davka* on this night, which is not the case regarding the other sons. (Abarbanel)

It's all an answer on the questions of mah nishtana. The question is why are we obligated in so many mitzvos on this night, which is not the case on other nights (rather all mitzvos are during the day!) and on this, the Haggadah brings the *drasha* (explanation) that we learn ‘the night’ from **בְּיוֹם הַהוּא**, therefore, this night doesn't have a din of night at all, but of day, so we do all of these things on this night. (Gra)

Why might we think that already from Rosh Chodesh we should start telling our children?

Since we are obligated to discuss *hilchos* (laws of) Pesach before the *Chag*, therefore, one might think that he is also obligated to open the discussion with his son. (Rashi and others)

Because the verse (Shemos 13:5) says **וְעָבַדְתָּ אֶת-הָעֶבֶדָה הַזֹּאת, בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה**, “...you shall do this avodah (service) in this month.” (Ritva)

Since it says **הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם, רִאשׁוֹן חֹדְשֵׁים**, “This month will be for you the first of the months...” – it was the first mitzvah that we were commanded and there it says to them (in the next verse) the mitzvah of taking the *korban Pesach*. (Birchas HaShir)

Why might we think that we are obligated in telling over the going out **יָכוֹל מִמָּוֶעַד יוֹם** (from during the daytime – i.e., *erev* (the eve of) Pesach on the 14th)?

Because the *zman* (time) for *shechting* (slaughtering) of the *korban Pesach* was *erev* Pesach and it was a *moed* (festival) for our going out from Mitzrayim. Therefore, there is a place to say that that's also the time that we are obligated in the Haggadah. (Rashi)

We *shecht* (slaughter) the *korban Pesach* starting from midday on the 14th – and the Torah calls the 14th *yom rishon* (the first day) (Shemos 12:15 and Rashi explaining what “yom rishon” refers to) – the time from which we must remove leaven from our homes. We find that the *avodah* (service) begins from **יָכוֹל מִמָּוֶעַד יוֹם** on the 14th, therefore, we might think that the mitzvah of Haggadah is also from that time. (Ritva)

Wherever we find the *lashon* (language) **בְּיוֹם הַהוּא** (“on that day”), it's implicit that the night is connected to the day that comes before it – therefore, we might think to say that we are obligated from **יָכוֹל מִמָּוֶעַד יוֹם** (from during the daytime). (Malbim)

IN THE BEGINNING, OUR FOREFATHERS WERE IDOL WORSHIPPERS

Who were the forefathers that were *ovdei avodah zarah* (worshipped idols)?

Our forefathers in Mitzrayim. (Rashbatz)

Terach (Avraham's father) and our forefathers. (Rambam)

Both. (Rokeach)

Why weren't we in Egypt 400 years when Avraham was told that we would be?

The count began with the birth of Yitzchak because from then the Avos (forefathers) were in a land that was not theirs. (Bereishis Rabbah 44:18)

At the time that Israel went out from Egypt, Uzza, the *Sar* (Ministering Angel) of Egypt, came before Hashem and said, "*Ribono Shal Olam* (Master of the Universe), this nation that You took out from Egypt, I have a claim against them. Bring Michael, the *Sar* of theirs, and let him enter into a court case with me." At this time, Hashem said to Michael, "Come and enter into a court case with him." Uzza came and said, "*Ribono Shal Olam*, You decreed on this nation that they would be enslaved under the hand of my nation for 400 years and, yet, they have only served 86 years, from the time that Miriam was born. And it still has not reached the time for them to go out. Give me permission and return them under my nation until 400 years have passed – just as You *kayim* (exist), so, too, Your oath should be *kayemes* (made to exist, fulfilled)! [RS: *The Bnei Yisrael were only in Egypt 210 years. They were not enslaved for the first 94 years, until the last of Yoseph's brothers, Levi, had died. Although the slavery was 116 years, we find that it only became bitter during the last 86 years, which is why Miriam was named as such (Rashi to Shir HaShirim 2:13), from the root mar, meaning bitter.*] At this moment, Hashem turned to Michael and said, "Answer him!" Immediately, Michael was silent. At this moment, Hashem answered Uzza and said to him, "There is to Me *limmud zchus* (a way to judge favourably) on My child. Nothing requires My son (i.e., Israel) to be a slave, but because of one thing that Avraham, My beloved, said before Me, 'How shall I know that I am to possess it?' (Bereishis 15:8) And I said to him, 'Know that your offspring will be strangers.' I said nothing about 'in the land of Egypt', rather, I said 'In a land that is not theirs.' It is revealed and known that from the birth of Yitzchak, they were made strangers, and, therefore, already completed 400 years. It's not for you to enslave My child at all." (Yalkut)

The slavery at night completed the count (i.e., the 210 years was really double because the *Bnei Yisrael* served by day AND by night). (Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer)

In the remaining exiles, Israel will pay what was lacking from the 400 years in the Egyptian exile. (Toras Chaim)

There is a midrash that says that Hashem considered the *tza'ar* (suffering) of Avraham and Sarah when they didn't have children – which was 100 years for Avraham and 90 years for Sarah – which makes up the missing 190 years. (Bifnei Dovid)

How do we calculate the 210 years?

There's a *kabbalah* (a received tradition) that Yocheved was 130 years old when Moshe was born, and she was born as they went down to Egypt. And Moshe was 80 years old when he stood before Pharaoh. (Shemos 7:7) (Rashbatz) [NB: For the 190 years prior to this (making a total of 400) – Yitzchak was 60 years old when Yaakov was born (Bereishis 25:26) and Yaakov was 130 years old when he appeared before Pharaoh (Bereishis 47:9) – i.e., when the *Bnei Yisrael* arrived in Egypt.]

The *pasuk* (verse) says (Shemos 12:40) that the *Bnei Yisrael* dwelled in Egypt 430 years – how is this possible?

Yisrael was in Egypt 210 years. Five years before Yaakov came to Egypt, Menashe and Ephraim were born to Yoseph – making for a total of 215 years. The *Mitzrim* (Egyptians) enslaved us by day and by night (See Shemosh Rabbah 18:9 – the same midrash that famously says that they gave men, women's work and women, men's work – see also Sotah 11b), so we need to count each and every day twice (i.e., they worked us double) = 430 years. (Rabbi Elazar ben Aruch)

Hashem told Avraham 400 years, but the Torah says that we were there 430 years?

Hashem was afraid of informing Avraham about the 30 years, so he said to him (Bereishis 15:16), "The fourth generation will return" – a hint that they wouldn't return immediately at the end of 400 years, rather they would be prevented from doing so until the fourth generation, which was another 30 years. (Ramban)

The Bnei Yisrael sinned in Egypt – nullifying the mitzvah of *bris milah* (circumcision) [RS: The Beis HaLevi says that they did the mitzvah of *bris milah*, but then nullified it afterwards by stretching the *orlah* back in place] and worshipping idols – so Hashem added 30 years. (Ramban)

Why were the Egyptians punished when Hashem decreed on the Jews that they would be enslaved?

It wasn't decreed that we would be strangers in Egypt *davka*, just "a land that was not [ours]." They chose to fulfil the decree, so they were punished. (Zohar)

Each and every Egyptian caused pain and did evil to Israel. If the Egyptians wanted to not do evil, the choice was in their hands. (Rambam)

The *Mitzrim* (Egyptians) were wicked and deserved the *makkos* (plagues) that were done to them – even without causing *tza'ar* (suffering) to Israel! But, if they would have listened to Moshe initially and sent out Israel, they wouldn't have been lashed and drowned in the sea. It was Pharaoh's deliberateness and humiliation of Hashem before Moshe, His *shliach* (servant), which caused all of it. (Ravad)

Zechariah (1:15) says, "I was only angry a little, but they overdid the punishment." Hashem decreed that we would be *אֶתְּם וְעִבְדִּים*, "enslaved and afflicted," but the Egyptians made them work *בְּכָרָךְ*, oppressive/crushing labour. (Ravad)

If the intent of the *Mitzrim* was to fulfil the decree of Hashem, there wouldn't have been a complaint against the *Mitzrim*. But, in truth, they intended to cause pain and to do evil to Israel and not fulfil the will of Hashem. (Ramban)

Hashem made it *al tanai* (on condition), telling Avraham that we would be enslaved and afflicted and that He would judge the nation who does it – so the *Mitzrim* didn't have the option of *teshuva* (repentance), as they accepted upon themselves the *tanai* (condition). (Eitz Chaim)

The punishment wasn't on the slavery – it was on the not sending us out from Egypt. (Tzemach David)

Normally, we say that a person doesn't get punishments of death and payment (i.e., it's only one or the other, but not both) – so, why did the Egyptians get both?

Not receiving both death and payment as penalties is only the case with the death penalty from Beis Din, but not with the death penalty that comes from the Heavenly Court. (Parshas Derachim)

What was the רבִּישׁ גָּדוֹל, “great wealth” that we received?

The gold and silver *keilim* (vessels) that we asked the Egyptians for. (Rashi)

The wealth was the tremendous birth rate in Egypt. (Rabbeinu Sheim Tov)

The wealth was the Torah. (Shach)

The wealth was the Torah and mitzvos. (Chasom Sofer)

Why did *Galus Mitzrayim* happen?

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי־גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וַעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה. (בראשית ט"ו:י"ג)

The cause:

אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלֶעָזָר: מִפְּנֵי מָה נִעְנַשׁ אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ וְנִשְׁתַּעֲבָדוּ בְּנָיו לְמִצְרַיִם מֵאַתִּים וְעֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים — מִפְּנֵי שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲנִיכְרִיָּא בְּתַלְמִידֵי חֻכְמִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּקַּח אֶת חֲנִיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ." וְשִׁמוּאֵל אָמַר: מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִפְרִיז עַל מַדּוּתָיו שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אֵירָשָׁנָה." וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: שֶׁהִפְרִישׁ בְּנֵי אָדָם מִלְּהַכְנֵס תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "תָּן לִי הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהַרְבֵּשׁ קַח לָךְ." Nedarim 32a

1. Rabbi Avahu said that Rabbi Elezar said: Because of what was Avraham Avinu punished and his children were enslaved in Mitzrayim for 210 years? Because he caused *talmidei chochomim* to work hard [Ran: he lead them to war], as it says, "And he [Rashi: girded (based upon Onkelos)] the students/apprentices who were born in his house." (Bereishis 14:14)

2. And Shmuel said: Because he went too far regarding the *middos* of Hashem [Rashi explains this as referring to Avraham's asking about Hashem's *middos*], as it says, "Avraham asked Hashem: "How do I know that they will possess it?" [Bereishis 15:8]

3. And Rabbi Yochanan said: He separated people from entering under the wings of the *Shechina*, as it says: [The *Melech* (King of) *Sedom* said to Avraham:] "Give me the souls [the people] and you take

the property.” [Rashi explains that Avraham should not have let the *Melech Sedom* keep the people. He should have taken them and converted them.] [Bereishis 14:21] [RS: As a side note, we see that the Avos were punished for the same thing regarding their refusal to accept Timna – which resulted in the greatest enemy of the Jews being created from the relationship between Timna and Eliphaz: Amalek. See Sanhedrin 99b.]

What influenced the place where we wound up enslaved and the harshness of the treatment:

ואמר רבא בר מוחסיא אומר רב חמא בר גוריא אומר רב: לעולם אל ישנה אדם בנו בין הבנים, שבשביל משקל שני סלעים מילת שנתן יעקב ליוסף יותר משאר בנים, נתקנאו בו אחיו ונתגלגל הדבר ויָרְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְמִצְרַיִם.
Shabbos 10b

And Rava bar Mochseiya said that Rav Chama bar Gurya said that Rav said: A person should not [treat differently] a child among his children because on account of Yaakov giving to Yoseph two *selahs* (a weight measurement equivalent to roughly 34 grams – for comparison: a standard Bar One candy bar is 42 grams, and a standard Hershey’s chocolate bar is 43 grams) of fine wool more than he gave to the rest of his sons, Yoseph’s brothers became jealous of him and the matter developed to the point that our forefathers descended to Mitzrayim.

ה"ג נתגלגל הדבר וירדו אבותינו למצרים - ואע"ג דבלאו הכי נגזר דכתיב (בראשית ט"ו:י"ג) "ועבדום וענו אותם" שמא לא היה נגזר עליהם עינוי כ"כ אלא ע"י זה, שהרי ארבע מאות שנה התחילו קודם שנולד יצחק ל' שנים:

Tosafos

Tosafos notes that despite the fact that it was decreed upon Avraham that his children would be “enslaved and oppressed,” perhaps it would not have been decreed upon them that the suffering would be so much (if the brothers has not done what they did), as we see that the 400 years began already from the birth of Yitzchak (i.e., the clock was running and things only got worse after the brothers sold Yoseph).

א"ר חנין אמר הקב"ה לשבטים אתם אמרתם "לעבד נמכר יוסף", חייכם אתם קורין עצמכם בכל שנה ושנה "עבדים היינו."

Midrash Tehillim Perek Yud

Rabbi Chanan said: Hashem said to the Shevatim (the tribes): You said, “We will sell Yoseph for a slave,” (Tehillim 117:5 – see Bereishis 37:27). By your lives! You will call yourselves on each and every year, *Avadim hayinu*, “We were slaves.”

(The above sources are from Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein)

V’HI SHE’AMDA

Most *Rishonim* (early authorities) consider the paragraph of *V’hi she’amda* to be a continuation of the previous paragraph *בְּרוּךְ שׁוֹמֵר הַבְטָחָתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל*, “Blessed is He who guarded His promise to Israel.” Therefore, the paragraph begins with a letter *vuv* (which means ‘and’) at the start, signalling its connection – not only in Egypt did He guard His promise, but in all generations He does so.

We don't find that Hashem promised Avraham at the *Bris Bein HaBesarim* (The Covenant Between the Parts – see Bereishis 15:1-21) that He would save every generation – only *galus Mitzrayim* (the Egyptian exile) and not more. Nevertheless, the *Rishonim* bring here *midrashi Chazal* (midrashim from our Sages) that *darshen* (explain) from the verses that Hashem showed to Avraham even the other exiles and promised to redeem his children from them.

The 430 years included also the time from the other exiles and, therefore, on all of them comes the promise that He will take us out from them. (Shibali Haleket)

The *shevach* (praise) in *V'hi She'amda* is on Hashem's promise to save us from the hands of the nations. Were it not for this *shavua* (oath), His promise would be nullified from our sins. Only because Hashem swore to our forefathers, does His *shavua* still stand for us. (Shinayim Mi Yodea)

נִשְׁבָּךְ דּוֹר וָדּוֹר, עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתָנוּ, "...in every generation they rise up to destroy us."

Hashem places upon us *tza'ar* (suffering) in every generation in order to show His *hashgacha* (Divine providence/supervision) through saving us from their hands. (Avudraham)

Adds the Chukas HaPesach: The intention is not that Hashem brings things upon us *tza'ar* of which we are undeserving, rather, we are guilty, and He is able to punish us Himself – nevertheless, He brings enemies upon us and saves us from them to show His *hashgacha*.

Why does the Haggadah say "in every generation they rise up" – surely there were generations who dwelled in peace?!

Even though there were generations who didn't see great miracles, nevertheless there were hidden miracles that saved us from our enemies. (Chukas HaPesach)

Hashem saves us from their hands – without killing them, only serving as a shield for us – and, through this, we recognise His love for Israel because if He killed them then we could say that, because of His hatred for them, He killed them – and not necessarily because of his love for Israel. But, since Hashem didn't kill them and it was only a protection for Israel from them, His love for us is evident and recognisable. According to this, Maggid continues and says, "Go and learn" from Lavan how Hashem saved Yaakov from him without killing him and, through this, proved His love for Yaakov. (Maaseh Hashem)

Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein adds that He not only saved us physically, but also from their evil ideas/philosophies and their false systems. So, Maggid continues and says, "Go and learn" from Hashem's saving us from Lavan that it was not only a war against the body, but a war between the powers of holiness and the powers of impurity.

TZEI U'L'MAD – GO AND LEARN (VIDUY BIKKURIM – DEVARIM – 26:5-8)

Teach your son what Lavan desired to do to Yaakov in order that he will know that with a *neis* (miracle) we exist, and our entire existence is with *hashgacha pratis* (Divine providence/supervision). (B'iyun Tefilla)

What do we learn from this?

It's a proof for V'hi She'amda – for the promise that Hashem made to Avraham – that this promise exists, and it is because of this promise that He saves us in every generation, as He saved us by Lavan, who desired to uproot everything. (Ritva)

Because the promise to Avraham was fulfilled completely by Lavan:

1. It says your seed will be a *ger* (stranger). Yaakov was a *ger* by Lavan; Yaakov was there temporarily and not permanently.
2. Hashem will judge the goy who enslaved them. Hashem judged Lavan, as it says in Bereishis 31:24, coming to him in a dream and telling him to guard himself from speaking to Yaakov.
3. Afterwards, they will go out. Yaakov went out – see Bereishis 31:13. (“...now rise, and go from this land...”)
4. With great wealth. Yaakov went out with great wealth – see Bereishis 30:43 (“And the man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, and maid-servants and servants, and camels and donkeys.”)

(Abarbanel)

We learn from Lavan regarding all the *nissim* (miracles) that Hashem does with us. Many of the *nissim* are concealed and we don't know that they were done for us – but, in any case, Hashem does with us great wonders. And this we learn from *darshaning* (explaining), “An Aramean tried to destroy my father” because, at first glance, it doesn't appear that Lavan wanted to do evil to Yaakov (besides for what they quarrelled about) and also the verse doesn't explain to us what evil Lavan wanted to do to Yaakov – and yet the Torah testifies upon him that, “An Aramean tried to destroy my father” – in other words, Lavan wanted to destroy Yaakov and Hashem saved Yaakov from him – so Hashem always does *nissim* with us that are concealed. (Gra)

After the Haggadah brings “V'hi She'amda” – that in every generation they want to destroy us, the Haggadah comes and adds: don't say that everyone who wants to destroy us is jealous of us. Rather, even if we marry them – also they still hate us and want to destroy us, as we find by Lavan, that Yaakov was married to his daughters, Rachel and Leah, and, in any case, Lavan wanted to destroy him, and the explanation is that their hatred flows from our faith in Hashem. (Ma'aseh b'Rebbe Eliezer)

צא ולמד מה בקש לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב אבינו,

שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים, **ולבן בקש לעקור את-הכל**, שנאמר:

Why did the Tanna (Rabbi from the mishna) choose *davka* this parsha to tell over and *darshan* (explain) on *leil* (night of) Pesach instead of a parsha that was directly related to *yetzias Mitzrayim* (the going out from Egypt) – such as something from Sefer Shemos?

On this night, we are obligated to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and we must do so by beginning with *g'nus* (shame) and concluding with *shevach* (praise) (Pesachim 116a) and the parsha that is the most appropriate to acknowledge *yetzias Mitzrayim* and which also includes the matter that it begins with *g'nus* and concludes with *shevach* is the parsha of *Bikkurim* ("First Fruits" – from which the verses regarding Lavan are drawn). (Zevach Pesach)

Why begin to *darshan* (explain) from Lavan, where the *pasuk* (verse) only hints at Lavan's wanting to destroy Yaakov and doesn't explain how he wanted to destroy Yaakov, rather than from Eisav, where the *pasuk* (Bereishis 27:41) explicitly states that Eisav wanted to kill Yaakov?

The point is not to list the enemies of Israel, whose hatred flowed from a particular reason, but to *daresh* (explain) the enemies of Israel whose hatred was not because of a reason at all. Therefore, we begin *davkah* with Lavan and conclude with Pharaoh. Lavan did not have a true reason to hate Yaakov. Yaakov worked for Lavan for his daughters, and Lavan turned against Yaakov, deceiving Yaakov. This was not the case by Eisav, who wanted to kill Yaakov, his brother, because he thought that Yaakov had stolen the brachos from him. And so, too, with regard to Pharaoh and what he decreed, to throw all of the baby boys into the Nile (Shemos 1:22) – it wasn't because of a specific reason, but only because he hated Yisroel. (Maharal)

What connection is there between Lavan wanting to uproot Yisrael **ולבן בקש לעקור את-הכל, and Yaakov and his sons descending to *Mitzrayim* (Egypt)?**

Lavan wanted to entice Yaakov to worship *avodah zarah* (idols). Therefore, when there was a famine, Yaakov sent his sons to buy food in Egypt, rather than Charan, despite there being food available to buy in Charan, since he did not want his sons to be enticed through Lavan to worship *avodah zarah*. (Ma'aseh Hashem)

The descent of Yaakov and his sons to *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) was because of the jealousy of the *shevatim* (tribes) for Yoseph and his being sold. This hatred flowed as a result from Lavan's deception of Yaakov and giving Leah to Yaakov in place of Rachel. Therefore, Yoseph was born last. Indeed, if not for Lavan's deception of Yaakov, Rachel would have been given to Yaakov first and Yoseph would have been the *bochur* (first born) – and there would not have been jealousy from his brothers (see excerpt from gemara quoted below that notes that it was because of the coat that Yaakov gave to Yoseph that resulted in their jealousy and, ultimately, our descent to Egypt) – nor would they have sold him! We find, therefore, that the deception by Lavan lead to the descent of Yaakov and his sons to Egypt! (המהר"י בי רב)

ואמר רבא בר מחסיא אמר רב חמא בר גוריא אמר רב בלעולם אל ישנה אדם בנו בין הבנים שבשביל משקל שני סלעים מילת שנתן יעקב ליוסף יותר משאר בניו נתקנאו בו אחיו ונתגלגל הדבר וירדו אבותינו למצרים

Shabbos 10b

In truth, it wasn't Lavan himself who caused the descent to Mitzrayim. Rather, Hashem foresaw that Yisrael would not be able to withstand the cruelty of the Arameans, and, therefore, in place of exiling the Bnei Yisrael to Aram, He exiled them to *Mitzrayim* (Egypt). (HaEmek Davar)

[א] אֶרְמִי אֶבֶד אָבִי, וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִמָּה, וַיָּגֵר שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מַעַט
וַיְהִי שֵׁם לִגְוִי גָדוֹל, עַצוֹם וָרֵב: (דברים כו:ה)

Why does the *pasuk* (Devarim 26:5) literally say, אֶרְמִי אֶבֶד אָבִי, “An Aramean [i.e., Lavan] destroyed my father”? Lavan didn't actually destroy Yaakov!

...Rabbi Nechemya said that when a non-Jew thinks about doing an *aveira* (sin), even though he doesn't actually do it, Hashem considers it as though he did it! For so it says, “An Aramean destroyed my father.” Where did Lavan destroy Yaakov? Rather, on account of Lavan's thinking about doing so, the *pasuk* counts it as though he actually did it! If a non-Jew thinks about doing a mitzvah, however, it's not recorded until he does it (citing to Daniel 6:15) and Hashem doesn't consider it until he does it. Whereas, when a Jew thinks about doing an *aveira*, but doesn't do it, Hashem doesn't record it until he does it (citing Micha 2:1). And, therefore, Dovid HaMelech says (Tehillim 66:18), “If I had an evil thought in my heart, Hashem would not have listened.” But, if (a Jew) thinks to do a mitzvah and he is unavoidably prevented and doesn't do it, Hashem counts it for him as if he did it. David thought to build the Beis HaMikdash and, even though he did not build it, it's recorded in his name, as we see, “A psalm, a song for the inauguration of the Temple, by David.” From here, (we see) that all who suffered for something, it's called in his name. And so we find by Moshe, on his suffering for the Torah and sitting 40 days and 40 nights, it's called after his name, as it says (Malachi 3:22), “Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant.”... (Midrash Tehillim on Chapter 30)

וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִמָּה. אָנוֹס עַל פִּי הַדְּבָר.

Where do we find that the descent of Yaakov to *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) was as a result of אָנוֹס, “against his will”?

It's learned from the *lashon* of *vaiyeired* (he descended) – it doesn't say *vaiyeilech* (he went), *vaiyavo* (he came), *vaiyeitzei* (he went out) – *vaiyeired* more so implies that it was forcibly. (Orchas Chaim)

It's learned from the verse (Bereishis 46:3) says אַל-תִּירָא מִרְדָּה מִצְרַיִמָּה (“Don't fear going down to Egypt”) – and Rashi explains that Yaakov was distressed that he had to go out from Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov was afraid to go down to Egypt and he didn't want to go. Hashem promised him אֲנִי אֵרָד עִמָּךְ מִצְרַיִמָּה “Don't fear, I will go down to Egypt with you.” After Hashem promised him, Yaakov went down, but only because Hashem had promised to go with him. (Shibali Haleket)

The *pasuk* (verse) says, “And Yaakov descended to *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) and sojourned there.” (Devarim 26:5) But the *pasuk* could have just said, “Yaakov sojourned there” – it didn’t need to say that Yaakov went down. We learn from the fact that the *pasuk* goes out of its way to mention Yaakov’s going down that he did so against his will. (Maaseh Hashem)

We see from the *lashon* used that Yaakov only intended to temporarily settle in Egypt, i.e., to sojourn there, and not to settle there (or establish permanent residence there) (which would have been an entirely different verb in Hebrew). The reason for this is because Yaakov only went down to Egypt in order to accept upon himself the Heavenly decree that he go into *galus* (exile). Another proof for this is when Yaakov and his sons are brought before Pharaoh upon their arrival in Egypt (Bereishis 47:4), the brothers speak to Pharaoh and inform him that they have come to “sojourn in the land” i.e., temporarily reside – not to settle there or establish permanent residence (and this is, in fact, the proof brought in the Haggadah). (הגדת מהר"י ט"ב)

Where do we find that Yaakov was commanded to go down to Egypt?

The Rambam’s Haggadah does not have the text *אָנוֹס עַל פִּי הַדְּבוּר*.

From the *pasuk* (Bereishis 46:3), Hashem says to Yaakov, “Do not fear descending to Egypt...I will go down with you to Egypt...” [*Rishonim* explain that the *lashon* of *אָנוֹס עַל פִּי הַדְּבוּר* is intended on prophecy – meaning that Yaakov prophesied that he needed to descend to Egypt. *Achronim* ask on this answer, as there is no *pasuk* where Hashem commands Yaakov of such a thing. Accordingly, there’s no source to say in the Haggadah: *אָנוֹס עַל פִּי הַדְּבוּר*.] (Orchas Chaim)

Why was Yaakov worried about going down to Egypt?

Yaakov knew that his children would be enslaved there in the future, therefore, he did not want to go down and bring them to their servitude. (Shibali Haleket, Ritva, and other *Rishonim*)

Yaakov was afraid of four things:

- (1) Perhaps, his descendants would become diminished in Egypt as a result of the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians) killing his sons and daughters;
- (2) Perhaps, when he goes out from Eretz Yisrael, the *Shechina* (Divine presence) would be removed from him;
- (3) Perhaps, he would die in Egypt and wouldn’t merit to be buried in *ma’aras hamachpela* (the cave of the Patriarchs) with his fathers;
- (4) He feared whether his children would be redeemed from Egypt.

And on each of these concerns, Hashem promised him:

- (1) “I will make you a great nation there” (Bereishis 46:3) – in other words, don’t worry about your descendants being diminished there;
- (2) “I will go down to Egypt with you” (Bereishis 46:4) – in other words, even in Egypt the *Shechina* will be with you;
- (3) and (4) “I will surely bring you up again” (Bereishis 46:4) – in other words, even if you die in Egypt, I will take care to bring you up and to redeem your children from Egypt. (Zevach Pesach)

Although the *galus* (exile) was promised to Avraham at the *Bris Bein HaBesarim* (Covenant Between the Parts) (see Bereishis 15:1-21), and at the time that Yaakov bought the *bechora* (right of the firstborn) from Eisav, his brother, he also accepted upon himself that the exile would be fulfilled through him and not through Eisav. Yaakov thought that the servitude would be in another land, not in Egypt, because it was filled with impurity. Therefore, he worried about going down to Egypt since he did not want the servitude to be there – on this, Hashem promised, “I will surely bring you up again” (Bereishis 46:4) – that He would bring them up from Egypt before they became submerged in the 49th gate of impurity. (Beis HaLevi)

וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם. מִלֵּמַד שֶׁלֹּא יֵרֵד יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ לְהִשְׁתַּקֵּעַ בְּמִצְרַיִם, אֶלָּא לָגוּר שָׁם,
שְׁנֵאמַר: "וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה, לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ בְּאֵנוּ, כִּי אֵין מְרֻעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר
לְעַבְדֶּיךָ, כִּי כִבֵּד הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן. וְעַתָּה, יֵשְׁבוּ־נָא עַבְדֶּיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן."
(בראשית מז:ד)

Why does the *Baal HaHaggadah* need to bring a *pasuk* as a proof that Yaakov only intended to sojourn (but not settle)?

The explanation of וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם can still be interpreted that in the eyes of the Egyptians, Yaakov and his sons descended only to sojourn and not to settle, but that Yaakov and his sons intended to settle in Egypt. Therefore, it brings a proof from the words of the *Shevatim* themselves that their entire intention was only to sojourn and not to settle. (Maharal)

Lashon וַיֵּגֶר is taught on the aim of their descent – that it was temporary, but maybe later they would settle in Egypt. Therefore, it brings the words of the *Bnei Yaakov* that the whole purpose was not just to sojourn temporarily, but there was a goal in itself not to settle in the place. (Midrash Haggadah)

Why did they ask יֵשְׁבוּ־נָא עַבְדֶּיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן, “to dwell in Goshen”?

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha said that Sarah Imeinu was *eishes* (the wife of) Pharaoh and from his love for her, he wrote in the *shtar kesuva* (including) all his money, silver and gold, and slaves and land, and he wrote that *eretz Goshen* was her property. Therefore, the Bnei Yisrael wanted to dwell in Goshen because it was the land of Sarah, their mother. In other words, since *eretz Goshen* had a connection to their mother, they wanted to take possession of a place that was connected to them, therefore, they asked Pharaoh to dwell *davka* (specifically) in *eretz Goshen*. (Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer)

Since they did not want to establish a permanent residence and mix with the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians), therefore, they asked to dwell *davka* in *eretz Goshen* because it was close to *eretz Canaan*. [Baalei Tosfos al HaTorah (Bereishis 46:29) write that *eretz Goshen* was on the border of *eretz Canaan* and the Shach (Bereishis 46:28) writes that *eretz Goshen* was an enclave inside the *irei* (cities of) *eretz Yisrael*.] (Rashbatz)

בְּמַתִּי מֵעֵט. כִּמָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "בְּשִׁבְעִים נֶפֶשׁ, יֵרְדוּ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ מִצְרָיִמָּה. וְעַתָּה, שְׂמַךְ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ, כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם לְרַב." (דברים י:כב)

Who is included in the בְּשִׁבְעִים נֶפֶשׁ, "70 souls" who went down to Egypt?

The gemara (Bava Basra 123a) says that in total you find 70, but (when considered) in detail, you find only 69 (Rashi explains that this includes Yoseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe). Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said that this (the missing person) was Yocheved who was conceived on the way and born between the walls of Egypt (see Bamidbar 26:49 and Rashi there).

The midrash says that there are those who say that Yaakov completed the count of 70; there are those who say that Hashem completed the count of 70; and there are those who say that Serach ben Asher completed the count of 70. (Bereishis Rabbah 94:9)

The way of writing when the Torah counts things and reaches to a number that is 10 minus 1 (i.e., 9) is to count it as 10 and not to take into consideration the one that is lacking. We see this also by the Torah's statement regarding lashes (Devarim 25:3), "He may be lashed 40 (times) but not more..." – although the Torah says 40, it really means that no more than 39 lashes should be given. (Rosh)

The matter that the Torah is explaining, regarding the number of their going down with 70 souls, is to teach us that if there hadn't been 70 souls and they had gone down to Egypt, they would have assimilated among the Egyptians and *am Yisrael* (the nation of Israel) would not have existed. (Maharal)

Why are Yisrael compared to כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, "stars"?

Even though Hashem gives man the choice to transgress His Torah, *chas v'shalom*, a person has the ability to reach a level of understanding where it's not possible for him to transgress the will of Hashem – and we find this with several prohibitions that are phrased "*lo sochel*," as for example with (Devarim 12:17), "Don't eat [lit: you're not able to eat] in your gates..." on which Rashi says (in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha), "You can, but you're not permitted." This was the level of the *Shevatim* (the twelve tribes), that they fulfilled the will of Hashem as if they were forced to do so and lacked free will. And we see this by the stars, that they have *da'as*, as we say in the *piyyut* of *Keil Adon* that we say on Shabbos morning in the brachos before *krias shema*, "Tovim m'oros sh'bara elokeinu, y'tsaram b'da'as, b'vinah, u'v'has'keil," He made the luminaries, i.e., the stars, with *da'as*. And their actions are *muchrachas* – as though they were forced to do what they do. Therefore, the *Shevatim* were beloved, that their names were made into a *davar choshuv* (something important) because they fulfilled their mission and purpose in full, and their names they did not change, like these stars. (Haggadas Arzei HaLevanon in the name of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt"l)

וַיְהִי שֵׁם לְגוֹי. מִלֵּמַד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצִינִים שָׁם.

What is meant by **מְצִינִים**, “exceptional/distinguished”?

They all lived in one city and did not spread out in several cities and as a result of this, they were seen as one nation and not like several nations. (Shibali Haleket, Siddur Rashi)

The *lashon גדול* וַיְהִי שֵׁם לְגוֹי teaches that in the merit of being together in a specific place, they were made גדול. (Machzor Vitry)

The meaning of the word לְגוֹי is one nation and not several nations – and this is a part of the miracles that Hashem did with Am Yisrael in Egypt since divisiveness/separation is the primary decree of exile. (Ritva)

They were recognizable in their dress and in their affairs. For example, with the *tzitzis* that they wore on their clothing, meaning even if someone dressed like an Egyptian, he was recognizable by the *tzitzis* that he wore on his clothing. As it's explained in the midrash, that in the merit of not changing their dress, they were recognizable in Egypt – and it's implicit from their words that *Bnei Yisrael* fulfilled the mitzvah of *tzitzis* in Egypt. And so, it says in the midrash (Piskta d'Rav Kahana Vayahi Beshalach; Vayikra Rabah 32:5; Shir Hashirim Rabah Perek Daled, Pasuk Yud Beis), “In the merit of four things, Israel was redeemed from Egypt: they did not change their names; they did not change their language; and they did not transgress in forbidden relations. And there were not informers among them. This explanation is based on it saying, וַיְהִי שֵׁם לְגוֹי גדול – seemingly, it's difficult how it's relevant to notice the size of the nation when the entire nation is mixed and under the rule of another nation. But, of necessity, this explanation is not about the abundance in quantity of the nation, but in the quality and the identifying features of the nation that all who see will recognize this is a son of Avraham Avinu. (Ritva)

גָּדוֹל עֲצוּם. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׂרָצוּ, וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ, בְּמֵאֲדָמָא, וַתִּמְלֹא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם." (שמות א:ז)

What does it mean that the Bnei Yisrael became **גָּדוֹל עֲצוּם**, “great, mighty”?

Our Rabbis say that they had two children at one time. There are those who say they had six in one belly. There are those who say that they had 12 in one belly. And there are those who say they had 60 myriad. (All of these are based on *drashas* on the verse quoted in the Haggadah from Shemos 1:7.) (Midrash Tanchuma) [RS: According to the Maharal (Gevurot Hashem Perek Yud Beis) – 6 because the Egyptians only oppressed them 6 days out of each week, since Moshe asked that they have one day of rest, Shabbos; 12 because they made them do work even by night – so the 6 days were really like 12; 60 – from *lashon ribuy* – and this refers to 10, which applied to each of the 6 days that they laboured, for a total of 60; and 600,000 – Rebbe said that one woman in Egypt gave birth to 600,000 children – he meant Yocheved giving birth to Moshe Rabbeinu who was considered equal to all of *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people). (See Shemos Rabbah 1:8; Shir HaShirim Rabbah 4:2)]

What is meant by the unusual lashon of **וַיִּשְׂרָצוּ**, “increased greatly”?

The word is related to *sheratzim* – creepy crawly animals, suggesting that the Jewish women were like these *sheratzim*. *Sheratzim*, for example a scorpion, can give birth to between 20 and 100 babies in a single brood. So, too, the Jewish women were like these *sheratzim* and gave birth to as many as 60 children at a time. (Me’am Lo’ez)

What does it mean that **וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם**, “the land was filled with them”?

This is a hint to the Jewish children who were born in the field. When the Egyptians came to kill them, the land swallowed up the babies. When the Egyptians left, the babies would emerge from the ground. And after they children grew up, they would come home in flocks. These babies are the ones who said (in the Song at the Sea), “This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him” (Shemos 15:2), as Rashi explains that they recognised Hashem because they had already seen His *Shechina* (Divine presence) and when it says, “This is my G-d,” the word “this” means that they had already seen Him (i.e., previously). (Sotah 11b)

This refers to before the Jews were enslaved. When it says that the Jews filled the land, it means that they did not remain only in the city of Goshen (where they had originally told Pharaoh that they would settle, see Bereishis 47:4), but, rather, they mixed among the Egyptians throughout the entire land of Egypt. And, because of this, the Jews learned from the ways of the Egyptians, going to their theatres (and circuses) – and by doing so, they transgressed the will of Yaakov, their father, who wanted them to dwell only in the city of Goshen. Therefore, the Egyptians were able to enslave the Jews. (Pesach Echad)

וַרְבֵּה. כִּמְהָ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "רַבְּבָה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְּתִירָהּ, וְתִרְבִּי, וְתִגְדְּלִי, וְתִבְאִי בְעֵדֵי עֲדָיִים, שְׂדִים נִכְנוּ, וְשַׁעֲרֵךְ צֶמַח, וְאַתָּה עָרַם וְעָרִיה: וְאָעֲבוּר עֲלֶיךָ וְאָרְאָךְ מִתְבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמִּיךָ וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדַמִּיךָ חַיִּי וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדַמִּיךָ חַיִּי." (יחזקאל טז:ז, ו)

What is the meaning of **וַרְבֵּה**, “numerous”?

The more that the Egyptians tortured Israel, the more that Israel increased (in number). This is learned from the *pasuk* **וַרְבֵּה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְּתִירָהּ** – meaning like with a plant, the more you cut it, the more it grows and increases, so, too, Israel. The Avudraham brings a proof for this explanation from the *pasuk* (Shemos 1:12), “When they [i.e., the Egyptians] would afflict it [i.e., Israel], so it would increase and so it would spread out.” (Ritva)

Based on the gemara (Sotah 11b) (which describes how the Jewish women in Egypt would go and give birth in the field under an apple tree and Hashem would send *malachim* (angels) to clean and care for the babies and they would nurse from stones that provided oil and honey,), **וַרְבֵּה** is lashon of growth – meaning that the children grew by themselves, and they were complete in their bodies without pain and toil, like a plant of the field that grew by itself. The *pasuk* **וַרְבֵּה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְּתִירָהּ** is brought as a proof of this that they grew by themselves like a plant in the field in completeness.

What's meant by וַיִּגְדְּלוּ, וַיִּתְבָּאִי בְעַדֵי עַדִּיִם, שְׂדֵיִם נִלְנוּ, וַיִּשְׁעֲרָךְ צִמָּם? They grew like a young girl who became fit to wear adornments. (Shibali Haleket and Avudraham)

Why the double *lashon* of וַיִּתְבָּאִי בְעַדֵי עַדִּיִם, “you became beautiful”?

The double *lashon* is *keneged bizas* (plunder of) Mitzrayim and *bizas hayam* (of the sea), and so it says in Bamidbar Rabbah (13:20), "וַיִּתְבָּאִי בְעַדֵי עַדִּיִם, בְּעַדֵי זֶה בִּיזַת מִצְרַיִם, עַדִּיִם זֶה בִּיזַת הַיָּם", (הרי"ד)

Why the double *lashon* of וַיִּתְבָּאִי בְעַדֵי עַדִּיִם, “bare and naked”?

The *Bnei Yisrael* had sunk to the 49th gate of *tuma'ah* (impurity), and the *tuma'ah* in which they were sunk was *avodah zarah* (idol worship) and *arayos* (elicit relations). *Arayos* refers to the *yetzer harah*, which has a masculine aspect, and *avodah zarah* has a feminine aspect. Hashem gave to the *Bnei Yisrael* *dam* (the blood of) Pesach *keneged* the *avodah zarah* and *dam milah* (circumcision) *keneged* the *arayos*. Therefore, *eirom* and *eryah* are in *lashon zachar* and *nekeivah* (masculine and feminine). (Beis David)

What is meant by מִתְבֹּסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶּיךָ, “wallowing in your blood”?

Hashem saw Israel wallowing and being dirtied in clay/mortar and bricks since they did not have free time in which to clean themselves from the heaviness of the work, therefore the *Navi* compares them to a woman giving birth who is wallowing in blood, and comforts them that they will not die from the difficulty of the work, but will live and increase like a plant of the field. (Rashi and Radak)

What is meant by לֶךְ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי, “Through your blood shall you live!”?

And they took the blood of *milah* (circumcision) and the blood of the *korban Pesach* and they placed it (i.e., both of these bloods) on the lintel of their houses, and when Hashem passed over to bring the plague upon the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians), He saw the blood of the *milah* and of the Pesach and He was filled with *rachamim* (mercy) on the *Bnei Yisrael*, as it says, “I passed over you and saw you downtrodden in your blood, and I said to you, ‘Through your blood, you shall live!’” (Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer 29)

[ב] וִירְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרִים, וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ, וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה: (דברים כו:ו)

וִירְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרִים. כֶּמָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: **"הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ. פִּן־יִרְבֶּה, וְהִיָּה כִּי־תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה, וְנוֹסֵף גַּם הוּא עַל־שִׁנְאֵינוּ, וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ:"**
(שמות א:י)

What does it mean **וִירְעוּ** "did evil to us (or made us evil)"?

Several *Rishonim* (early commentators) explain that the intention here is that the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians) thought of the *Bnei Yisrael* as evil, and regarding this the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* (the author of the Haggadah) brings the *pasuk* (verse), "Let us deal shrewdly with them...if we happen to be at war, they may join our enemies..." because this is the proof (i.e., that we would betray them) that they thought that the *Bnei Yisrael* were evil. (Kalbo, Meiri, Abarbanel)

The intention of **וִירְעוּ** (they did evil to us) is that in the beginning there was not **עֲנוּי** affliction in the servitude, rather they only did evil to Israel because the Egyptians were ashamed to extend a hand against Israel because they came to Egypt with the Egyptians' approval – and if they would hurt them, it would be considered a betrayal. Therefore, the *Baal HaHaggadah* brings the *pasuk* **הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ** (let us deal wisely with them) because there is not in this "affliction" and only afterwards does it write **וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ** (afflicted us). [*The Maaseh Nissim also explains like this that there are three parts in this pasuk וִירְעוּ (they did evil to us), וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ (they afflicted us), and עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה (they imposed hard labour upon us).*] (Ritva)

What does **הִבֵּה** mean?

הִבֵּה is *lashon preparation* and to prepare for a thing, meaning prepare yourselves for this. (Rashi)

Why does it say **נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ** ("deal wisely with him") rather than **נִתְחַכְמָה לָהֶם** ("deal wisely with them")?

The gemara (Sotah 11a) asks on the *pasuk* **נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ** why it doesn't write **לָהֶם**? The gemara answers the intention behind **לוֹ** is Hashem – that they should deal wisely with Him such that He would not be able to punish them. The Egyptians knew that Hashem only punishes *middah keneged middah*. Therefore, they chose to punish Israel with water because they thought Hashem couldn't punish them with this because He had sworn that He would not bring another flood to the world, as it says (Yeshayahu 54:9), "...as I have sworn from the waters of Noach passing over the Earth again." The gemara explains that the oath was not to bring a flood on the entire Earth, but on one nation, it could be brought. Furthermore, a flood was not brought upon them, rather they came and fell into the water. Simply put that this "dealing wisely" resulted in what's said (Shemos 1:22), "...every boy that is born, you shall throw in the Nile..." The gemara concludes: **בְּקִדְיָה שֶׁבִּישְׁלוֹ, כֵּה נִתְבַּשְׁלוּ**: "In the pot that they cooked, they were cooked in it."

Why was Pharaoh worried that there would be war?

Pharaoh was worried that the kings of Canaan would wage war with him because of the money (literally: silver) that Yoseph had gathered from them, as it says (Bereishis 47:14), “Yoseph gathered all the money that was to be found in *eretz Mitzrayim* (Egypt) and in *eretz Canaan*...” (Ba’al HaTurim)

The Canaanites had a tradition that they would fall into the hands of the sons of Yaakov (see Rashi to Bereishis 34:30), and this was Pharaoh’s worry that they would go up from the land and wage war with Canaan and destroy them. And so, he forbade them from going out from the land. (Ohr HaChaim)

Why was Pharaoh worried that the Bnei Yisrael would wage war with them?

He was worried because the *Bnei Yisrael* were separated from the *Mitzrim* (Egyptians) in language and in opinions/knowledge such that *Bnei Yisrael* were not able to eat bread with the *Mitzrim* (see Bereishis 43:22). Therefore, at a time of war, the *Mitzrim* would discover the hatred of the *Bnei Yisrael*, and the *Bnei Yisrael* would wage war against them. (Sforno)

About whom was Pharaoh speaking when he said **וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ**, “...and leave the land”?

The gemara (Sotah 11a) explains that Pharaoh should have said **וְעָלִינוּ** “...and we will leave the land” (meaning that the Egyptians would be forced from their land). The gemara explains that this *lashon* is like that of a man who curses himself, but attributes the curse to his friend. In other words, the intention of the word **וְעָלָה** is on the Egyptians, but rather than say such a curse upon themselves, they said it, so to speak, on the Bnei Yisrael.

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ. כָּמָה שָׁנָאֶמְרָ: "וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים, לְמַעַן עֲבֹדוּ בְּסִבְלוֹתָם: וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת לְפָרְעָה, אֶת־פֶּתֶם וְאֶת־רַעְמֶסֶס: (שְׁמוֹת א:יא)

What is meant by the *lashon* **וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ**, “And afflicted us”?

Simply speaking, we might assume that it refers to the *avodah* (labour) that we did, but the *pasuk* (verse) continues and says, “They imposed hard labour (*avodah kasha*) upon us,” so **וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ** can’t be referring to the labour. The Ba’al HaTurim explains that it refers to the suffering/torture in terms of marital relations in order to diminish them (i.e., in numbers – reduce the amount of procreation taking place). The Ibn Ezra explains similarly that as a result of their suffering/torture, it caused their seed to dry out and the birth rate was diminished. The Rashbatz explains that the Egyptians rose early each day to take the *Bnei Yisrael* from their homes so that they could not be with their wives, and, in so doing, they caused them to be diminished.

Why does it say, **וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים**, “They set taskmasters over him,” rather than “over them”?

The gemara (Sotah 11a) explains that they brought a mold (for a brick) and hung it around Pharaoh’s neck. If any of the Bnei Yisrael would say that he was an *istanis* – someone delicate (i.e., he was unable to work), they would say to him, “Are you more delicate than Pharaoh?” So then, what’s

meant by the *lashon* of *sarei misim* (taskmasters)? The intention was that this mold that hung around Pharaoh's neck was something that was *meisim* [this is a play on words *misim/meisim*] (something that would compel control) over the people. So, the verse is meant to be understood as: They placed upon him (i.e., Pharaoh) a means of compelling control (i.e., the mold which hung from his neck and which gave them no excuse to say that they were too delicate to do the work).

What is meant by the word מסים, "taxes"?

The *Bnei Yisrael* owed a lot of money to the Egyptians, so as payment towards their debt, the Egyptians made them work, and the Egyptians doing this was, so to speak, a *tovah* (something good) for the *Bnei Yisrael*, so the *Bnei Yisrael* worked diligently to pay their debt and then, "The Egyptians subjugated the *Bnei Yisrael* with hard work." (Maharil Diskin)

From the money that the *sarei misim* (lit: lords of taxes) collected, they built Pisom and Ramses. (Haggadah Leil Shimurim)

Who were the שְׂרֵי מַסִּים, "taskmasters"?

They were Egyptians who had been chosen from the nation to do this work, but when they saw that by doing so it did not help to diminish the *Bnei Yisrael*, so each and every Egyptian subjugated the *Bnei Yisrael*, as it says (Shemos 1:13), "The Egyptians (i.e., all of the Egyptians) subjugated the *Bnei Yisrael*." (Ramban and Tur HaAruch)

They were appointed by the Egyptians from the *Bnei Yisrael* with the intention that on account of this it would cause rivalry and hatred among the *Bnei Yisrael* and result in the *Shechina* (Divine presence) being removed from them. (Rabbi Yonason Eibschutz)

The Egyptians appointed the *Bnei Yisrael* to be *sarim* (in charge, lords). Since it was a *kavod* (honour), those who were chosen did not refuse, and this was a trick because when the *Bnei Yisrael* whom they oversaw were not able to complete the work that was imposed upon them, the *sarim* needed to complete the work, and through this, the *sarim* became obligated to work and this is what is meant by the *lashon* בְּפֶה רַךְ *b'farech*, meaning בְּפֶה רַךְ *b'feh rach* (lit: with a soft mouth) (see Sotah 11a and b), they began as *sarim* and afterwards became *avadim* (slaves) [RS: Rashi on the gemara in Sotah says that they attracted them with words and with reward until they became accustomed to doing the work]. (Ohr HaChaim)

Why does it say למען ענותו, "in order to oppress him with their burdens" it should have said למען ענותם "in order to oppress them with their burdens"?

The gemara (Sotah 11a) explains that "him" here refers to Pharaoh, referring to the fact that Pharaoh himself was involved with the labour (e.g., he had the brick mold around his neck, as mentioned above) and this was so that the *Bnei Yisrael* would labour and be burdened.

To what does בְּסִבְלוֹתָם, "with their burdens" refer?

Some say that it refers to the weight of the load that was on their shoulders.

Others say it refers to *avodah zarah*, as in the *pasuk* (Yeshayahu 46:7), **יִשְׂאוּהוּ עַל-קִתְּףִי יִסְבְּלוּהוּ**, “They carry [the idols] on the shoulder, they bear...”

What are **ערי מסכנות, “storage cities”?**

The gemara (Sotah 11a) brings a *machlokes* (argument) between Rav and Shmuel. The one says that they are called this because they endanger their owners and the other says that they are called this because they impoverish their owners (NB: the root **מסכן** can mean either danger or poverty).

Why were the cities called **פִּתּוֹם, Pisom and **רַעַמְסֵס**, Ramses?**

The gemara (Sotah 11a) brings a *machlokes* between Rav and Shmuel. The one says that its name was Pisom. So why was it called Ramses? Because one by one they collapsed (**מתרוסס**). The other says that its name was Ramses. So why was it called Pisom? Because one by one the mouth of the abyss (**פי תהום**) swallowed it. The Maharsha explains what was bothering Rav and Shmuel. Ramses was already mentioned in the *pasuk* (Bereishis 47:11), “And Yoseph settled his father and brothers...in eretz Ramses...” Therefore, one said that its name when it was built was Pisom, but they called it Ramses because it collapsed, but this was not the city of Ramses that was in the days of Yaakov, rather, it was just a nickname alone. And the other said that they built it in the place of Ramses that was in the time of Yaakov and called it Pisom because the mouth of the abyss swallowed it and, therefore, they needed to build it again.

The Baalei Tosafos bring a Midrash that says that Pharaoh asked Moshe why everything that the Bnei Yisrael built would immediately fall down. Moshe answered that it was because Pharaoh did not give them one day in the week to rest and he casts lots regarding what day to rest and the lot fell on Shabbos. And this is what we say in the Shabbos Shemoneh Esrei at Shacharis, “Moshe rejoiced in the gift of his portion...,” this refers to the Shabbos that Pharaoh gave to him and this is what is said (Devarim 5:15), “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt...therefore, your G-d has commanded...to observe the day of Shabbos,” that from the day that you were in Egypt, I gave to you Shabbos.

Why did the Egyptians give *davka* this *avodah* to the Bnei Yisrael?

Yalkut Hareuveni says that at the time that Yoseph took Binyamin, Yehudah became angry, he and Yoseph shouted, and their voices caused Pisom and Ramses to fall. Therefore, the Egyptians decreed that the Bnei Yisrael should rebuild them.

Since Yoseph advised storing food (See Bereishis 41:34), it was the law in Egypt. So, Pharaoh decreed that Yoseph’s descendants should labour in this. (Abarbanel) The Bachor Shor and the Malbim say that, therefore, Pharaoh was involved with this himself because a fifth of the produce was meant to go to Pharaoh (see Bereishis 47:24, 26).

וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה. כָּמָה שָׁנָאֵמַר: "וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרָךְ:" (שמות א:יג)

Why is וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ written without a *yud* (i.e., instead of writing וַיַּעֲבִידוּ)?

It's written without a *yud* as a hint to the fact that each of the Bnei Yisrael did the labour of ten men and for that, the Egyptians were struck with ten different *makkos* (plagues). (Baalei HaTosfos)

Why does it say that הַמִּצְרַיִם, "the Egyptians" subjugated them instead of Pharaoh?

From the fact that it says, "the Egyptians", and not "Pharaoh", we can learn that the Bnei Yisrael were considered ownerless to all of the Egyptians, and this is what's meant in the next *pasuk* (which follows this one in the Chumash – see Shemos 1:14), "...in all the work of the field..." meaning to say that they were *hefker* (ownerless) like a field. (Baalei HaTosfos)

What does אֶת come to include?

The word אֶת comes to include the women – the Egyptians exchanged the work of women with the work of men (see Sotah 11b). And to include those who accompanied them, slaves and converts. And to include the *Shechina*, as it's written (Shemos 24:10), "They saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was like the shape of a sapphire brick, and like the very Heaven in purity." [Rashi explains: This (sapphire brick) was before Him at the time of the enslavement as a reminder of the suffering of Israel, that they were subjugated with making bricks.] (Rokeach)

What is meant by the *lashon* בְּפָרָךְ, "hard labour"?

The gemara (Sotah 11b) writes that Rabbi Elazar said that the explanation is בפה רך "with a soft mouth," as noted previously Rashi explains that the Egyptians attracted the Bnei Yisrael with words and with reward until they became accustomed to doing the work. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani says that it's *lashon* פריכה "crushing".

Tosafos (Pesachim 117b d"h l'ma'an) says that we mention yetzias Mitzrayim in the kiddush of Shabbos and Yom Tov based on a midrash that brings that א"ת ב"ש in פרך ("At-Bash" – a technique in *gematria* where letters are swapped out and replaced based on a reflective pattern of placing the *aleph-beis* in its proper order against the *aleph-beis* in its reverse order, as the name *At-Bash* alludes to) is וג"ל which is equal to ל"ט, the numerical value of 39, which is a hint to the 39 *Malachos* of Shabbos in which Israel was enslaved, and at the time that they were redeemed, they were warned about the 39 *Malachos* of Shabbos.

[ג] וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קִלְנוֹ, וַיֵּרָא אֶת עַנְיֵנוּ, וְאֶת עֲמָלֵנוּ, וְאֶת לַחֲצֵנוּ: (דברים כו:ז)

וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים
הָהֵם, וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ. וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעֲתָם
אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים מִן הָעֲבֹדָה:" (שמות ב:כג)

What is meant by the *lashon הרבים*, "many days"?

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:34) says that they were days of *tza'ar* (pain, suffering), therefore, it calls them *rabim* (many). We see this also in the *pasuk* (Vayikra 15:25), "When a woman has a discharge for (*yamim rabim*) many days," that *tza'ar* is referred to as *rabim* (many) [Rashi says that it was three days and the Maharal in Gur Aryeh explains that *yamim* (days) alone would have meant two days, so the addition of the word *rabim* (many) means that it was three days]. When a person is in a painful situation, it appears in his eyes that every day feels like a long time and, therefore, it's called "many days".

Why did the Bnei Yisrael groan *מִן הָעֲבֹדָה*, "from the *avodah*," *davka* after the king of Egypt died?

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:34) explains that when it says "died" here, it's referring to the fact that Pharaoh got *tzara'as* (a spiritual malady with physical manifestations often erroneously translated as leprosy, but to which it bears little, if any, similarities other than a need for quarantining), bringing as proof for this the *pasuk* (Bamidbar 12:12) where Moshe davens for Miriam after she is punished with *tzara'as* for speaking *lashon harah* about him, saying, "Let her not be like she is dead," and the *pasuk* (Yeshayahu 6:1), "In the year that King Uzziah died," which Rashi explains to mean that he had *tzara'as*. So, why did the Bnei Yisrael groan after Pharaoh got *tzara'as*? Because his magicians said that the only cure was to slaughter 150 Jewish children in the evening and 150 in the morning and bathe in their blood twice each day. When the Bnei Yisrael heard about this decree, they began to groan and lament. (Rashi and Ritva)

The Bnei Yisrael had hoped that the king who had made them work hard would die and, perhaps, a new king would arise in his place and give them some relief. But after the king died, they saw a new king arise who not only did not give them any relief from their previous arduous labour, but who placed even greater burdens upon them. So, they groaned after the king of Egypt died because their hope was lost, and they could not find anything to do other than to daven to the G-d of their forefathers to save them. (Ramban, Rashbitz, Pesach Doros)

Until the king died, the Bnei Yisrael were afraid to complain and to cry out about their situation or because the Egyptians did not leave them alone to groan since the Egyptians worried that Hashem would redeem them. But, when the king died, they were able to groan and cry out since when a king

dies, the custom is to eulogise him and cry. Therefore, that's when the Bnei Yisrael cried, and while the Egyptians thought that the Bnei Yisrael were crying about the death of the king, the truth is that they were crying out to Hashem from the labour and this is the intention of the *pasuk*, "And their cries went up to Hashem from the labour," meaning that only Hashem knew that their cries were about the labour and not about the death of the king. (Zevach Pesach, the Shelah, Midrash Haggadah, etc.)

It's the nature of man that he doesn't feel *tza'ar* while he's busy working, only after he rests from it. During the life of the king, the Bnei Yisrael did not have any rest from the labour that they did and so they still did not feel so much the difficulty of the labour. But, when the king died and they were given the opportunity to rest, since all they built was for the needs of the king, as it says (Shemos 1:11), "...and built the storehouse cities for Pharaoh," and with their resting, they felt their broken bodies and their suffering from the labour, and they had time to cry out. (Maasei Hashem and Divrei Shaul)

וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קִלְנוֹ. כִּמָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת נַאֲקָתָם, וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ, אֶת אַבְרָהָם, אֶת יִצְחָק, וְאֶת יַעֲקֹב: " (שמות ב:כד)

Why does the *Baal HaHaggadah* bring the *pasuk* **וַיִּשְׁמַע** in order to prove that Hashem heard our cries, when the continuation of the previous *pasuk* that was brought already mentions it: **וַתַּעַל שְׁוֹעָתָם אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים מִן הָעֲבָדָה**?

The *pasuk* **וַיִּשְׁמַע** is brought in order to inform us that they were not fit to be answered in their own merit – they were only answered in the *z'chus Avos* (the merit of the forefathers). (Rashi, Shibali Haleket, Zevach Pesach, etc.)

וַיִּרְא אֶת עֲנִינוֹ. זוֹ פְּרִישׁוֹת דֶּרֶךְ אֲרָץ. כִּמָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּרְא אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וַיַּדַּע אֱלֹקִים: " (שמות ב:כה)

Why does it explain **עֲנִינוֹ**, "And saw our affliction," as **פְּרִישׁוֹת דֶּרֶךְ אֲרָץ**, "the breaking up of family life," and not as speaking about the difficulty of the slavery?

"And saw our affliction" – these are things that are between a man and his wife, as the *pasuk* says (Bereishis 31:50, Lavan warning Yaakov), "If you afflict (תענה) my daughters...", which Rashi explains it to mean "by refusing them conjugal rights." And so, in the *pasuk* (Shemos 21:10), "...by diminishing her conjugal rights (וענתה)." The *lashon* of **עֲנִינוֹ** "affliction" implies withholding conjugal rights because it is a great affliction and, therefore, that's why it explains it here as referring to breaking up the family, separating husbands from wives. (Rashi)

Who caused this פְּרִישׁוֹת דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, “breaking up of family life,” to happen?

Based upon the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:12), the Egyptians caused the Bnei Yisrael to be separated from their wives, saying, “If they go and sleep in their houses, they will not rise quickly and will not be able to give the number of bricks required,” therefore, the Egyptians made the Bnei Yisrael sleep in the fields. (Rashbam and Orchas Chaim)

Because of the decree that their sons must be thrown into the Nile, the Bnei Yisrael themselves chose to separate from their wives, saying, “Why should we give birth for nothing? Because afterwards, they will throw the children into the Nile.” (Rashbam, Kalbo, etc.)

Why did the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* choose to prove the disruption of family life from the *pasuk* (Shemos 2:25), “Hashem saw the Bnei Yisrael, and Hashem knew”?

The intention of “Hashem saw the Bnei Yisrael, and Hashem knew” was that Hashem commanded the world in *peru u'revu* (being fruitful and multiplying) and He saw that the Egyptians were preventing the Bnei Yisrael from doing this mitzvah. (Rashi and Peirush Kadmon)

The *lashon* of “Hashem knew” hints to the “breaking up of family life” because *yediah* is a hint to conjugal rights (see Bereishis 4:25, I Shmuel 1:19. (Rashi)

וְאֵת עֲמָלָנוּ. אֵלֵינוּ הַבָּנִים. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כָּל הַבֵּן הֵילוּד הַיָּאֲרָה תְּשָׁלִיכוּהוּ, וְכָל הַבֵּת תַּחֲסִין:" (שְׁמוֹת א:כב)

How do we darshan עֲמָלָנוּ, “our burden (toil),” to mean הַבָּנִים, “the children”?

Children are the toil of a person and the work of his hands. (Rashi)

We find that children are called עֲמַל, as it's written (Iyov 5:7), “A man is born to toil” – lit: a man gives birth to עֲמַל. (Peirush Kadmon, Rashbatz, Zevach Pesach)

It's called עֲמַל because it comes from the strength and vigour of a man (see e.g., Bereishis 49:3, where Yaakov describes Reuven as, “My might and the first fruit of my vigour.”).

Labouring in vain (i.e., for nothing) is called עֲמַל. Here, Pharaoh commanded that the children be destroyed – as the *pasuk* says, “Every son born you will throw in the Nile,” so they were labouring for nothing. (Orchas Chaim)

As is known, the more that the Bnei Yisrael increased in number, the more their labour increased and, as a result of this increased labour, they completed the labour of 400 years in a shorter time period, and this was the reason that the *ge'ulah* (redemption) came earlier. Indeed, when the Egyptians threw their sons into the Nile, they were diminished, and because of this, they needed to complete the labour in a longer time or through harsher subjugation, and, therefore, it explains “our burden – these are our children” because as a result of the children being thrown into the Nile, the labour was increased for them. (Birchas HaShir and Chasan Sofer)

Why was it necessary to bring the *pasuk*, “Every son that is born you will throw into the Nile”?

The *Ba'al HaHaggadah* brings this *pasuk* in order to teach that the intention of, “He saw our affliction,” is that Hashem saw the children who were cast into the Nile. (Rabbi Yehudah bar Yakar and the Ritva)

Rav Shila says on this *pasuk* that none of the children who were thrown into the Nile died. Rather, the Nile ejected them to the *midbar Mitzrayim* and Hashem brought a *sela* (rock) for each of them that nursed them and another rock that rubbed them with oil, as it's written (Devarim 32:13), “Nursing them with honey from a *sela* (rock) and oil from a flint *tzur* (rock).” (Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer)

Why does the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* bring the end of the *pasuk*, “but every daughter you shall let live”?

The intention of Pharaoh was to let the girls live for the sake of debauchery as *Chazal* say in Shemos Rabbah (see 1:18, where it speaks of Pharaoh's intention to let the Egyptians take the Jewish girls for wives). (Ritva)

וְאֵת לַחֲצֹנוֹ. זֶה הַדְחָק. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְגַם־רֵאִיתִי אֶת־הַלֹּחֶץ, אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לּוֹחֲצִים אוֹתָם:" (שמות ג:ט)

What is meant by the word *הַדְחָק*, “pressure,” explaining *לַחֲצֹנוֹ*, “our oppression”?

Rashi and other Rishonim explain it based on the *Targum* (the Aramaic translation) דּוּחָקָא (squeezing, pressing) that it refers to the Egyptians striking and forcing the Bnei Yisrael to pay the quota of bricks (see e.g., Shemos 5:14, which speaks about the Jewish taskmasters being beaten for not meeting the quota).

Ritva explains it as referring to *שַׂמַּד* (persecution). When the Egyptians saw that they were unable to destroy the Bnei Yisrael, they began to pressure them to convert to the faith of the Egyptians and mix with them.

The *lashon* of *לַחֵץ* “oppression” implies two things: either a lack of supply, as we find in Yeshayahu 30:20, “...meagre bread and scant (*לַחֵץ*) water...,” or a pressure on the body in a narrow place, as we find in Bamidbar 22:25, “...and pressed (*תַּלְחֵץ*) Bilaam's foot against the wall...” Here, it's impossible to explain it from the *lashon* of a lack of supply because it says (Shemos 16:3), “...where we sat by the meat pot, where we ate bread to satiation...” and (Bamidbar 11:5), “We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.” Therefore, *לַחֲצֹנוֹ* is explained as *הַדְחָק* because they did not have a spacious place, and they were pressed into Goshen in a narrow place. (Midrash Haggadah and the Gra)

What is the proof from the *pasuk*, “I have also seen how the Egyptians are oppressing them”?

The Ritva explains, according to his understanding that לְחַצְנוּ refers to שְׂמַד (persecution), that the Egyptians pressured the Bnei Yisrael to convert to the faith of the Egyptians and the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* proves this from the *pasuk*, “I have also seen הלחץ (the oppression),” because the fact that the Egyptians were pressuring the Bnei Yisrael to convert was a reason to redeem them quickly, as Hashem worried that, perhaps, the Bnei Yisrael would not be able to withstand the *nisayon* (test) because a portion of them had already begun to convert, nullifying their *bris milah* (circumcision) and going after other powers and sorcerers.

[ד] וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם, בְּיַד חֲזָקָה, וּבְזֹרַע נְטוּיָה, וּבְמֶרָא גָדוֹל וּבְאִתּוֹת וּבְמִפְתִּיּוֹת: (דברים כו:ח)

וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם. לֹא עַל יְדֵי מֶלֶאךָ, וְלֹא עַל יְדֵי שָׂרָף. וְלֹא עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ. אֲלֵא הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּכָבוֹדוֹ וּבְעֶצְמוֹ. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְעִבְרָתִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּלִילָה הַזֶּה, וְהִפֵּיתִי כָל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, מֵאָדָם וְעַד בְּהֵמָה, וּבְכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים, אֲנִי ה'." (שמות יב:יב)

"וְעִבְרָתִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּלִילָה הַזֶּה," אֲנִי וְלֹא מֶלֶאךָ. "וְהִפֵּיתִי כָל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם," אֲנִי וְלֹא שָׂרָף. "וּבְכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים," אֲנִי וְלֹא הַשְּׁלִיחַ. "אֲנִי ה'," אֲנִי הוּא וְלֹא אֲחֵר:

How does the *pasuk* וְעִבְרָתִי, “I will pass...,” prove that Hashem took us out בְּכָבוֹדוֹ וּבְעֶצְמוֹ, “in His glory, Himself”?

The entire parsha from where the *pasuk* is taken speaks in the *lashon* of Moshe, so it would have been fitting for it to say, “Hashem passed through Egypt and struck every firstborn...,” so why does it, instead, say, “I will pass...,” we can explain from this (i.e., the change in *lashon*) that it comes to teach that “I will pass” means “I myself,” not through a *malach* (angel). (Ramban and Rashbatz)

What’s the explanation of וּבְכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים, אֲנִי ה', “...and on all the gods of Egypt, I will make judgments, I Hashem”?

According to the Mechilta, “[idols] of stone melted, and of wood rotted, and of metal were made into a heap,” [RS: Rashi on Shemos 12:12 brings a slightly different girsah] meaning the protection, which caused them to stand has been removed from them, and immediately they melted and rotted, and with this it was known that it was מַכַּת אֱלֹהִים (a plague from Hashem) because there is no sovereign power that rules over another power to cancel it – only Hashem alone. (Ritva)

How do we explain the contradiction between Hashem saying that “in His glory, Himself” would carry things out, yet the *pasuk* (Shemos 12:23) speaks of Moshe warning the Bnei Yisrael that they must put blood on their lintel and doorposts, otherwise the destroyer (*mashchis*) will enter their homes?

Although Hashem Himself passed through Egypt, the *malachim hamashchisim* (the destroying angels) were with Him and it was through them that Hashem destroyed, as we see in Zachariah 14:5, “...Hashem, my G-d, will come, all the holy ones with You,” and Shemos 23:28, “I will send the wasp....” The intention is not that the wasp alone killed, whereas Hashem turned aside from them, but certainly the wasp will be a tool of His desire, and so, here, the *malach* (angel) will be a tool of His destruction. (Da’as Zekeinim and Drashos HaRan)

Mashchis is not intended to mean the *malach hamashchis* (the angel of destruction), but, rather, it is a name for destruction, so the *pasuk* should read, “...and not let the destruction come into your home....” (Avudraham, Abarbanel, Shevli Leket)

The *mashchish* was a burning stale/rotten air that Hashem initiated in a wondrous way, as it would enter in the firstborns by way of the mouth and nostrils, and suddenly went to their heart. This *mashchish* (destroyer) wasn’t able to distinguish between a *tzaddik* and a *rasha* because it was not a *ba’al da’as* (capable of understanding) and it was from a *neis* (miracle) from Hashem that in the merit of the *korban Pesach* and *bris milah* (circumcision) that the burning stale/rotten air did not enter into the homes of the Bnei Yisrael. (Abarbanel)

The entire world is full of *mazikim* (damaging spiritual forces) that stand ready to destroy man. The fact that man is not harmed by them is because there are *malachaim tovim* (good angels) upon him that have been appointed to guard him. In the event that these guardians would be removed from man, he would be immediately damaged by the *mazikim*. It’s explicit that the firstborns were not struck through a *malach* (an angel) or a *seref* (a fiery angel) because the firstborns were not deserving of being struck by higher angels. Instead, Hashem Himself removed from upon the firstborns the protection of these good angels and immediately they were damaged as a result of the *mazikim*. (Rashbatz)

Chazal teach regarding *makkos bechoros* that all the firstborns died, whether they were the firstborn from the mother’s side or from the father’s side. Because of infidelity, there were cases where only Hashem could know who the father of a child was, and whether or not that child was a firstborn to that father. Therefore, it says, “I will strike every firstborn...” I and not a *seref* (fiery angel) – because only Hashem is able to strike such a firstborn, where the paternity is in question. But the firstborns who were known to be firstborns (i.e., when it was a firstborn to the mother), those were struck through the *mashchis* – and since the *mashchis* was there, the Bnei Yisrael needed to place blood on their lintel and doorposts to protect them. (Birchas HaShir)

Chazal teach that if there was no firstborn in the house, then the oldest child would die. The firstborns themselves were struck by Hashem, as it says, “I will strike every firstborn...,” but in a place that did not have a firstborn and the eldest child in the house died, it was the *mashchis* that struck them. (HaMarbeh L’Saper)

In truth, it was not fitting that the firstborns – who were uncircumcised and impure - should be killed by Hashem Himself. Should the firstborns be touched by the elevated hand of the one Whose name is holy and awesome? Rather, Hashem only struck them and, afterwards, the *mashchis* killed them, as implied by, “I will strike every firstborn...,” which suggests that it was merely the “striking” that Hashem was doing because He was the one capable of determining if the one being struck was a firstborn, but it was the *mashchis* who killed them. (HaMarbeh L’Saper)

Similar to the previous question, the *pasuk* (Shemos 12:23) says that Hashem will not allow the destroyer (i.e., the *Malach Hamaves*, angel of death) to enter your houses – this suggests that the *Malach Hamaves* was also present on that night – but it says, “I and no *malach*,” so how do we understand this?

We need to say that [the mention of the *Malach Hamaves*] is intended on ordinary deaths that occur naturally during the night among the masses of the large nation of Israel. There were then “600,000 fighting men on foot” (Shemos 12:37) “between the ages of 20 and above” (Rashi), besides for women and children. The possibility of natural death would be non-existent because there would not be at all there [i.e., in the homes which had placed blood on the lintel and doorposts as Hashem had commanded], the passage of the *Malach Hamaves* on this night (meaning he was present, but he couldn’t enter the homes of the Bnei Yisrael – so there were no natural deaths among the Bnei Yisrael that night).

[NB: We typically see in the modern era around 1,000 deaths per 100,000 people per year. In a population of 3 million (600,000 men plus women and children), that would mean 30,000 deaths in a year, which works out to approximately 82 each day.] (Baruch She’amar Haggadah)

What is the difference between a מַלְאָךְ (“angel”), a שָׂרָף (“fiery angel”), and a שְׁלִיחַ (“messenger/agent”)?

Malach refers to a *malach* that is sent to strike with a plague, as with the matter that is said by Dovid HaMelech (II Shmuel 24:16) and by Sancherev (II Melachim 19:35) (that there, a *malach* was sent to bring a plague). *Seref* – from *Serafim* goes out a fire that burns His enemies, as we see with Eliyahu HaNavi that a fire descended according to his word and burned up the leader of fifty men. And it’s *darshened* from, “I will strike every firstborn...” “I and not a *seref*,” to say that Hashem Himself will descend and He will not send a *malach*, but also that the striking itself will be through Hashem and not like a *malach* that takes revenge against His hated ones before Him by being appointed to strike. *Shliach* is *hamalach hagadol* (the big angel) called *Metatron* (see e.g., the episode in the gemara with Acher in Chagigah 15b) – he is the messenger/agent who is sent by Hashem for all the deeds that are done on earth. And, here, Hashem did not send him, but came Himself. (Ramban)

בְּיָד חֲזָקָה. זוֹ הַדִּבָּר. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הִנֵּה יָד ה' הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה, בַּסּוּסִים בַּחֲמֹרִים, בַּגְּמָלִים, בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן, דָּבָר כְּבִד מְאֹד:" (שמות ט:ג)

Why does the *lashon* of **בְּיָד חֲזָקָה**, “with a mighty hand,” refer to the plague of **דִּבָּר**, “pestilence”?

We see this from the fact that before the plague of *dever* was brought upon the Egyptians, it says (Shemos 9:3), “Behold, the *yad Hashem* will strike in your livestock...” and it’s implicit from this that *dever* comes from the *yad Hashem*.

וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה. זוֹ הַחֶרֶב. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַחֲרָבוֹ שְׁלֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ, נְטוּיָה עַל יְרוּשָׁלַּיִם:" (דברי הימים א כא:טו)

It says that **זֶרַע נְטוּיָה**, “an outstretched arm,” refers to **הַחֶרֶב**, “the sword.” Where do we find that there was a sword in Egypt?

“The sword” is a name for the retribution/vengeance that Hashem did in Egypt, via (Vayikra 26:25), “I will bring a sword against you, retribution for the bris (covenant),” referring to the *bris* of Avraham Avinu. And so, the *pasuk* brought by the *Ba’al HaHaggadah* (I Divrei HaYamim 21:16), “...his drawn sword in his hand...,” speaking of the sword that comes to take retribution against those who rebel against Hashem. (Ritva)

“The sword” refers to the sword that the firstborns took to kill their own fathers after they pleaded with Pharaoh to let the Bnei Yisrael go out lest they die, and Pharaoh refused, as we see in Hallel Hagadol (Tehillim 136:10), “He struck the Egyptians with their firstborns” – this is the sword that the *Ba’al HaHaggadah* mentions here, as this was a complete reversal from the nature of the world that came from Hashem. (Rashbam, Avurraham, Kalbo, etc.)

The *sheim hameforesh* (Yud Key Vuv Key, Hashem’s unspoken name) is called “the sword of Moshe.” (Shevli Leket)

How did the *Baal HaHaggadah* determine that it was *davka* these *makkos* – *dever* and *makkos bechoros* – that were referred to by the *lashon* “*yad chazakah*” and “*zeroa netuya*”?

Dever included the first five *makkos*, whereas *makkos bechoros* included the last five *makkos*. Each of the five *makkos* included in *dever* and *makkos bechoros* is called a “*yad*” (hand), as each contains five *makkos* corresponding to the five fingers of the hand. Therefore, the *Baal HaHaggadah* mentions the *makkah* of *dever* in order to hint at the first five *makkos* that are included in *dever* and the hint to this is through the word “*yad*” that was said by the *makkah* of *dever* (as noted above). Afterwards, he says regarding *zeroa netuya* that this is the sword, which hints to *makkos bechoros*, that with it was completed the latter *makkos* (and the *eser makkos* (Ten Plagues) hints to two hands, that each hand struck five *makkos*). (Gra and Maaseh b’Rebbe Eliezer)

וּבְמִוְרָא גָדוֹל, זוּ גְלוּי שְׁכִינָה. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אוּ הִנֵּסָה אֱלֹקִים, לְבוֹא לְקַחַת לּוֹ גּוֹי מִקְרֵב גּוֹי, בְּמִסּוֹת בָּאתָ וּבְמוֹפְתִים וּבְמִלְחָמָה, וּבִיד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה, וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדוֹלִים, כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָכֶם ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֶיךָ:" (דברים ד:לד)

It says that **וּבְמִוְרָא גָדוֹל**, "with great awe," refers to **גְלוּי שְׁכִינָה**, "the revelation of the *Shechina*." When was the *Shechina* revealed to the Bnei Yisrael?

The "revelation of the *Shechina*" was with *makkos bechoros* (the striking of the firstborn). Even though it was possible to strike them through a *shliach* (messenger), Hashem Himself struck them. And so, the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* brings this from, "Has Hashem ever attempted to take unto Himself a nation," which implies that Hashem Himself came and took us out and that He did not take us out through a *shliach*. (Rashi, Rashbam, Shevli Leket, etc.)

"ולכל המורא הגדול, זו קריעת ים סוף" (And with all the great awe – this is *krias yam suf*, the splitting of the sea). At *krias yam suf*, they saw the *Shechina* and they said, "זה קלי ואנוהו" (This is my G-d and I will glorify Him). *Chazal* teach (Mechilta on Beshalach) that a maidservant saw at the *yam* what Yechezkel ben Buzi (the prophet Ezekiel) did not see (and he saw the *ma'aseh merkava*, the workings of the Divine chariot). (Sifrei)

The "revelation of the *Shechina*" refers to seeing the *malach* that went before them, as it says (Shemos 13:21), "And Hashem went before them by day in a pillar of cloud..." (Rashbatz)

The "revelation of the *Shechina*" refers to what Hashem revealed in *makkos bechoros* by showing who were firstborns from the father and who were firstborns from the mother. They saw from this that He knows what's concealed, as it says (Yirmiyahu 23:24), "If a man enters a hiding place, do I not see him?" Therefore, **מוֹרָא גָדוֹל** ("a great awe") entered into the heart of each one to not sin in secret.

וּבְאִתּוֹת. זֶה הַמָּטָה, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְאֵת הַמָּטָה הַזֶּה תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ, אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ אֶת הָאֵתָת:" (שמות ד:יז)

What does it mean that **וּבְאִתּוֹת**, "with signs," refers to **הַמָּטָה**, "the staff"?

The intention is for the signs that were done before Pharaoh, which were done via the staff, as it says (Shemos 7:10-12) that Aaron cast down his staff and it swallowed the staffs of the sorcerers. We see also (Shemos 4:8) that Hashem refers to Moshe's staff changing into a snake (in order to prove to the people that Hashem sent him) as *os rishon* ("the first sign"). (Peirush Kadmon and Shevli Leket)

וּבְמִפְתִּים. זֶה הַדָּם. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְנִתְּתִי מוֹפְתִים, בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם, **וְאֵשׁ, וְתַמְרוֹת עֵשֶׂן: " (יואל ג:ג)**

וּבְמִפְתִּים - זֶה הַדָּם, "With wonders – this refers to the blood" – to what blood does it refer?

Several Rishonim explain that the intention here is for *makkos dam* (the plague of blood) and the Ritva explains that "wonders" is in the plural because in this plague of *dam* there were many wonders, as the clear waters throughout the seas of the world turned to blood. A Yisrael and an Egyptian would drink from a single cup, and the side from which the Egyptian drank would be blood and the side from which the Yisrael drank would be water. And in the Midrash of the Rashbi, they were made like a burning fire that filled all of Egypt with smoke and we see a proof for this from what continues after, that is says, "Blood, fire, and columns of smoke."

The intention here is not for *makkos dam*. Rather, it refers to the wonder that Moshe did before the eyes of the nation (Shemos 4:9, 30), that he spilled water, and it became blood on the dry land. Through this sign, all of Yisrael believed in him. (Orchas Haim and Gra)

Wonders is in the plural, referring to two bloods: the first was the blood from the sign that Moshe showed to the Bnei Yisrael and the second was *makkos dam* that came from striking the Nile. (Midrash Haggadah)

The intention is for *makkos shechin* (boils), that it boiled their blood. The plague was brought about through (Shemos 9:10) *piach hakiv'shan* (soot from a kiln), which was burning like fire, and resembled columns of smoke, therefore, the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* brings a proof from the *pasuk* (Yoel 3:3), "I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke." (Pesach Doros)

There are three *makkos* included in *dam*: *arov* ("wild animals"), *shechin* (boils), and *choshech* (darkness), which is why it says "wonders" in the plural. *Arov* because animals entered into their homes and killed them, devouring everything that they were able to and for their being spillers of blood, they were called by the name *dam*. *Shechin* is called because of the stench of *dam* and the blood loss that come from it. *Choshech* is called *dam* because the light of the sun is reddish and dark, as it says (Yoel 3:3), "I will show wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth," and afterwards it says (3:4), "The sun will turn to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and fearsome day of Hashem comes." The intention is not for *makkos dam* because it says, "I will show wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth...", and not in the water! Therefore, it continues and says, "...blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke," "blood" is a hint to the evil animals (i.e., *arov*), "fire" is a hint to *shechin* that it is like a fire burning with boiling the blood, and "columns of smoke" are a hint to darkness. (Abarbanel)

דָּבָר אַחֵר. "בְּיָד חֲזָקָה" שְׁתֵּימִם. "וּבִזְרֹעַ נְטוּיָה" שְׁתֵּימִם. "וּבִמּוֹרָא גָדוֹל" שְׁתֵּימִם. "וּבִאֲתוֹת" שְׁתֵּימִם. "וּבִמִּפְתִּים" שְׁתֵּימִם: אֵלּוּ עֶשֶׂר מַכּוֹת שֶׁהֵבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרִים בְּמִצְרִים, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן:

Why does the *Baal HaHaggadah* add דָּבָר אַחֵר, “another explanation”?

Until now, the *Baal HaHaggadah* explained the verses in a way that taught only a portion of the *makkos* that struck the Egyptians. And now, he wants to prove all Ten Plagues from the verses and learn from them. (Shibali Haleket)

There’s no contradiction between the two different explanations. “Another explanation” comes to add another matter: that the Ten Plagues are hinted at in the verse. (Maharal)

How do we understand deriving שְׁתֵּימִם, “two” *makkos*, from each word?

It only needed to teach בְּיָד (with a hand). Since it says בְּיָד חֲזָקָה (with a strong hand), this is to teach two, referring to two *makkos*. So, too, with וּבִזְרֹעַ נְטוּיָה (and with an outstretched arm) and וּבִמּוֹרָא גָדוֹל (and with great awe) – it could have just said וּבִזְרֹעַ (and with an arm) and וּבִמּוֹרָא (and with awe) alone – and the fact that it adds another word to each again teaches two. And so, too, in place of the words וּבִאֲתוֹת (and with signs) and וּבִמִּפְתִּים (and with wonders), it could have said וּבְאוֹת (in the singular for each), but each word (being in the plural) comes to teach two *makkos* (Chazal often point out that the plural points to a minimum of two). (Rashbam and Kalbo)

THE TEN PLAGUES

Three of the plagues were done through Aharon, three through Moshe, three by Hashem, and one by all of them. Blood, frogs, and lice, which affected the land, were done through Aharon. Hail, locusts, and darkness, which affected the air, were done through Moshe. Wild animals, sickness, and death of the firstborn were done by Hashem. The plague of boils was done by all of them. (Midrash Rabbah, Da’as Zekeinim)

The Midrash teaches that Hashem brought the plagues *middah keneged middah* (measure for measure). In other words, each one of the plagues was to punish the Egyptians for something that they had done to persecute the Children of Israel.

1. DAM (BLOOD) – WHY?

The Egyptians saw that the Children of Israel would immerse in a *mikvah* when they became impure or because of *taharas hamishpacha* (family purity). So, the Egyptians withheld water from them so that they could not immerse in it in an attempt to stop them from the mitzvah of procreation – so Hashem turned all of the Egyptians’ water to blood. (Yalkut Shemoni)

Another reason: The Egyptians forced the Children of Israel to draw water for them. (Midrash Tanchuma)

DID YOU KNOW?

**The Nile was only made into blood for a very brief period, during which the fish immediately died because of the blood, and, afterwards, the Nile returned to its prior state. When the Torah says that the Egyptians were not able to drink from the water of the Nile, it was not because of the blood, as we don't find that they asked for the plague to be removed, but because of the fish that died in the Nile and the stench that was in the air. And a proof of this is that we see that Pharaoh's magicians were able to turn the Nile to blood – if it hadn't returned to its prior state of being water, how would they have been able to do so?! (Chizkuni)*

**Even when an Egyptian spit – it turned to blood! (Yalkut Shemoni)*

2. TZIFARDEA (FROGS) – WHY?

The Egyptians told the Children of Israel to go out and bring them insects and other disgusting creatures, so that they could play with them. So, Hashem brought frogs on the Egyptians until the sounds of the frogs could be heard in the stomachs of the Egyptians. (Yalkut Shemoni)

DID YOU KNOW?

The frogs would enter into the Egyptians' ovens, but they didn't die! They would enter into the bread baking in the oven and when the Egyptians would eat the bread, the frogs would go into their stomachs and they would jump there and cry out in a loud voice, until the Egyptians would die. (Tamtzis HaZohar)

3. KINIM (LICE) – WHY?

The Egyptians would make the Children of Israel sweep their houses, and their streets and their markets, therefore, Hashem changed all the dust in Egypt into lice until there was no more dust to sweep. (Yalkut Shemoni)

Another reason: The Egyptians prevented the Children of Israel from taking baths and washing their clothes. (Midrash Sechel Tov)

DID YOU KNOW?

**The plague of lice began on the first of the Hebrew month of Tishrei, i.e., the date of Rosh Hashanah. This was the day on which Pharaoh's magicians declared (Shemos 8:15) regarding the plague of lice, which they were unable to duplicate, "It is the finger of G-d!" admitting that it had come from Hashem. From that day and after, although still not redeemed, the Jews no longer had to work like slaves during the six months that they would remain in Egypt (See Rosh Hashana 11a). (Shichas Leket)*

**There were 14 types of lice brought on the Egyptians. (Yalkut Shemoni)*

4. AROV (WILD BEASTS) – WHY?

The Egyptians told the Children of Israel to go and bring bears and lions and make games and contests with the animals, therefore, Hashem brought all the wild animals against the Egyptians. (Yalkut Shemoni)

DID YOU KNOW?

The plague of wild animals brought lions, wolves, bears, leopards, etc., and they entered into the homes of the Egyptians. The Egyptians locked their doors and Hashem sent a wild animal from the sea and its name was Siloni. The Siloni would enter through the windows of the Egyptians' homes, and it would open the door so that the wild animals could enter and eat the Egyptians. (Otzar Midrashim)

5. DEVER (SICKNESS) – WHY?

The Egyptians made the Children of Israel shepherds of horses, camels, donkeys, cows, and sheep. Therefore, sickness came and killed all the animals that the Children of Israel shepherded, until there were no animals left for the Jews to shepherd. (Yalkut Shemoni)

DID YOU KNOW?

If an animal was in the hands of an Egyptian, and there was a Jew with a grievance regarding that animal (e.g., a claim that a portion of that animal belonged to the Jew) – such an animal would be saved, thus making it known that the grievance should be decided in the Jew's favour. (Midrash Rabbah)

6. SHECHIN (BOILS) – WHY?

The Egyptians made the Children of Israel servants to warm the cold and to cool the hot. Therefore, boils came on them in order that they would not be able to wash in either hot or cold. (Yalkut Shemoni)

Another reason: The slavery was so intense that the Children of Israel did not even have a moment to scratch themselves from the hard work. (Midrash Aggadah)

DID YOU KNOW?

**Since Pharaoh had not done teshuva (repented) following the first five plagues, from the sixth plague and after, even if Pharaoh had changed his mind and wanted to return, Hashem strengthened his heart in order that Hashem could collect the entire judgment against Pharaoh for his transgressions. (Midrash Rabbah)*

**According to some, there were three types of boils: (1) dry on the inside and on the outside; (2) wet on the inside and on the outside; and (3) dry on the inside and wet on the outside. (Meseches Bechoros) According to others, there were 24 types of boils. (Midrash Sh'loscha v'Arba'ah)*

7. BARAD (HAIL) – WHY?

The Egyptians made Israel plant gardens, vineyards, trees, and orchards. Therefore, hail was brought upon them and broke everything that Israel had planted. (Shemos Rabbah)

DID YOU KNOW?

**How did the hail fall? First there were brilliant flashes of lightning and then there were booming sounds of thunder, then the earth shook, and then the stones of hail fell – only there was no rain! (Midrash HaGadol) [And this explains why Moshe was able to scratch a mark on the wall and tell Pharaoh that, when the sun reaches there, then the hail will fall. (See Rashi on Shemos 9:18) Normally, when it hails, there are clouds in the sky blocking the sunlight.]*

**One half of the hail was ice, and the other half was fire. So it was that when the Egyptians were struck, they would be burned by the ice and then burned by the fire. (Midrash HaGadol)*

**Come and see how great the mercy of Hashem is! Even at a time of His anger, He still has mercy on the wicked and on their animals because the plague of hail wasn't sent against them, only against their crops and produce, so as to avoid harm to those who took care and guarded themselves and their animals in order that they would not be struck by the hail. (Midrash Rabbah)*

8. ARBEH (LOCUSTS) – WHY?

The Egyptians made Israel sow wheat and barley, and beans and lentils, and all types of *kitniyos* (legumes). Therefore, locusts came upon them and ate all that Israel had sown. (Yalkut Shemoni)

DID YOU KNOW?

**The Egyptians were happy when the locusts came! They filled barrels with them and pickled them. But Hashem wasn't about to let them gain from a plague intended to punish them, so he brought a westerly wind, which didn't leave behind a single one – even the ones that they had pickled in their pots and in their barrels flew away! (Shemos Rabah)*

**Some say there were 7 types of locusts, and some say that there were 4 types of locusts. (Midrash HaGadol)*

9. CHOSHECH (DARKNESS) – WHY?

When an Egyptian would eat a meal at night, he would bring a Jew and sit the Jew opposite him. He would light a lamp and place it on the head of the Jew, and he would say to the Jew, "See that you don't bend your head from side to side, otherwise I'll cut your head off." (Midrash HaGadol)

Another reason: The Egyptians conspired to imprison the Children of Israel. (Midrash Tanchuma)

DID YOU KNOW?

**During the first three days of darkness, if an Egyptian was sitting and wanted to stand, he could stand, or if he was standing and wanted to sit, he could sit. But, during the second three days, if an Egyptian was sitting, he was not able to stand, and if he was standing, he was not able to sit, and a person who was lying down was not able to sit up. (Midrash Rabbah)*

**Six days of darkness took place in Egypt, and the seventh day of darkness took place at the sea, where, just as it had been in Egypt, it was light for the Jews and dark for the Egyptians. (Midrash Rabbah)*

**This darkness was not the absence of the light of the sun, like at night. It was a very thick mist that descended from Heaven which one could perceive as having substance to it. Had this not been the case, they would have been able to use lamps. (Ramban)*

10. MAKKOS BECHOROS (DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN) – WHY?

The Egyptians wanted to kill the Children of Israel. (Midrash Tanchuma)

The entire time that the Children of Israel are in exile, *Rochel Imeinu*, our mother Rachel, cries over her children – and not only once, but the entire time that they are in exile. And because the Egyptians caused Rachel to cry out loud, therefore, Hashem punished them with crying out loud - as

it says by the death of the firstborn – “And there was a great cry in all of the land of Egypt.” (Tamtzis HaZochar)

DID YOU KNOW?

**The firstborn to every man died (even if the mother had previously had children). The first born to every woman died (even if the father had previously had children). The firstborn of every animal died. Firstborn boys died. Firstborn girls died. (Midrash Tehilim and Piskta d’Rav Kahana) Where there was no firstborn at home, the oldest in the house would die. (Ramban)*

**When the Egyptians were informed that the last plague was going to take place, the firstborn children went to their fathers and said, “Everything that Moshe has said has been brought upon us. Don’t you want us to live? Take these Hebrews out from among us, and, if not, we will die!” They answered to them saying, “Even if every Egyptian dies, [the Hebrews] are not going out from here!” What did the firstborn children do? They went to Pharaoh and screamed, saying, “Please, take out this nation! Because of them, evil comes upon us and upon you.” He said to his servants, “Go and violently beat them.” What did the firstborns do? Immediately, they went out and each one took a sword and killed his father,” as we say in Hallel HaGadol (aka Tehillim 136:10), “[Hashem] struck the Egyptians with their firstborn,” and sixty myriad were killed as a result. (Midrash Tehillim)*

**After the last plague, Pharaoh went running through the streets, calling out, “Where do Moshe and Aharon live?” Young Jewish children played with him and said, “Where are you going, and who are you looking for?” Pharaoh told them that he was looking for Moshe and Aharon. Some of the children told him that Moshe and Aharon lived here, and others told him that Moshe and Aharon lived somewhere else, and still others told him a different place. Finally, Pharaoh found Moshe’s house and said to him, “Rise, go out from my nation!” Moshe said to him, “Are we thieves that we should leave in the night? Hashem commanded us, ‘No man will go out from his home until morning.’” (Shemos 12:22) (Midrash Tehillim and Midrash Vayosha)*

**Bisya, the daughter of Pharaoh, who rescued Moshe from the Nile, gave him his name, and raised him, was a firstborn. Moshe davened that Bisya be spared from dying in the plague. (Midrash Tehillim)*

The Egyptians wanted to drown Jewish babies in the Nile, so Hashem drowned the Egyptians in the sea. (Midrash Tanchuma)

All of the above on the Ten Plagues based upon the sefer Midrash Leil Shimurim

Why are we accustomed to take out a drop of wine from our cups with the mention of each word of “blood, fire, and columns of smoke”, the Ten Plagues, and the mnemonic of Rabbi Yehudah?

The total number of drops that we take out is 16 (3 plus 10 plus 3), which is *keneged* (corresponds to) the letters “yud” and “vuv”, alluding to the first two letters of the name of Hashem’s sword, יוה”ך, with which He struck Pharaoh (the name can be broken up into יו”ך, meaning He struck 16). (Mishnah Berurah)

The reason we spill these drops from our cups is so that we shouldn’t drink wine on which was mentioned the name of the *makkos* (plagues). (פסח מעובין)

It’s an allusion to the words of the Egyptian sorcerers (Shemos 8:15), “This is the finger of Elokim.” (Otzar Ta’amei HaMinhagim) [This is also why some people are accustomed to *davka* use their finger to remove the drops!]

It's a hint that through each of the *makkos* (plagues), Hashem diminished the Egyptians. (Ta'amei HaMinhagim)

Why does it say that these are the *makkos* (plagues) that Hashem brought on the “*Mitzrim b'Mitzrayim*” (Egyptians in Egypt)?

Because these plagues were brought on them precisely in Egypt – at the sea, there were additional *makkos* (as we see from the discussion of Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva, where they discuss how many *makkos* took place at the sea). Here, we are speaking only about the *makkos* brought in Egypt. (מגיד דבריו ליעקב)

Rashi says (on Shemos 12:12, which says that Hashem struck all of the firstborns) that even the Egyptian firstborns who were not in Egypt (i.e., they were in other locations) at the time of *makkos bechoros* (the striking of the firstborns) died. From here, it's evident that all the other *makkos* only came on the Egyptians who were *davka* (specifically) in Egypt. Therefore, here it says two things: “on the Egyptians,” referring to *makkos bechoros* which was on the Egyptians even though they weren't in Egypt, and “in Egypt,” referring to the rest of the *makkos* that were *davka* on the Egyptians that were in Egypt. (מגיד דבריו ליעקב)

There were *makkos* that were on the bodies of the Egyptians *mammish*, such as lice and boils, or which damaged their bodies, such as the wild animals and *makkos bechoros* – these were “on the Egyptians.” Then there were other *makkos* that were not on the bodies of the Egyptians, only “in Egypt,” such as blood, frogs, pestilence, hail, locusts, and darkness, which, in any case, continued the suffering for the Egyptians. (מגיד דבריו ליעקב)

Precisely to say how great the *chesed* is that Hashem does with Israel, that all of the *makkos* were only on the Egyptians and didn't touch any one from Israel for any sort of damage or loss – that Hashem brought the *makkos* only “on the Egyptians” that were “in Egypt” and not on Israel. (Chida and Maaseh b'Rebbe Eliezer)

Why did Hashem bring the *makkos davka* in this order?

Hashem brought the *makkos* according to the custom of kings. When a *medina* (city) rebels against a king of flesh and blood, the king sends legions to surround the city. He begins by closing off the city's aqueducts (i.e., its water supply) (blood). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he brings upon them noisemakers (a type of soldier) (frogs). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he shoots arrows at them (lice). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he brings barbarians upon them (wild animals). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he punishes (דורמוסיות) them (pestilence). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he throws kerosene/naphtha on them (boils). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he brings a catapult to throw stones at them (hail). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he enlists many troops against them (locusts). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he imprisons them (darkness). If the city returns, good, and, if not, he kills the *gedolim* (the significant people) (striking of the firstborns). (Midrash Tanchuma בא ד)

Why is *makkos bechoros* (striking the firstborns) the only one that includes in its name the word *makkah*?

Because the name of each *makkah* alone indicates what the *makkah* was, but the word “*bechoros*” (firstborns) doesn’t imply anything about the *makkah*, therefore the word “*makkos*” was added to *bechoros*. (Midrash Haggadah)

When the firstborns heard that they were going to die in the final *makkah*, they went to war with their fathers, who were preventing the *Bnei Yisrael* from leaving, therefore, it says, לְמַכָּה מִצְרַיִם בְּבְכוֹרֵיהֶם “He struck the Egyptians with their firstborns” (Tehillim 136:10) – i.e., the Egyptians were struck through their firstborns. [RS: The Aruch HaShulchan says that this “civil war” between Pharaoh and the fathers versus their sons took place on the 10th of Nissan in Egypt, which was Shabbos, and is one of the reasons we refer to that Shabbos henceforth as Shabbos HaGadol.] The author of the Haggadah wanted that there should not be any mistake made, saying that the intention of the *makkah* was that the firstborns struck Egypt, as could be the case if it would have just said *bechoros* alone, which would imply that the *makkah* was like the rest of the *makkos*, like wild animals and the locusts that struck Egypt, so, too, the firstborns struck Egypt, therefore, it adds the word *makkos* to *bechoros* to teach that the intention is for the *makkah* that struck the firstborns themselves, rather than for their striking Egypt. (Haggadas Mordechai based on Midrash Tanchuma)

Why did Rabbi Yehudah need to give *simanim* (usually translated in the Haggadah as ‘abbreviations’) for the *makkos* – *d’tzach*, *adash*, *b’achab*?

Many of the *Rishonim* (early authorities) explain that, were it not for these *simanim*, we might think “There is no earlier or later in the Torah” – i.e., there is no chronological order, meaning that the *makkos* weren’t brought on the Egyptians *davka* in this order, especially since Dovid HaMelech (King David) doesn’t list them in this order (see Tehillim 78:44-51 where they are listed as: בכורות, דבר, ברד, ארבה, צפרדע, ערוב, דם; and Tehillim 105:28-37 where they are listed as: בכורות, ארבה, ברד, כינים, ערוב, צפרדע, דם, חושך).

Similarly, some *Rishonim* bring the words of the midrash (Shemos Rabbah 8:3): “Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Go and punish him.’ [Moshe] said to Him, ‘How should I bring upon him the Ten Plagues?’ And He said [to Moshe], ‘Take this staff in your hand.’ Rabbi Yehudah said that the staff weighed 40 *seah* (a measure of volume, not weight; one *seah* has a liquid volume of approx. 8.29 litres) and was made out of sapphire and the Ten Plagues were engraved on it in abbreviated form: *d’tzach*, *adash*, *b’achab*. Hashem said, ‘In this order [i.e., as it was engraved on the staff], you will bring upon him the *makkos*.” Rabbi Yehudah gave the *simanim* according to the order that the *makkos* were engraved on Moshe’s staff.

Rabbi Yehudah would give *simanim* for things in order that people wouldn’t err. In support of this, we see (Menachos 96a) regarding the measurements of the *shte halechem* (the two loaves brought on Shavuot):

שתי הלחם ארכן שבעה טפחים ורחבן ארבע טפחים וקרנותיה ארבע אצבעות לחם הפנים ארכן עשרה טפחים ורחבן חמישה טפחים וקרנותיו שבע אצבעות ר' יהודה אומר שלא תטעה ז"ד יה"ז

“The *shte halechem* were 7 *tefachim* (handbreadths) in length, 4 *tefachim* in width, its horns (protrusions at the corners) were 4 fingerbreadths; the *lechem hapanim* (the showbreads or facebreads that were placed on the *shulchan* (table) each week in the *Beis HaMikdash*) were 10 *tefachim* in length, 5 *tefachim* in width, and its horns were 7 fingerbreadths. Rabbi Yehudah says, ‘Do not err: z’dad y’haz.’” (z’dad stands for 7 4 4 and y’haz stands for 10 5 7) (Rashbatz and Rabbi Yehudah bar Yakar)

Other *Rishonim* say that Rabbi Yehudah divided the *makkos* in this *lashon* (language) because *d’tzach* are the *makkos* that came from the ground, *adash* are the *makkos* that came by chance (i.e., that sometimes they can come naturally), *b’ach* are the *makkos* that come from the air, and he joined *makkos bechoros* to *b’ach* (making *b’achab*) because the last *makkah* doesn’t have a category.

There are other *Rishonim* who explain Rabbi Yehudah’s *simanim* based upon what follows afterwards: the calculations by Rabbi Yose Haglili, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva, who argue regarding how many *makkos* the Egyptians suffered at the sea: 50, 200, or 250 and the total of all of the *makkos* that they said equals 500 *makkos*. Therefore, Rabbi Yehudah gives the *siman*: *d’tzach*, *adash*, *b’achab* because the *gematria* of these letters when added together equals a total of 501 *keneged* (corresponding to) 500 *makkos* [according to הר"ד, *gematria* is not particular about a number being off by one, more or less], meaning to say that all of the words of the *chochomim* (Torah scholars) were true, that in all of the *makkos* that the Egyptians were struck by the sea there were 500 *makkos*.

RABBI YOSE HAGLILI, RABBI ELIEZER, AND RABBI AKIVA

Why did Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva seek to increase the number of *makkos*?

עַל־כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר־שִׁמַּתִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אֲשִׁים עֲלֵיךְ “...all the illnesses that I brought upon the Egyptians, I will not bring upon you...” (Shemos 15:26) It’s implicit that only the *makkos* that were in Egypt won’t be brought upon us, whereas after this the verse concludes ה' רִפְאֶךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רַפְּאֵךְ “...for I am Hashem, your Healer,” which implies that He will heal us from all illness. Therefore, the Rabbis strove to add so much to the calculation of the *makkos* of Egypt to the point that there would not be an illness that didn’t exist there. (Haggadas Divrei Yoel)

In Pirkei Avos (5:4), it says עָשָׂר מַכּוֹת הָבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרִיִּים בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעָשָׂר עַל הַיָּם (“Hashem brought ten *makkos* on the Egyptians in Egypt, and ten [*makkos*] at the sea.”) – which seems to contradict what Rabbi Yose (50), Rabbi Eliezer (200), and Rabbi Akiva (250) say here!

The *Tanna* (Rabbi from the mishna period) in Pirkei Avos is arguing on the *Tannaim* here! (Shevus Yehuda)

In his commentary on the Mishna, the Rambam says that the Egyptians had brought upon them more *makkos* at the sea than in Egypt, but that all of them were from the ten types that descended on Egypt, which divided into many types at the sea. According to his words, we can learn that there wasn’t a *machlokes*, as according to the opinion of all of the *Tannaim*, they were struck at the sea with the ten types of *makkos* of Egypt.

The *Tannaim* here are not arguing on the *Tanna* in Pirkei Avos! Just the opposite, the entire calculation of theirs with the number of *makkos* is according to the *Tanna's* explanation there that the Egyptians were struck with ten *makkos* at the sea. Just as in Egypt, they were struck with ten *makkos* with a finger, they were stuck at the sea with *ten makkos* with a finger. Whereas in Egypt they were struck with one finger, at the sea they were struck with five fingers, with the result that they were struck at the sea with 50 *makkos*. (Shibali Haleket)

Why were the Egyptians struck with more *makkos* at the sea than in Egypt?

It was because the Egyptians pursued after the *Bnei Yisrael*, which was a *chutzpah gedolah* (tremendously insolent) after they had seen all of the wonders in Egypt. Why were they struck five times for each one that they were struck in Egypt? We can explain this according to the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 30:7) on the verse in Shemos (21:37) וְשָׁלַם בְּקֹרֶן יִשְׁלַם תַּחַת הַשּׁוֹר ("...he will pay five oxen in place of an ox..."). Why with an ox does he give five? Because he takes it out in public, which can be compared to ... this one who threw a stone at an image of the king, receives five lashes. And we can explain that showing contempt for an image of the king gets lashed with great strength, five on one, and so, the Egyptians who went out with insolence to pursue after Israel, throwing arrows and stones at the clouds of Hashem, were punished with five times the punishment. (Leil Shimurim)

Why 50 *makkos* at the sea?

Since Moshe and Aaron came to Pharaoh and said to him, "So said Hashem, the G-d of Israel" (Shemos 5:1), and Pharaoh began to discuss with them that he did not recognise Hashem ("I don't know Hashem" 5:2). And, in the end, he answered, I don't know what you are saying מִי ה' אֲנֹכִי "Who is Hashem that I should listen to his voice?" And on this, Hashem said to him, "Rasha (wicked one), 'who is Hashem' speaks, 'מי' (who) lashes you." The word מי has a *gematria* of 50 and these are the 50 *makkos* that Hashem brought against the Egyptians at the sea. (Midrash Tanchuma)

The 50 *makkos* were *keneged* (corresponding to) the 50 gates of *tumah* (impurity). (Imrei Emes)

Even though *yetzias Mitzrayim* (going out from Egypt) was greater than *krias yam suf* (splitting of the sea), nevertheless because in Egypt the *Bnei Yisrael* were empty of mitzvos and also were a goy within a goy, their enemies were struck only with one *makkah* in each *makkah*, and Hashem only did wonders for the sake of His name alone – which was not the case at the sea, where they already had two mitzvos to their credit: *dam Pesach* (the blood of the *korban Pesach*) and *dam milah* (the blood of circumcision), as well as another three merits: (1) the merit of Yoseph's *aron* (coffin) and the bones of the *Shevatim* (tribes – i.e., Yoseph's brothers) that they carried with them; (2) the merit of *emunah* (faith), as it says (Shemos 14:31), "...and they believed in Hashem..."; (3) and the merit of *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctifying Hashem's name) that resulted from their entering inside the sea [before it split] (as explained in Sotah 37a). So, we find that they had five merits [the two mitzvos plus the three merits detailed] and *keneged* (corresponding to) each merit the Egyptians were struck with ten *makkos*, therefore, *keneged* their five merits the Egyptians were struck with 50 *makkos*. (מגיד דבריו ליעקב)

DAYEINU

Why was this *piyut* (poem) placed here?

It comes to continue the words of the *Tannaim* (Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva), who each enlarged on his colleague and explained the count of the *nissim* (miracles) that were done in Egypt and at the sea. Therefore, this *piyut* says that there is still much for which to add and praise Hashem. (Peirush Kadmon and Shibali Haleket)

After the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* (author) tells of the *makkos Mitzrayim* and the *yetzia* (going out) from there, he returns to discussing the *tovos* (goodness) and the *chasadim* (kindnesses) that Hashem did with Israel in *yetzias Mitzrayim* and after the *yetzia*. (Maharal)

This *piyut* is the introduction to saying Hallel (praises) – after completing the *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over of the going out from Egypt) and the *makkos* at the sea and all the *nissim* (miracles) and their explanations – we turn to saying Hallel and, in order to arouse our children before we say it and to help them deeply understand how much we are obligated to say it, the Haggadah lists all of the *nissim* that Hashem did for Israel. In truth, even on just one from all of the things listed we need to say Hallel and thank Hashem – how much more so with the collection of all of these *tovos* together! There is no measure and no limit to the gratitude that is befitting Hashem. (Midrash Haggadah)

How can we say *dayeinu* (it would have been enough)? It wouldn't have been!

The intention with saying *dayeinu* after each *neis* is not say that it would have been sufficient for us, i.e., we wouldn't have needed any more *nissim*, but instead to declare that, if Hashem had only done this particular *neis* (miracle) alone, that *neis* alone – without any further *nissim* – would be sufficient reason for us to endlessly thank Hashem. So, the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* comes to arouse us, explaining that, on each and every goodness that was done for us, we should exhaust ourselves with praises for Hashem until we don't have any strength left. (Midrash Haggadah)

We say *dayeinu* in a *lashon* (language) of astonishment – in other words, we are astonished and it's as if we are saying after each *neis* (miracle) listed, "Would it have been sufficient for us with this one without another?" We can compare it to a king who coronates someone who is dear to him to be the king of a single medina (city). When the king comes there to visit his friend and sees that the man is lacking *bigdei malchus* (royal garments), the king gives them to him. When the king sees that the man does not know how to behave like a king, he teaches him – and, so similarly with other matters of kingship. And when this man comes to thank the king, he praises the king and says, "In a royal city without *bigdei malchus*, would it have been sufficient for me to reign? And even if he gave to me *bigdei malchus*, but didn't teach me how to behave like a king, would it have been sufficient for me to reign?" Likewise, the *Ba'al HaHaggadah* acknowledges in a *lashon* of astonishment: after Hashem promised Avraham Avinu that He would make us a "*goy gadol*" (a great nation), we praise and say is it possible to be a *goy gadol* without publicising his G-d through us or without the Torah, etc.? (Haggadas Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi)

Why are there 15 levels/steps to *dayeinu*?

Just as there are 15 steps in the *Beis HaMikdash* between the *ezras nashim* and the *ezras yisrael*, and in the *shir hama'alos* of Dovid HaMelech (King David) in Tehillim, and so with the name *yud hey* (gematria = 15) Hashem created two worlds (see Yeshayahu 26:4), and so the moon rises for 15 days in the month and no more until its purpose is fulfilled – all of this is a proof that spiritual elevation is with 15 steps/levels and no more. Therefore, it mentions 15 levels here that Hashem raised Israel until the 15th level, which was the uppermost level, building the *Beis HaMikdash* – which was also the holiest level, as the Mikdash was sanctified with the highest level of kedusha (holiness). (Maharal)

HOW MUCH MORE SO

Why do we return to the beginning of the things enumerated in *Dayeinu* and count them again?

Until now, we counted the levels in the negative – that it would have been sufficient for us without each and every level – therefore, we return and count them all in the positive, that Hashem did for us all of them and we didn't lack even one. (Ritva)

We return and multiply all the *tovos* (goodness) in order to increase in *sipur yetztias Mitzrayim* (the telling of the going out from Egypt). (Haggadas Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi)

Here we conclude what we began to *darshen* (explain), “An Aramean tried to destroy my father...” (Devarim 26:5), and the parsha from which that is drawn ends with the bringing of the *bikkurim* (first fruits) to the *Beis HaMikdash*, as it says, “And now, behold! I have brought the first fruit of the ground that You have given me, Hashem!” And you shall place it before Hashem, your G-d.” (Devarim 26:10) Therefore, it concludes here with thanksgiving on the *Beis HaBechira* (the Temple). (Rashbatz)

RABBAN GAMLIEL

Why do we need to say the reason for these three mitzvos?

Because the verse says, וְאָמַרְתֶּם זֶבַח-פֶּסַח (“And you will say to [your children], *zevach Pesach* (the Pesach offering) ...) (Shemos 12:27). We learn from this that a person needs to say the words פֶּסַח זֶה שָׂאנוּ אוֹכְלִין (“This Pesach that we eat”), *davka* to say it, and also with matzah and maror one needs to say so because they are derived from the *korban Pesach*. (Tosafos Pesachim 116a *d”h v’amartem*)

It says by the mitzvah of Succah, “In order that your generations will know that in succos you dwelled...” (Vayikra 23:43). When the reason for a mitzvah is explicit in the Torah, a person doesn't fulfil his obligation until he intends to do it for that reason. Therefore, also with the mitzvah of *korban Pesach* the Torah says, “It is a *zevach Pesach* for Hashem because Hashem passed over...” (Shemos 12:27) and with the mitzvah of matzah it says, “In order that you will remember the day when you went out...” (Devarim 16:3), obligating us with mentioning their reasons. (Divrei Shaul)

How is it possible that the reason for the matzah is because, as the Haggadah says, “the dough of our forefathers didn’t have time to rise” (because they left Egypt in such a hurry) – when they were commanded on eating matzah (see e.g., Shemos 12:8) before they went out from Egypt?!

The eating of matzah that was commanded in Egypt was not for the same reason as the eating of matzah that was commanded for future generations. In Egypt, they were commanded to eat matzah as a *zecher* (remembrance) for the exile and suffering, as it says in the beginning of the Haggadah, **הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְרָהָמָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם** (“This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.”). But the eating of matzah that future generations were commanded in was as a remembrance for the haste at the time of the redemption – therefore, it says, “Why do we eat this matzah?” [i.e., we eat it for a different reason than they ate it in Egypt] (Abarbanel)

The commandment to eat matzah in Egypt was not for the reason that “the dough...didn’t have time to rise,” but because of the obligation of the *korban Pesach* and as *lachmei todah* (referring to the breads that were brought with a thanksgiving offering) that were eaten together with a *korban todah* (thanksgiving offering). (Leil Shimurim)

Do the words of Rabban Gamliel – that we eat matzah because “the dough of our forefathers didn’t have time to rise” – contradict the description of matzah at the beginning of the seder of “halachma anya” (“the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt”)?

The intention of the *Ba’al HaHaggadah* with **הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְרָהָמָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם** (“This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt”) was for the matzah that they ate with going out from Egypt, and this was like the reason of Rabban Gamliel that the matzah is for a *zecher* (remembrance) of the matzah that they ate because **שְׁלֹא הָיָה זְמַן לְהִתְרַמֵּץ** (“there wasn’t sufficient time for their dough to rise”). (And even though halachma anya could have said “...that they ate with their going out from Egypt,” rather than “...in the land of Egypt” – the *Ba’al HaHaggadah* wasn’t being precise at that moment to explain why they ate the matzah, therefore, it just says that they ate it in Egypt, because, when they ate the matzah, they were still in Egypt.) (Maharal)

The gemara says in Pesachim (96b) that the *issur* (prohibition) of *chometz* for the Pesach spent in Egypt was all day. How can we say that they ate matzah because they “didn’t have time for their dough to rise” since they left in a hurry, when, surely, they wouldn’t have been able to bake their dough as *chometz* anyways?!

The *issur chometz* for *Pesach Mitzrayim* (Pesach in Egypt) was only a night and a day (not seven days – eight outside of Israel – as it was for future generations), and so the next day eating *chometz* was permitted. Therefore, if they were able to delay, it would cause their dough to become *chometz* for the needs of the next day [the Ran says that they were not warned on the Torah prohibitions of *bal yera’eh* and *bal yimatze* (not seeing or finding *chometz* – see Shemos 12:19 and Devarim 16:4), so baking *chometz* wouldn’t have been a problem for them], but because of the swiftness of the redemption, they did not have spare time, therefore, they baked their dough into matzah. (Ran, Rashbatz, Meiri)

Moshe said to Israel, “You shall not eat *chometz*, today you go out” (Shemos 13:3-4) – and he was speaking about the 14th of Nissan, the day that they offered the *korban Pesach* (as the next verse speaks about doing the *avodah* (service) and Rashi there explains that this refers to the *korban Pesach*), despite their only going out on the 15th of Nissan. With regard to the consumption of *kodshim* (offerings), night follows after the day [i.e., the animal is *shechted* (slaughtered) in the day and that starts the clock for the period of consumption] (see Chulin 83a). Therefore, it’s the same for the *korban Pesach*, the night follows after the day [some also say that this – night following after day – was anyways the case before the giving of the Torah]. It calls their going out “today” because it was considered already their going out that night, as the verse says (Devarim 16:1), “Hashem, your G-d, took you out from Egypt at night”. [Rashi queries this verse saying, surely they went out in the day, citing Bamidbar 30:3, which says that they went out in the day. And he answers that it says that they went out at night because Pharaoh gave them permission to leave at night, see Shemos 12:31.] Therefore, they were only commanded on the prohibition of *chometz* on the day of the 14th and the night that followed after it (i.e., the night of the 15th), so eating *chometz* was already permissible on the morning of the next day (i.e., the morning of the 15th). (ח"ל and Malbim)

IN EVERY GENERATION

Why was this paragraph placed after the words of Rabban Gamliel?

In order to teach us that just as a person is obligated to say Pesach, matzah, and maror, so, too, he is obligated to say *לֹא אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּלֶכֶד גָּאֵל הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֲלֵא אִף אֶתְּנוּ גָאֵל עִמָּהֶם* (“It was not only our forefathers whom Hashem redeemed, but also we were redeemed with them”) because this is from the central mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over the going out from Egypt). (Rashbatz)

It’s brought here because the saying of Hallel in the Haggadah is in the category of saying *shirah* (song), and there is only an obligation of saying *shirah* with a man who himself was redeemed from suffering. Therefore, the *Ba’al HaHaggadah* made the saying of this paragraph a preface which would make it evident from what was said that we were also redeemed from *Mitzrayim* and now the obligation falls upon us to give thanks and to say *shirah*. (Chidushei HaGriz HaLevi)

To see himself (לראות) or to show himself (להראות)?

Based upon the *lashon* (language) in the Rambam, the Sifsei Chaim explains that there are two different obligations: (1) for a person to see himself as if he went out from Egypt, making him obligated to praise and give thanks to Hashem; and (2) to show himself (i.e., actively demonstrate, behave) as if he went out from Egypt, making him obligated to show through his outward actions that he went out from Egypt. Therefore, when the Rambam comes to explain the obligation of reclining, he prefaces his comments and says, “A person is obligated to show himself as if he now is going out from servitude in Egypt” and continues and says (in the 7th halacha), “therefore, when a man eats his meal on this night, he needs to eat and to drink and to recline in the manner of freedom” – in other words, the obligation to recline is because, by doing so, one shows himself as being a free man.

Now, we are again in *galus* (exile) and are not free men, so why must we behave as if we are free men?

The redemption from Egypt was not only from the physical servitude that was there, but the *Bnei Yisrael* changed from this time to *Bnei Chorin* (free men) in fact, therefore, even in a time that we find ourselves in *galus*, we are still *Bnei Chorin*, as we see in the saying of Chazal (our Sages), “All of Israel are *Bnei Melachim* (children of kings),” which is said also in a time of *galus*. (Maharal)

There is a difference between *galus Mitzrayim* (the Egyptian exile) and other exiles. In Egypt, the *nefesh* (soul) was in exile, but, in other exiles, the exile is for the body alone, since we already received the Torah – freedom of the soul is what was acquired with *yetzias Mitzrayim*. In every generation, we add fences to the Torah to fulfil it, and behold, the only *Ben Chorin* (free man) is one who is *osek* (involved) in Torah [RS: See Avos 6:2 *אֵל תִּקְרָא חֲרוּת אֶלָּא חֲרוּת, שְׁאִין לָךְ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה*] because he is not enslaved to his *yetzer* (evil inclination), and *tumah* (impurity) does not rule over him. (Gra)

THEREFORE, WE ARE OBLIGATED

Why do we say this paragraph here?

It is in place of the bracha of “*she’asah nissim...*” (“that He did for us miracles” – the bracha that we say by the reading of the Megilla and the Chanukah *neiros*) that we are obligated to bless. (Shibali Haleket)

It is in place of the bracha before Hallel. (Orchos Chaim)

Because of what are we obligated to give thanks, etc.?

The *Rishonim* (early authorities) explain that “therefore” is meant on what we said in the prior paragraph “in every generation, a person is obligated to see/show himself as if he went out from Egypt”, and, on this, it says “therefore”, since we went out from Egypt, we are obligated to thank and to praise and to say *shirah* (song), like our forefathers said.

Explaining the different expressions...

לְהוֹדוֹת (“to give thanks”) – it is about the good news that has come to us. לְהַלֵּל (“to praise”) – it is to publicise the attributes of Hashem. לְשַׁבַּח (to praise) – it is to tell of His awesome deeds. לְפַאֵר (to glorify) – it is that His splendour is recognisable to everyone. לְרוֹמֵם (to exalt) – it is that Hashem is exalted over all that is found. לְהַדָּר (to honour) – it is to give to Him great honour. לְבָרֵךְ (to bless) – it is simply to say, “Blessed are You, Hashem...,” and it adds *koach l’ma’alah* (strength above). לְעֵלָה (to exalt) – it is to explain that there is no end to His praises and He is above all bracha and adoration. לְקַלֵּס (to laud) – the intention is that we laud Hashem for giving us permission to speak His praises. (Leil Shimurim)

Explaining the five expressions of the goodness that Hashem did for us...

“He took us out from slavery” in Egypt **“to freedom”**; **“from grief”** on the shore of the sea **“to simcha”**; **“from mourning”** that was after the incident with the *eigel* (golden calf), that it says there, “...they mourned” (Shemos 33:4) **“to Yom Tov”** this was Yom HaKippurim, that on it Moshe came down and brought the nation the second set of tablets, as it says (Taanis 26b), “There were not Yomim Tovim for Israel like Tu B’Av and Yom HaKippurim”; **“and from darkness”** of the *midbar* (desert) that it was a land of darkness and death **“to great light”** of Eretz Yisrael; **“and from servitude”** of the days when the judges judged (i.e., before Israel had a king, echoing the language used at the beginning of Megillas Rus), Israel was enslaved to the nations of the world **“to redemption”** in the days of Dovid and Shlomo, then they dwelled securely on their land. (Gra)

Why don't we mention Hashem by name, but instead say “to the one who did...all these miracles”?

Since there is an obligation to say *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (the telling over of the going out from Egypt) by means of question and answer, it was established that the praise here would also be by means of question and answer – i.e., that we are speaking of Hashem in a hidden way, that it should arouse by the one who says it the question of who is it? And he should answer for himself that it is Hashem that does the *nissim* (miracles). (Pachad Yitzchak)

HALLEL

Why do we divide Hallel up and say a part of it now?

The place of Hallel is after *bentching* (aka *birchas hamazon*, or Grace After Meals). The reason we say a portion before *bentching* is because we need to for the second cup, as our Sages say (Brachos 35a), “*Shirah* (song) is only said over wine.” With every one of the cups that we drink at the seder, there is an embellishing (adorning) of the cup with what we say over it – for example, Kiddush over the first cup, *bentching* over the third cup, and Hallel over the fourth cup – but the second cup doesn't have anything, therefore, it was established to say over it a bit of Hallel. (המרדכי, המנהיג, והאבודרהם)

The Hallel that the prophets established in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) was from לא לנו (i.e., the third paragraph of what we call Hallel) until the end of Hallel. After the *Bnei Yisrael* went out from *Mitzrayim*, they established saying ה' בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם and הָלְלוּקָה ה' עַבְדֵּי ה' (i.e., the first two paragraphs of what we call Hallel). Therefore, we say what was connected and established on *galus Mitzrayim* (the Egyptian exile) and make the bracha גָּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל and after the *seudah* we complete the saying of Hallel from לא לנו until the end without skipping. (Haggadah Pesach Doros)

Chazal (our Sages) wanted that Hallel would be said on the *korban Pesach*, which was eaten during the *seudah* (meal) (and nowadays, with eating the matzah). If all of Hallel was said before the *seudah* or all of it was said after it, it would not be recognisable that Hallel was being said on the *korban Pesach*. Therefore, they divided Hallel, half before the *seudah* and half after the *seudah*. (Maharal)

We divide Hallel so that the children will ask, as with all the changes that are made on the night of the seder. (Seder HaYom)

What's special about the Hallel on Seder night?

- We don't make a bracha before we say it.
- It's the only time of the year that we say it at night.
- We are *mafsik* (interrupt) in the middle of saying it (by having our *seudah*).
- We sit when say it.

----MOZTEI MATZAH----

It is a positive commandment from the Torah to eat matzah on the night of Pesach, as it says, "...in the evening, you will eat matzos...." (Shemos 12:18) It is nearly the only mitzvah in the Torah related to eating that we still have today. The other one? We must also have a *kezayis* (olive size piece) of *pas* (bread) on the first night of Succos (in the Succah).

The mishna teaches (Pesachim 35a) that a person fulfils his obligation to eat matzah with wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats. The gemara *darshens* (derives) this from the verse (Devarim 16:3), "You shall not eat *chometz* with it [i.e., the *korban Pesach*]; seven days you shall eat matzos..." that anything that can become *chometz* is kosher for matzah.

The Shulchan Aruch (462:1) writes that a person may not fulfil his obligation for eating matzah with matzah that was kneaded with fruit juice because this is matzah *ashirah* (wealthy matzah – i.e., it has more than just flour and water as its ingredients) and the Torah says (Devarim 16:3) *lechem oni* (poor man's bread).

----MAROR----

It says in the Torah (Shemos 12:8), "They shall eat the flesh [of the *korban Pesach*] on that night, roasted over fire, and matzos; with maror they will eat it." We are commanded in this verse to eat maror on the night of Pesach. The gemara (Pesachim 120a) explains that this obligation – to eat maror together with the *korban Pesach* – was only from the Torah when there was a *Beis HaMikdash*. But *b'zman hazeh* (nowadays), there is no *korban Pesach*, and there is no *d'oraisa* mitzvah to eat maror by itself since the Torah only says that the maror will be eaten together with the *korban Pesach*. There is, however, a mitzvah *d'rabbanin* to eat maror, in the absence of the *korban Pesach*.

----KORECH----

Hints behind eating the *korech* [i.e., the pesach, matzah, and maror together *b'bas achas* (at one time)] ...

To make it known that the bitterness of *galus* is something that is inseparable from the will of Hashem – and that G-d did not change His will at the time of the redemption – and that the entire order that Hashem arranges for us, all of it is in accordance with one will. Therefore, we combine the *korban Pesach* and the matzah, which hint to freedom, together with the maror, which hints to the exile, to show that all of it is with one will. (Sfas Emes)

To teach about the virtues of the Jewish people, that, after all that happened to them in Egypt, that the Egyptians enslaved and embittered the lives of their forefathers, they neither took revenge nor rejoiced in the downfall of their enemies. This is what Hillel HaZakein teaches us: to sweeten the bitter of the maror with the matzah, which hints to our freedom. (Haggadas Meir Nativ)

The redemption from Egypt was a redemption of the soul, in order to receive the Torah on Har Sinai. And the servitude came for this same aim, to purify Israel to be fit to receive the Torah. Therefore, we take the matzah, as a hint to the freedom, and the maror, as a hint to the servitude – and we combine them together, to teach that their shared aim was to redeem the soul. (Haggadas Mehullal Ba'tishbachos)

----SHULCHAN ARUCH----

The Rema writes that they are accustomed in a few places to eat an egg at the seudah (meal) on Pesach night, as a *zecher* (remembrance) for *aveilos* (mourning). There are several reasons given for this:

The night of Tisha B'Av is fixed to always fall out on the same day of the week as the night of Pesach. (Rema)

It is a *zecher* (remembrance) for the *churban habayis* (the destruction of the Temple), where we would offer the *korban Pesach*. (Rema) (*Haggadas Chaim L'Rosh writes that the reason the egg needs to be eaten immediately after the korech (Hillel sandwich) is because the korech is also a zecher for the churban Beis HaMikdash (destruction of the Temple)!*)

Avraham Avinu died on *erev* (the eve of) Pesach and for this reason we eat an egg as a *zecher* the mourning of Avraham. (Pri Megadim)

It was already a custom by our forefathers in Egypt that on every “*yom rishon shal pesach*” (“first day of Pesach”), it was for their *gedolim* (leaders) a day of mourning, like Tisha B'Av, because, on that day (i.e., the 15th of Nissan), the servitude of the *Bnei Yisrael* was decreed at the the *Bris Bein*

HaBesarim (The Covenant Between the Parts – see Bereishis 15:1-21). And on that day, Sarah was taken by Pharaoh (Bereishis 12:15), and on it Yaakov stood before Pharaoh when he went down to Egypt (Bereishis 47:7), and on it the 86 years* of hard servitude began, and when Hashem sent Moshe on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*** at the *sne* (burning bush) and he came before Pharaoh and it writes (Shemos 5:9), “Let the work be heavier on the men” and the suffering multiplied, therefore, they ate an egg on the night of Pesach as a *zecher* of these sorrows. (Chasam Sofer)

[RS: **Miriam died on the 10th of Nissan (see Aruch HaShulchan Orach Chaim 430:2). There is a principle that the righteous are born and die on the same date (see Kiddushin 38a), which fits well here, because that would mean that Miriam was born on the 10th of Nissan and five days after she was born, the harsh slavery would have started, and Rashi says (see Shir HaShirim 2:13) that Miriam was named because of the bitterness of the slavery that began from the time that she was born!*

***Seder HaDoros says that Hashem appeared before Moshe at the sne on the 15th of Nissan 2447 – precisely one year before the Bnei Yisrael would be redeemed and leave Mitzrayim.]*

----TZAFUN----

After the *seudah* (meal), we eat the *afikomen* from the *matzah* that we broke at *Yachatz* and set aside. If one lost this *matzah*, he takes from another *matzah*.

We call this stage in the seder *Tzafun* because the custom is *l'hitzfin* (to hide) the *afikomen* in the tablecloth and to guard it until it's time to eat it. As noted previously, the Bach says that the reason for the custom of hiding the *afikomen* is because of concern that, perhaps, one of the guests will eat all of the *matzah* and there won't be any *matzah* left to eat at the end of the *seudah* (meal).

Why was the *korban Pesach* eaten when a person was satiated?

Because if a person will eat it when he is hungry, there is a concern that, in the midst of his hunger, he will break a bone in the *korban* and transgress the prohibition against doing so (see Shemos 12:46). (Talmud Yerushalmi Pesachim 70a)

It is a *din* (law) with all *korbanos* (offerings) that they need to be eaten when one is satiated because it says (Bamidbar 18:8), “...for a consecrated portion...,” and our Sages *darshen* (explain) (Chulin 132b) that *korbanos* should be eaten in a manner of greatness and importance, in the way that kings eat, and eating when one is satiated is eating that is with importance. (Rashi and Rashbam)

The reason for prohibiting eating anything after the *korban Pesach* was out of concern for the decree that a person might come to eat the *korban Pesach* in two places. (Ran)

When did they eat the *korban Pesach*?

After eating the matzah and the maror, one would eat from the *korban Chagigah*, and afterwards eat from the *korban Pesach*, and eat his *seudah* (meal), and after the *seudah*, he should eat again a *kezayis* (olive size piece) from the *korban Pesach* in order that the taste should remain in his mouth. (Rambam, Chometz u'Matzah 8:6-9)

They would first bring the *korban Pesach* and he would make the bracha "*al achilas haPesach*" and he would eat from it a *kezayis*. Afterwards, they would bring the *korban Chagigah* and he would make the bracha "*al achilas hazevach*" and he would eat it. When he finished eating the *korban Chagigah*, they would bring a *kezayis* from the *korban Pesach* and he would eat it while he was satiated. (Avudraham)

There is a mitzvah *d'oraisa* (from the Torah) to bring a *korban Chagigah* (festival offering) on the first day of yom tov. So why was there a *Chagigah* (known as the *Chagigah of the Fourteenth*) served at the Pesach seder?

Because one was meant to eat the *korban Pesach* to satiate him. Accordingly, ideally, one was meant to partake of the *Chagigah* first so that by the time he got to the *korban Pesach* (the dessert of the meal), he would be satiated from eating it. (Rambam Hilchos Korban Pesach 8:3)

How does the *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* differ from the *Chagigah of the Fifteenth* (i.e., a normal *korban Chagigah* which a man was obligated to bring on every yom tov when the *Beis HaMikdash* was standing)?

1. The *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* was brought erev yom tov (the eve of the festival), whereas one was obligated to bring the *korban Chagigah* on the first day of yom tov. (Rambam Hilchos Korban Pesach 8:3; Rambam Hilchos Korban Chagigah 1:1) (NB: The *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* did not fulfill one's Torah obligation to bring the *Chagigah of the Fifteenth*. Rambam Hilchos Korban Chagigah 2:10)
2. The *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* was not an obligatory obligation, whereas a man had a *d'oraisa* obligation to bring a *korban Chagigah* on the first day of yom tov. (Rambam Hilchos Korban Chagigah 1:1, 2:10)
3. Like the *korban Pesach*, the *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* had to be roasted. (Rambam Hilchos Korban Pesach 8:4)
4. When the fourteenth of Nissan (i.e., erev Pesach) falls out on Shabbos, the *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* is not brought (since it is not a mitzvah). (Since the *korban Pesach* is a mitzvah *d'oraisa*, it would be brought even on Shabbos; it is the only *korban yachid* (individual offering) that was *doche Shabbos* (offered on Shabbos – lit: pushed off).) (Rambam Hilchos Korban Pesach 10:12)

How is the consumption of the *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* different from the *korban Pesach*?

Unlike the *korban Pesach* which must be finished by midnight (*d'oraisa*, a person had the entire night, until *amud hashachar* (dawn)), the *Chagigah of the Fourteenth* could be consumed for a

period of two days and one night (just like all other *korban Shlamim*, peace offerings). (Rambam Hilchos Korban Pesach 8:15, 10:13)

OPENING THE DOOR

We are accustomed to open the door at the time that we say, “Pour out Your wrath...” in order to remember that this night is *leil shimurim* (“a protected night”) and we don’t worry about anything – and in the merit of this *emunah* (faith) we were redeemed. Therefore, we ask that, in this merit, Hashem pours out His anger on the goyim and redeems us. (Rema)

We are accustomed to open the door in order to show our faith in the coming of Moshiach, that, “In Nissan we were redeemed, and in Nissan in the future we will be redeemed” (Rosh Hashanah 11a). And if Eliyahu HaNavi will come and find the door open and we will go out quickly to greet him, in the merit that we expected, hoped, and awaited his coming, even though he delayed, in this merit, Hashem will hasten our redemption and will pour out His wrath on the goyim. (הפסח מעובין והמטה (משה)

We open the door with, “Pour out Your wrath...,” in order to hint that the future redemption will be open/revealed. In the redemption from Egypt, the *Bnei Yisrael* were commanded (Shemos 12:22), “... and you, no man shall go out from the door of his house until morning.” In the future redemption, we will be permitted to see the downfall of the wicked publicly. (Sfas Emes)

THE CUP OF ELIJAHU

Why do we have the *cos shal Eliyahu*?

It’s a hint that we believe that just as Hashem redeemed us from Egypt, so, too, He will redeem us again, and He will send us Eliyahu to inform us (of the redemption). (Mishnah Berurah)

It’s considered the “fifth cup.” The Ravad brings from the midrash that the fifth cup is *keneged* (corresponds to) *וְהִבֵּאתִי* (“I will bring you”) (Shemos 6:8), which is *lashon* (language) of *geulah* (redemption), its name is the “*cos shal Eliyahu*.” And there are those who say that its name is because the *Rishonim* (early authorities) argued regarding the law of the fifth cup (i.e., whether we should drink four or five cups), and the thing remains in a status of *safek* (doubt) until Eliyahu HaNavi comes and decides it.

----NIRTZAH----

Chasal siddur pesach

At the conclusion of the Haggadah, we are accustomed to say the *piyut* (poem) *Chasal siddur pesach* which is a part of the *yotzros* (special prayers in the form of *piyutim* that are recited on special occasions such as *yomim tovim*) for *Shabbos HaGadol* (the Shabbos that precedes Pesach). These

words are taken from the *piyut* that begins *Elokim haruchos*, which contains many *dinim* of Pesach and which concludes with the words of *Chasal siddur pesach* as brought in our Haggadah. It was composed by Rabbi Yoseph Tov Elem.

Why do we say *k'hil'chaso, mishpato, v'chukaso*?

This *lashon* is similar to (Bamidbar 9:14), "...make the Pesach for Hashem according to the *chukas hapesach* and according to its *mishpat*, so you will do..." The intention behind *k'hil'chaso* is the halachos and the *dinim* of the seder; *mishpato* this refers to what and how they were obligated with eating on the night of the seder; *v'chukaso* refers to the *dinim* (laws) of Pesach that are without a *ta'am* (reason), for example: that one needs to eat the matzah *davka* (specifically) in one place and not in two places as a *zecher* (remembrance) to the *chukas hapesach* (the laws of the *korban Pesach*). (HaMarbeh L'Saper)

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About the Haggadah¹

The Mitzvah of *Sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*

We fulfil the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over of the going out from Egypt) on the night of the 15th of Nissan by saying the Haggadah. *Chazal* (our Sages) did not transmit to us a *nusach* (formula) for the Haggadah that was completely arranged, but, rather, in *Perek Arbei Pesachim* (found in mesechta Pesachim), they stated several *dinim* and *halachos* (laws) about how to fulfil the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*:

- (1) Saying the Haggadah **needs to be in the form of question and answer** regarding the changes on the night of the seder from other nights. The Mishna lists several things that can be asked about (e.g., matzah, maror, roasting, and dipping – what we refer to as the mah nishtana) (nowadays, we replace the question about ‘roasting’ with one about ‘leaning’). In order that the children will ask, we make several changes from our *seudos* (meals) that take place on the rest of the days of the year, such as giving them toasted grains and nuts, snatching the matzah, dipping twice, removing the table (nowadays, the seder plate), and filling the cup (i.e., the second cup) before the *seudah*.
- (2) With regard to *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, we’re meant to **begin with *g’nus* (shame) and conclude with *shevach* (praise)**. Rav and Shmuel argue (Pesachim 115b) regarding what is the *g’nus*, whether we should begin with, “*Mitchilah ovdei avodah zarah*” (Rav), or “*Avadim hayinu*” (Shmuel).
- (3) It also says in the Mishna, “**And *darshen* from, ‘*Arami oveid avi*,’ until you complete the entire parsha,**” referring to the verses that are read for Bikkurim along with their *drashos* (Devarim 26:5-8).
- (4) “**Rabban Gamliel used to say that anyone who does not say these three things on Pesach doesn’t fulfil his obligation.**” The intention is that one should speak about the matters of the mitzvos of Pesach, matzah, and maror. This obligation is a part of the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*. (There are those who say that it is included in the mitzvah of eating the pesach, matzah, and maror, and the intention is on the reason for their being eaten – meaning that when one fulfils the mitzvah of eating these things, he must also speak about each thing.)
- (5) “***B’chal dor v’dor chayuv adam lir’os es atz’mo k’ilu hu yatzah miMitzrayim.***” In the gemara, it says that one needs to say the *pasuk* (verse) (Devarim 6:23), “**And He brought us out from there...**” and the Rashbam says that with saying this *pasuk*, a person fulfils this *din* because with this he sees himself as if he went out from Mitzrayim. (According to the Rambam, one fulfils this *din* (of “showing himself”) by leaning when he eats and drinks on this night and through the drinking of the four cups.)

The Rambam writes about these *dinim* (i.e., what’s listed above) that all these things are what’s called: Haggadah.

¹ NB: This essay is for advanced study and requires great familiarity with the text and parts of Maggid

Additional *dinim* of the Haggadah:

Chazal established that **the Haggadah must be said on the second cup of the four cups**. The *nusach* of the bracha *Asher G'alanu*, which is said after the saying of the Haggadah, appears in the Mishna. Before this bracha, we say the first two chapters of Hallel, with an introduction.

The paragraphs said after *Birchas HaMazon* (Bentching, aka Grace After Meals) – the chapters of Hallel, Nishmas, etc. – are not a part of the Haggadah, meaning that they are not related to *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*; rather, they are said for other reasons.

What comprises the Haggadah?

According to what's stated in the Mishna and Gemara, the Haggadah includes:

"Mah Nishtana," "Avadim Hayinu" or "Mitchilah ovdei avodah zarah hayu avoseinu," the verses of "Arami oveid avi" and their explanations, "pesach, matzah, and maror al shum mah," the statement that we ourselves went out from Mitzrayim, as it says, "He took us out from there." After them, we say two paragraphs of Hallel with an introduction before them, and seal it with a bracha and drinking a cup of wine.

These things are *m'akev* (i.e., if they're not said, a person hasn't fulfilled his obligation) fulfilling the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, and one should not subtract from them.

Paragraphs that are not mentioned in either the Mishna or Gemara have been added to the above-mentioned sections. We don't know who added these new paragraphs nor when they were added, whether it was during the time of *Chazal* or later. The Haggadah that we have in our hands originated in the period of the *Gaonim* and we don't know what was said before then. From old Haggadahs, it appears that these additions were added over the years by the leaders of the generations. In the end of the period of the *Gaonim*, the final arrangement of the Haggadah was accepted as we have it now in our hands. The *nusach* of the oldest Haggadah that we have is from Rav Sadya Gaon (referred to here as the RSG Haggadah).

This *nusach* is in accordance with the words of the Mishna and its arrangement and, therefore, it is much shorter than our Haggadah, but already we find several new paragraphs that have been added: before "Mah Nishtana" was added the paragraph of "Kal dichfin yeisei v'yeichol"; between "Avadim Hayinu" and "Mitchilah ovdei avodah zarah hayu avoseinu" was added the midrash about the questions of the *Arbah Banim*; afterwards, before the *drashos* of "Arami oveid avi" was added the paragraph of "Baruch Shomeir havtachaso l'Yisrael," and so also the continuing paragraph of "V'hi She'amdah."

Rabbi Sadya Gaon writes that "many from our *chaveirim*" have added on to the Haggadah several paragraphs: the *machlokes* between Rabbi Yose HaGlili, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva about counting the *makkos* in Mitzrayim and at the sea, and so the *piyut* (poem), "*Dayeinu*," and "*Al achas camah v'camah*."

In the order of the Haggadah of the Rambam, we find all that is found by Rav Sadya Gaon. Within the things that were said were added several paragraphs. Before the midrash about the questions of the *Arbah Banim* were added things about the importance of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, "*Afilu kulanu chochomim*" and "*mitzvah aleinu l'sapeir bitzias Mitzrayim*," and after this the *ma'aseh* with the *tanai'im* who discussed *yetzias Mitzrayim* until *amud hashachar* (dawn), and so the words of Rabbi

Elazar ben Azaryah about mentioning *yetzias Mitzrayim* at night, and the continuation of the opening to the questions of the sons, "*Baruch HaMakom, Baruch Hu.*"

The Rambam did not include in the Haggadah the *machlokes* of the *tanai'im* about the count of the *makkos* (plagues) and also did not include the *piyut* "*Dayeinu*", but Rabbi Avraham, his son, testified that the Rambam was accustomed to say them.

The *nusach* of the Haggadah that is in our hands and in the hands of all of Israel without exception, accords with the *nusach* of the Haggadah in the siddur of Rav Amram Gaon and in the Machzor Vitry (by a student of Rashi; Rashi lived about 100 years before the Rambam) and in other Rishonim. These siddurim include all the aforesaid additions.

The arrangement of the Haggadah

The *nusach* of the Haggadah can be divided into the following sections:

(A) Introduction

---*Ha Lachma Anya* – this statement was added in Bavel in the time of the *Gaonim* as the opening for the entire Haggadah.

(B) Questions of the sons and *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* in brief

---The question of "*Mah Nishtana*" and the answer of "*Avadim Hayinu*" – the source for the statement is the Mishna and verses in the Torah. With this, we fulfil the first *din* in the *halachos* of the Haggadah, that the *sipur* (telling over) will be done *b'derech shailah v'teshuva* (question and answer). The statement of "*Avadim Hayinu*" is the answer to the son, which accords with the second *din* that the telling will begin with *g'nus* (shame) (saying *Avadim Hayinu* is according to the opinion of Shmuel). And we continue and say, "*V'ilu lo hotzi HaKadosh Baruch Hu es avoseinu miMitzrayim, harei anu uvaneinu uv'nei vaneinu m'shubadim hayinu l'Pharaoh*" – perhaps, saying this comes in order to fulfil the fifth *din*, that a person sees himself as if he went out from Mitzrayim.

(C) Different things about the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*

---*Afilu kulanu chochomim, ma'aseh b'Rabbi Eliezer* and the *chochomim* who spoke about *yetzias mitrayim* all night, the *din* about mention *yetzias Mitzrayim* at night (i.e., *Amar Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah*) – here we say things about the importance of the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, and about the importance of remembering *yetzias Mitzrayim* in a general way. The basis of these statements is the Haggadahs of Rav Amram Gaon and the Rambam and are not found in the Haggadah of Rav Sadya Gaon.

---*Baruch HaMakom, Baruch Hu, Arbah Banim* and *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* for each of them, and conclude with clarifying the time for the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (i.e., *Yacheil meirosh chodesh*) – these statements continue with saying the virtues of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* with adding details about the obligation of the *sipur*. They appear in all Haggadahs and their source is the Mechilta, but *Chazal* did not establish them in the Haggadah.

(D) Sipur yetzias Mitzrayim at greater length, beginning from the Avos and onwards

---*Mitchilah ovdei avodah zarah chayv avoseinu* with a source from *pesukim* (verses) – as previously stated, this statement has its source in the gemara and it is the beginning of the *g'nus* (shame) according to Rav.

---*Baruch Shomeir havtachaso l'Yisrael* (the promise by Hashem to Avraham Avinu at the *bris bein habesarim*) and *V'hi She'amdah la'avoseinu* – the basis of these things is the Haggadahs that the Gaonim wrote, and they are found in all of them.

(E) Sipur yetzias Mitzrayim an additional time in even more detail

---The verses from *Bikkurim* (with the introduction of *Tzei u'l'mad*), explained and *darshened*, and concluded with the mentioning of the *makkos* – they are said according to the words of the Mishna that says to *darshen* from *Arami oveid avi* until the end of the parsha.

---The three opinions (i.e., Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Akiva) about the count of the *makkos* in Mitzrayim and at the sea – this is found in a portion of the Haggadahs of the *Gaonim* and Rav Sadya Gaon brings it as a *minhag* (custom) that many are accustomed to say it.

---*Piyutim* about the *tovos* (good things) done by Hashem for the Bnei Yisrael from *yetzias Mitzrayim* until the building of the *Beis HaMikdash* – this is also found in a portion of the Haggadahs of the Gaonim and Rav Sadya Gaon brings it as a *minhag* that many were accustomed to say it.

(F) The completing of details of sipur yetzias Mitzrayim (the matter of the mitzvos of the night, and that we ourselves went out)

---*Rabban Gamliel hayah omeir kal shelo amar sh'loshe d'varim* – the source is the words of the Mishna; the contents of which explain the mitzvos of Pesach, matzah, and maror.

---*B'chal dor v'dor chayuv adam lir'os es atz'mo k'ilu hu yatzah miMitzrayim* – these are the words of the Mishna. And also, this is from the *dinim* of the *sipur*, as stated above in number 5.

(G) Hallel

---*L'fichach anachnu chayavim l'hodos ... v'nomar l'fanav shira chadasha hallelukah* – the source of this is from the Mishna and this is the introduction to Hallel.

---Saying two paragraphs from Hallel – as we find in the Mishna.

(H) Sealing it with a bracha

---*Birchas Asher G'alanu* – also its source is the Mishna

The Parts of Maggid – The Evolution of the Haggadah

Like *bentching*, it was up to *Chazal* to determine what is said to fulfil the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*. Just as bentching was originally in a more abbreviated format than we know it today, so, too, the text of the Haggadah expanded as things were added over time.

1. **Bold, asterisked parts** listed below indicate what the Mishna/Gemara indicate the Haggadah should include.

2. Those parts listed below that are brought by the *Mechilta*, but which *Chazal* did not establish them as part of the Haggadah are noted with the word *Mechilta* in parentheses. They appear in all Haggadahs.

3. Later additions to Maggid are noted by being tabbed in below:

--Tabbed in once for those that appear in **Rav Sadya Gaon's (RSG) Haggadah** or **Rav Amram Gaon's (RAG) Haggadah** (i.e., from the time of the Gaonim)

--Tabbed in twice for what appears in the Rambam's Haggadah

NB: The period of the Gaonim lasted approximately 400 years. Rav Amram Gaon lived approximately 70 years before Rav Sadya Gaon. There were approximately 250 years between Rav Sadya Gaon and the Rambam.

Ha Lachma Anya (added in Bavel during the time of the Gaonim)

Kal dichfin yeisei v'yeichol (added, appears in **RSG's Haggadah**)

***Mah Nishtana**

***Avadim Hayinu – v'ilu lo hotzi HaKadosh Baruch Hu es avoseinu miMitzrayim**

Afilu kulanu chochomim (added, appears in **RAG's Haggadah** – but not in **RSG's Haggadah**)

Ma'aseh b'Rabbi Eliezer (added, appears in **RAG's Haggadah** – but not in **RSG's Haggadah**)

Mitzvah aleinu l'sapeir bitzias Mitzrayim (added, appears in **Rambam's Haggadah**)

Amar Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah (added, **RAG's Haggadah** – but not in **RSG's Haggadah**)

Baruch HaMakom (*Mechilta*)

Arbah Banim (*Mechilta*)

Yacheil meirosh chodesh (part of Arbah banim - a drasha on v'higad'ta l'vin'cha) (*Mechilta*)

***Mitchilah ovdei avodah zarah**

Baruch Shomeir havtachaso l'Yisrael (added, appears in **RSG's Haggadah**)

V'hi She'amdah (added, appears in **RSG's Haggadah**)

***Tzei u'l'mad - Arami oveid avi (including Dam va'eish v'simros ashan and Eser Makkos)**

Rabbi Yose, Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Akiva (added, appears in **RSG's Haggadah** – but not in **Rambam's Haggadah**, but his son reported that his father was accustomed to saying it)

Dayeinu (added, appears in **RSG's Haggadah** – but not in **Rambam's Haggadah**, but his son reported that his father was accustomed to saying it)

Al achas camah v'camah (added, appears in **RSG's Haggadah**)

***Rabban Gamliel – pesach, matzah, maror**

***B'chal dor v'dor**

***V'osanu hotzi misham**

***L'fichach**

***Hallel**

***Asher G'alanu**

Based on the Haggadah Shel Pesach Mesivta

How Do We Fulfil the Mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*?¹

As Pesach draws near, we are involved with many preparations for it, such as *biur chometz* and baking matzos. The mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, however, requires no less preparation. But, because it is a mitzvah whose purpose is to bring about heartfelt feelings, we do not prepare sufficiently.

Even those who do prepare and delve into the Haggadah, into its *peirushim*, do not do this in the proper and correct form because they primarily prepare *pilpulim* and *diyukim* in the *nusach* of the Haggadah. For example, they clarify and explain if the *girsas* is correct - such as, is it *הא לחמא עניא* or is it *כהא לחמא עניא*?

Also, when we prepare explanations for inside the Haggadah, it's very common that we elaborate with *drashos* in the beginning of the Haggadah, with sections that exist only as an introduction for the essence of the *sipur*, explanations of the definition of the mitzvah, for example: ואפילו בולנו חכמים ... וכל המרבה לספר וכו' והוי מספרים ... כל אותו הלילה (e.g., (יכול מראש חדש, (ארבעה בנים); and the time when we are obligated in the *sipur* (e.g., (יכול מראש חדש, (ארבעה בנים).

When we reach the main part of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* – with “*Aramei oveid avi*” – it's then that we usually hurry with the saying of the Haggadah in order to fulfil the mitzvos of the night in a time before midnight.

But this is where there is a mitzvah to expand and prolong things, as the Rambam writes²: “One *darshens* from ‘*Aramei oveid avi*’ until he completes the entire *parsha* and anyone who adds and elaborates with *darshening* this *parsha*, behold, he is praiseworthy.”

The reason for this incorrect approach and laxness in the fulfilment of the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* is because people don't know the definition of the mitzvah. In order to establish this mitzvah, we must know its definition, its essence, and its measure.

The *Baal HaHaggadah* hints to the definition of the mitzvah with the beginning of his words: “And even if we were all wise ... it is a mitzvah upon us to tell over the going out from Egypt, and anyone who increases in the telling over of the going out from Egypt, behold, he is praiseworthy.” And we will see that its measure is taught to us from the end of the Haggadah: “A person is obligated to see (Rambam: show) himself as if he went out from Egypt.”

Why should a wise person have to tell over the story?

In order to clarify things, we can ask: what *hava mina* is there to say that the wise are exempt from the mitzvah of *sipur* on the night of Pesach such that the *Baal HaHaggadah* needs to emphasise “even if we were all wise, it is a mitzvah on us to tell over”? Is a wise person exempt from the daily mitzvah of *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* (or is such a thing suggested)? How does the mitzvah of the night of the seder (*sipur*) differ from that of the daily mitzvah (*zechira*)?

The mitzvah of Pesach night is *sipur*, whereas the entire year the mitzvah is *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim*. The Haggadah Emek Bracha explains in the name of Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, *zt”l*, three differences between *sipur* and *zechira*.

¹ NB: This essay is for advanced study and requires great familiarity with the text of the Haggadah, mitzvos of the night, etc.

² Hilchos Chometz U'Matzah 7:4

Sipur is done:

1. Via question and answer;
2. All of the events unfold “beginning with *g’nus* and concluding with *shevach*,” and
3. We must mention: “Pesach, matzah, and maror - because of what?”

We can add onto this that for the mitzvah of *sipur*, we are meant to elaborate and to go into every detail - whereas on each day the mitzvah is only to remember, which is sufficient with just a bit of remembrance. In each detail that we add to tell over about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, we fulfil with it the mitzvah of *sipur* because those who listen to the details of the story, as the narrator describes at length for them what occurred, receive more comprehensive knowledge of the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and of the chesed of Hashem.

According to this, one could argue that the mitzvah of telling over the story is only for someone who lacks the knowledge about the events of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, but a wise person who already knows every detail of the story is exempt from this mitzvah. Therefore, the *Baal HaHaggadah* informs us that wise people are also obligated in telling over the story, and even a wise person who is reclining alone on the night of the seder has a mitzvah to tell it over to himself and to elaborate in the story, as Chazal say³, “A person is obligated to tell over the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* all night ... even to himself.”

Chazal do not distinguish regarding this obligation between one who does not know the details of the story and a wise person who knows the story and its details. Therefore, it is evident from here that the aim of the mitzvah of *sipur* is not only for the sake of informing about the details of the slavery to one who does not know them.

What is the goal of the *sipur*?

We now need to explain what the aim is of the mitzvah of telling over the story and elaborating in the telling over for one who knows it in all of its details.

The aim is to reach to the level of “to see/show himself as if he went out from Mitzrayim!” The *sipur* is the means through which a person sees himself as if he went out from Mitzrayim because when a person tells over something from the past, he depicts it in his imagination so much so that he feels, at the time of the telling over, the same experiences that he felt at the time that these things happened to him.

For example: people who are not active in their old age and feel a lacking in their daily lives love to talk about their magnificent past because, through telling stories, they make the past come alive again in the present.

More than this, the narrator of an event feels alive in the past and may even shed tears and cry at the time he tells over the story because the things are alive for him like at the time that they actually happened.

As much as he elaborates in the telling over of the details of the story, so these things will be depicted in his imagination in greater depth and scope, and he will feel the experience more as a living reality in the present. Therefore, it is a mitzvah upon us to elaborate in the telling over of

³ Tosefta, Pesachim

yetzias Mitzrayim in order to draw our feelings closer to the feeling that we ourselves went out from Mitzrayim.

And in this, there is no difference between a person who does not know what happened and a wise person who knows everything, therefore “even if we were all wise people - there is a mitzvah upon us to tell over the story.”

Making the story real through the mitzvos of the night

An additional means to reach the feeling that we went out from Mitzrayim is by making the bitterness and hardness of the slavery - and the freedom of the redemption - perceptible. The mitzvos of the night are a means of making this perceptible in order that we achieve this recognition. This is the case both in the essence of the mitzvos and in the way that they are performed.

Hashem commanded us to eat maror in order that at the time of eating it we would feel the bitterness of the slavery in Mitzrayim, as it says in the mishna⁴ and in the Haggadah: “Maror - because the Mitzrim embittered the lives of our forefathers in Mitzrayim,” and Chazal add on to this additional details in order that we will feel it more, namely, that a person is obligated to say this in the recitation of the Haggadah, and even more, that we need to lift up the maror at the time that we say it and show it to those in attendance at the seder.⁵

Another mitzvah that comes to make us feel the difficulty of the slavery and the kindness of Hashem that was within the *hester panim* of the slavery is the mitzvah of eating the *charoses*, as Chazal say⁶, “Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok said *charoses* is a mitzvah ... a remembrance of the apple tree - that their children were born there without pain, that it should not be recognised by the Egyptians as it’s written, ‘Under the apple tree, I awakened you,’⁷ ... [And Rabbi Yochanan said the *charoses* is] a remembrance of the mortar.”

Not only the mitzvah itself awakens in us the experience of slavery as we said, but Chazal commanded us also to make *charoses* in a way that will fully illustrate for us the apple and the mortar in order to remember them and they even instructed us in a practical manner how to prepare it, and so they said⁸, “Abaye said therefore [taking into account both of these opinions – apple and mortar] one needs ... [to make it sour] as a remembrance of the apple, and needs to make it thick as a remembrance of the mortar,” and Rashi explains, “make it thick – to put in and crush it a lot in order that it will be thick, and to put in apples and wine and spices (ginger) that will make the taste sour.”

On the other hand, the mitzvah of eating matzah comes in order for us to feel the process of redemption in the actual stages of leaving. Chazal were not satisfied with the illustration that is actually the mitzvah, so they added an obligation to say, “This matzah that we eat - because of what do we do it? Because our forefathers did not have sufficient time for their dough to become *chometz* before the King of kings, Hashem, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them,” and at the time of saying this, we are obligated to lift up the matzah and show it to those in attendance at the seder.

⁴ Pesachim 116b

⁵ See the Gemara there

⁶ Pesachim 116a and Rashbam

⁷ Shir HaShirim 8:5

⁸ Id.

In order that we can feel the feeling of free men who went out from the house of slavery, Chazal established for us two special mitzvos. The one is the mitzvah of leaning, as Rashi and the Rashbam explain,⁹ "...and even a poor person in Israel does not eat on the night of Pesach until he leans in the way of a free man with a couch and on the table as a remembrance of freedom." And the second mitzvah, the mitzvah of drinking the four cups, about which Chazal said¹⁰, "Our rabbis established four cups in the way of freedom."

To feel as if we went out from Mitzrayim

From all of this, we see to what extent Chazal considered illustration/demonstration as a central means through which we will reach the feeling as if we went out from Mitzrayim.

The fundamental point mentioned in the mitzvos of reclining and the four cups is also explained in the words of the Rambam. We will quote his words and elaborate on them, and thereby consider in what way the Rambam adds to explain and clarify the obligatory mitzvos of the seder, in order to reach a feeling as if we ourselves went out from Mitzrayim.

And so, he writes¹¹: "In every generation, a person is obligated to show himself as if he himself went out now from the slavery of Mitzrayim, as it says¹², 'And [Hashem] took us out from there.' And on this, Hashem commanded in the Torah¹³, 'And remember that you were a slave,' in other words: as if you yourself were a slave and went out to freedom and redemption."

"In every generation, a person is obligated to show himself," the Rambam is not *gares* according to what's written in front of us¹⁴ "to see himself," rather "to show himself," namely, a person must do external actions and illustrations/demonstrations of the going out to freedom, and through them, awaken his heart and feel inside him as if he went out from Mitzrayim, according to the *yesod* brought in *Mesilas Yesharim*¹⁵ that "external movement awakens the internal."

The words of the Rambam at the end of this halacha prove this. He writes, "'And remember that you were a slave¹⁶,' in other words: as if you yourself were a slave and went out to freedom and redemption," and he does not mention the obligation "to show himself," rather that he must feel in himself that he was a slave, etc., and this was because after a man shows himself and demonstrates with his external actions the going out to freedom, he will come, in truth, to feel this internally.

A person must reach a level like this of completeness/wholeness until he feels "as if he himself went out now from the slavery of Mitzrayim," meaning: it's upon him to feel as if now - on this night of the seder - that he was a slave in Mitzrayim and now Hashem took him out to freedom from there.

Things we do to help us feel that way

The Rambam continues, "Therefore, when a man has a meal on this night, he needs to eat and to drink and he reclines in the way of a free man - and each and every one, whether man or woman, is obligated to drink on this night four cups of wine."

⁹ Pesachim 99b

¹⁰ Pesachim 109b

¹¹ Hilchos Chometz U'Matzah 7:6-7

¹² Devarim 6:23

¹³ Devarim 15:15

¹⁴ In the mishna in Pesachim 116b and in the Haggadah

¹⁵ Perek yayin. See also Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah 16

¹⁶ Devarim 5:15

The “therefore” is a continuation and explanation of the prior halacha that “a person is obligated to show himself,” meaning: how will a person show by external action that he went out to freedom? With reclining in the way of a free man.

It’s also implicit from the way that it’s written -- from the fact that the Rambam relies on the obligation of the four cups in the laws of reclining, and afterwards¹⁷ details the laws of the reclining, and in the continuation¹⁸ details the laws of the four cups -- that the mitzvah of the four cups is, likewise, an action in the way of freedom¹⁹ in order to show that the person went out to freedom, and thereby he will feel internally as if he himself went out from Mitzrayim.

It is also an enactment of Chazal to begin the story of the going out from Egypt with the shame (*g’nus*) that, in the beginning, our forefathers were idol worshippers and with the shame of the servitude and slavery in Mitzrayim, and to conclude with the praise (*shevach*) that Hashem drew us close to believe in His Oneness and to serve Him and in praise of the miracles that He did for us and He took us out to freedom.²⁰ The purpose is in order for the bitter feelings of shame and disgrace and the enormous simcha with the going out to freedom to penetrate our heart, and thereby recognise the good that we received from Hashem, and accept the yoke of His Kingship lovingly and wilfully.

The more we describe the details of the shame and the praise, the more deeply they will take root in us, and draw us closer to Hashem. Therefore, Chazal say on this that the one who increases the telling over of the story is praiseworthy, as the Rambam writes, “And one who *darshens* from ‘*Aramei oveid avi*’ until he completes the entire *parsha*,” which deals with the details of the slavery and the redemption, “and all who add and elaborate with *darshening* this *parsha*, behold, he is praiseworthy.”

Clarifying the obligation to give thanks and praise

In their description of the order of the seder in the gemara, following a discussion regarding Mah Nishtana and after explaining that we “begin with shame and end with praise,” Chazal bring²¹ an incident with Rav Nachman in order to illustrate the praise that should follow the redemption. And so, it says, “Rav Nachman said to his servant Daro: a slave who is freed by his master and the master gives him silver and gold, what does the servant need to say to him? Daro answered that the freed servant needs to thank the master and praise him.” Rav Nachman wanted to feel for himself the joy of the redemption which obligates one to give thanks and praise, therefore he asked his servant Daro.

Behold, Chazal describe for us the good situation of Daro; he did not have a difficult/hard yoke on him. And so, Chazal tell us²²: “[Rav Nachman said,] ‘A slave is not worth the bread that his master feeds him’ but [Rava said that Rav Nachman] said this about his slave Daro, who was not a slave, but a jester who would dance among the barrels (i.e., in bars) in order that they would give him wine to drink.” And if Daro did not serve Rav Nachman in practice, nevertheless, he felt and said about a slave who was freed that the slave must give thanks and praise to his master; how much more so

¹⁷ In Halacha 7:8

¹⁸ Halachos 7:9 and 10

¹⁹ As explained in Pesachim 109b

²⁰ Pesachim 116a; Rambam sham Halacha 4

²¹ Pesachim sham

²² Bava Metzia 64b and Rashi there

must we do so because Hashem took us out to freedom from crushing servitude and hard slavery - how much greater is our obligation to give thanks to Him and to praise Him [if even someone who could barely be considered a slave felt that way].

After the answer of Daro, Rav Nachman continued the recitation of the Haggadah and said²³, “We were slaves,” meaning, begin with the story of the going out from Mitzrayim that’s in the Haggadah because the telling over of the going out from Mitzrayim in itself is a praise and a giving of thanks to Hashem.

The Avudraham explains the meaning of the word “Haggadah,” and this is what he says: “There are those commentators who say that ‘Haggadah’ is lashon thanksgiving and praise to Hashem on taking us out from Mitzrayim, as the Targum Yerushalmi says in the translation of Devarim 26:3, ‘I acknowledge (*higadti*) this day before Hashem your G-d’ – ‘praise for the day of judgment.’”

Before he started reciting the Haggadah, Rav Nachman clarified for himself the obligation to praise Hashem through evidence based on the reaction of a slave because perfect praise is only possible by the senses of seeing and feeling. And so, it is implicit in the Rashbam²⁴ in his explanation of the words of the gemara about the incident with Rav Nachman:

“After the questions from his son, he begins to say, ‘*Avadim hayinu* - we were slaves’ and completes the Haggadah with praises and thanksgiving, meaning: so” — like the question that Rav Nachman asked to Daro, what does a slave need to do whose master freed him and gave him presents, and he answered that the slave needs to give thanks and praise, and by this Rav Nachman felt that it was so — “Hashem did for us, that we were slaves and He took us out from there.”²⁵

Expanding on the *sipur* brings us to *hoda’ah* and *shevach*

We find that by expanding on the telling of the story in its details and by means of demonstration – the mitzvos of the Seder – we are brought to feel as if we went out from Mitzrayim, and then come “to give thanks and to praise.”

“To give thanks” - this is to acknowledge the truth that Hashem did miracles and wonders for us and much for the good of His people, and thereby we give thanks to him. These two understandings in “to give thanks” include the concept of *hakaras hatov* - to recognise that Hashem does good for us and to express this in speech and action (fulfilling mitzvos). And from this, we will come to praise, that is to tell and make known the kindnesses of Hashem and we express this recognition by saying praises on His many kindnesses.

²³ Pesachim sham (Rashi explains that according to Rav Nachman, Daro’s answer has made them exempt from saying Mah Nishtana and they could skip to “*Avadim hayinu*”)

²⁴ Pesachim sham, ד”ה פסח

²⁵ The Sifsei Chaim comments here that the Rambam writes (Hilchos Chometz U’Matzah 7:2): “How [does a father teach his son in accordance with the son’s intelligence]? If he is a child or *tipush* say to him, ‘My son, we were all slaves like this maidservant or like that manservant in Mitzrayim, and on this night, Hashem redeemed us and took us out to freedom.’” Meaning, we have to feel the slavery and the freedom by giving the living example of the manservant and maidservant who are in front of us. Certainly, the source for the words of the Rambam is the story about Rav Nachman and his slave, but the Rambam *paskens* that a person needs to make this example only for a child and a *tipush*. In an extensive footnote on this, the Sifsei Chaim asks how the Rambam can narrow the application this way to only applying to a child and a *tipush* when Rav Nachman made this demonstration for himself? *B’kitzur*, he says that Rav Nachman was behaving *lifnim mishuras hadin* and this is why the Rambam did not *pasken* this way.

The purpose of the *hakaros hatov* regarding the going out from Mitzrayim is the acceptance of the yoke of the heavenly kingdom and fulfilment of mitzvos with joy and desire. As the Chovos HaLevavos writes²⁶: the goodness of the Creator Who gives life and goodness to every creation, obligates them to do His will in the rational mitzvos (the *sheva mitzvos bnei noach* are also in the category of rational), “the second matter — the goodness of the Creator on a nation from the nations ... like He did good for the Bnei Yisrael with taking them out from the land of Mitzrayim ... this requires additional service on top of the original/first service and it is the teachings (*toros*) that were heard,” namely the *chukei HaTorah* that are not understood by the intellect/reason.

Connecting the end of the Haggadah

We can now understand the content and order of things at the end of the Haggadah.

“Anyone who does not say these three things on Pesach does not go out from the hands of his obligation.” It’s not the intention that a person does not go out from the hands of his obligation of the mitzvos of Pesach, matzah, and maror because he didn’t say these things – because they are fulfilled with action²⁷.

Rather, the intention [i.e., the *chiyuv* to which Rabban Gamliel is referring] is for the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* because the benefit of the story is expanding things in detail, and Chazal ruled that these three things are essential for completing the telling over and its aim. And one who does not say them does not go out from the hands of his obligation of the mitzvah of *sipur*.

After one completes the telling over with saying “Pesach, matzah, and maror,” the Baal HaHaggadah arranges the verse: “In every generation, a person is obligated to see/show himself as if he went out from Mitzrayim, as it says, ‘You shall tell your child on that day,’ on the night of Pesach, saying, ‘because of this...’” The word “this” (*zeh*) means it is like showing with a finger, namely demonstrating things and illustrating them to those who are in attendance, as it says in the Haggadah earlier, “because of ‘this,’ it can only be said when matzah and maror are placed before you,” namely because of these things that have been placed before me, “Hashem did for me with taking me out from Mitzrayim.”

Meaning, I have to feel by the illustration that Hashem redeemed me from Mitzrayim. Therefore, we find that through the telling over and the illustration, a person reaches to a level where he is able to fulfil the obligation to see/show himself like he went out from Mitzrayim.

Afterwards we say, “Therefore, we are obligated to thank, praise, glorify, etc.,” because after we feel as if we ourselves were redeemed, “Therefore we are obligated” from the power of the feelings of the heart “to thank and to praise.” And so, the Avudraham writes, “Since it is as if we went out from Mitzrayim, we are obligated to thank and to praise Hashem as our forefathers did.”

Based on a sicha from the Sifsei Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, zt”l

²⁶ Shaar Avodas Ha'Elokim, perek vuv

²⁷ There are those who hold that the *chiyuv* to which Rabban Gamliel refers is included in the actual mitzvos of the eating of the Pesach, matzah, and maror (see e.g., Haggadah Divrei Sheol and Binyan Tzion). This is according to the words of Tosafos (116a d”h v’amartem). This is derived from the *pasuk* (Shemos 12:27), “And you will say, ‘Zevach Pesach hu.’” (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mesivta)

The Four Questions: How Could a Child Possibly Ask Them?

One of the most iconic images of the Pesach Seder (if not the most iconic image) is of a young child, who slowly rises from where he sits until he reaches a standing position, either on top of or next to his chair, facing all of the guests who are seated around the Seder table, and then (albeit nervously) sings the words of the Mah Nishtana, aka The Four Questions, which focus on some of the differences in our behaviour that will be noticed throughout the course of the Seder meal: eating only matzah; eating maror; dipping twice; and leaning while eating and drinking.¹

Although most people have become accustomed to having a young (or even the youngest) child ask The Four Questions of the Mah Nishtana² (and certainly shouldn't change from doing so!), Rabbi Avraham Danzig, zt"l, (aka the Chayei Adam, after the title of his halachic work of that name) points out in Toldos Adam (his commentary on the Haggadah) that, although a child is, in fact, meant to ask "mah nishtana" at the very point in the Seder that we've become accustomed to having a child do so, the child was not, however, meant to be the one asking The Four Questions! In fact, Rabbi Danzig explains that, at the point in the Seder where The Four Questions of the Mah Nishtana are meant to be asked, it would not even be possible for a child to ask such questions, as most of the things being asked about have yet to take place at the Seder!

In other words, in the absence of a really fantastic memory regarding what transpired at the prior year's Pesach Seder (or a considerable amount of prepping, as we often do with our children, nowadays), how could a child know at the point in the Seder at which The Four Questions are asked that (1) only matzah will be consumed at the Seder meal; (2) maror will be one of the vegetables consumed; (3) two different vegetables will be dipped (as only one vegetable, karpas, will have been dipped by this point in the Seder); and (4) matzah and wine will be consumed exclusively while leaning?

In fact, the question about leaning wasn't even in the original version of The Four Questions but was a later substitution! The original question found in the mishna was actually: "On all other nights, we eat meat that has been roasted, boiled, or cooked, but tonight we eat only roasted meat." But again, a child would not know that only roasted meat would be served at the Seder until he had made it all the way through to the meal and had the *korban Pesach* (Pesach offering), the *korban Chagigah* (festival offering), and the *Afikomen*, the dessert of the Seder meal [which, when the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Holy Temple) stood consisted of the roasted Pesach offering (a young goat or sheep) eaten along with matzah, maror, and charoses – the original shwarma]!

So, what is the "mah nishtana" that our Sages intended for the child to ask?

¹ The Aruch HaShulchan (OC 473:21) maintains that The Four Questions aren't really intended to be asked as questions in the sense of: "Why is the sky blue?", but are instead meant to evoke a sense of wonder or astonishment, in the sense of: "How great are Your deeds Hashem..." (Tehillim 92:6.) or "How goodly are your tents, Yaakov..." (Bamidbar 24:5).

² See Id., who notes that we are no longer accustomed to having a child ask the original Mah Nishtana question noted by Rashi (presented later in this discussion) and are instead accustomed to having a child ask The Four Questions.

To understand the answer, we first need a bit of orientation to the Seder. Normally, be it Shabbos or Yom Tov, a child is used to coming to the dining room table, hearing his father make Kiddush and then having some wine to drink. Immediately afterwards, everyone washes his hands and says the bracha of “*al natilas yadayim*” in preparation for eating the challah that will be distributed after the father has made the bracha of “*hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz*.” At the Seder, the child begins to recognize that something funny is going on when everyone washes his hands – and sometimes, for those who have such a custom, actually proceeds to wash his hands right at the table (using large basins) – without saying a bracha. And then, instead of having the usual (warm) yummy challah, the child receives a vegetable (aka karpas), such as potato or celery, which has been dipped in salt water, and watches (a bit stunned) as his father makes the bracha of “*borei p’ri ha’adama*” before everyone eats the karpas. And why do we engage in such unusual behaviour? Precisely so that the child will start to ask spontaneously (a la “mah nishtana” fashion): “Why are we dipping (vegetables) before we eat (our meal)? We don’t normally do this!”³ And this is also a pretty safe guess as to the reason why we do most unusual things at the Pesach Seder: in order to capture the attention of the children, get them to notice that something different from the norm is happening right before their very eyes, and encourage them to ask about these differences.

After we’ve finished eating the karpas, the Seder continues with the father breaking the middle matzah, setting the larger piece aside for the Afikomen, and then holding up the broken piece and stating the paragraph of “*halachma anya*,” after which he replaces the smaller piece back in between the other two whole matzos where it had been before being broken in half.

At this point⁴, the mishna states that: “The second cup of wine is poured and **here the child asks his father.**”⁵ And what exactly is the question that the child asks? Rashi comments on this mishna that the child asks: “Mah nishtana (i.e., why) did [we] pour a second cup of wine before having [our] meal (i.e., washing our hands and making the bracha of “*hamotzi*” on some type of bread)?”⁶ What the child is supposed to be bothered by – so much so that he just can’t help but ask at this point – is the fact that his father is suddenly having a second cup of wine before the meal has even started! (Had a rough a week Dad?) Even if the child’s father normally has more than one cup of wine with his Shabbos or Yom Tov meal, the significant difference here is that the meal hasn’t even started! It’s as if the child wants to remind his father, “Ummm ... Dad ... are you forgetting something? We haven’t even started our meal yet and you already made Kiddush!”

And the Chayei Adam was not alone in making this observation. No less than the Rambam codifies⁷ what we are meant to do at the Seder precisely like this mishna and Rashi’s explanation: “Pour the second cup and here the child asks [i.e., on the pouring of the second cup]. The Korei (lit: the reader; i.e., the one leading the Seder) asks, ‘*Mah nishtana halailah hazeh m’kol haleilos?*’ (Why is this night different from all other nights?)”

³ Id. OC 473:18.

⁴ Some people remove the Seder plate.

⁵ Pesachim 116a (emphasis added).

⁶ See Id. Rashi d”h v’kahn haben sho’eil aviv.

⁷ Hilchos Chometz U’Matzah 8:2.

The entire point of our annual telling over of the story of the exodus from Egypt (*sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*) is to “implant emunah (faith in Hashem) in the heart of a child from the time that the child is very young,” as the going out from Egypt serves as the very “foundation and seat of Jewish faith” because it was then that Hashem’s *hashgacha* (supervision) of His world and the Jewish people became evident to everyone.⁸ Out of concern for the proper performance and fulfillment of this mitzvah of telling over the story of our exodus, our Sages required that questions be asked (to the point that even someone who makes a Pesach Seder by himself is obligated to ask himself these questions!), thereby forcing the father to answer the questions that get asked, providing explanations and reasons for everything, with the depth of the questions and answers being dependent upon the person(s) asking and answering.⁹

So why did our Sages insist that the Pesach Seder be a series of questions and answers? Because the only way to arrive at the truth of a matter is to investigate it via a proper inquiry (i.e., through asking questions and seeking answers) because only one who questions will actually succeed in finding an answer!¹⁰ Moreover, it is only by means of the questions being asked by his children that a father can determine if the children have understood and accepted the answers that the father gives them – as questions reveal what is in a person’s heart (as we see clearly via the questions asked by The Four Sons later on in the Haggadah).¹¹ And we can appreciate how questioning reveals such a thing by thinking about any presentation that we have attended where people were given an opportunity to ask questions following the presentation: some people ask questions and clearly want to hear an answer to those questions, while other people raise their hands to “ask” questions, but instead wind up offering their own opinions on the very subject under discussion, showing that they never really had a question in the first place, but rather a “comment” and were never really interested in hearing any answers!¹²

May we be blessed with constantly seeing the events of the Pesach Seder through the fresh and innocent eyes of children; with taking note of the many different subtleties and nuances that our Sages included; with constantly asking questions by which we will better understand and appreciate the *yetzias Mitzrayim* (the exodus from Egypt), as well as deepen our own understanding and faith in Hashem. Next year in Yerushalayim ... with the original shwarma!

⁸ See Toldos Adam on Mah Nishtana.

⁹ See Toldos Adam on Mah Nishtana.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ See Leil Shimurim d”h keneged arba’ah banim.

¹² Id.

The Four Cups: Why Do We Drink Them?

Who doesn't know the *Mah Nishtana*? Every child learns it in school so that he can give his parents *nachas* when he recites it at the seder. We ask about the matzah; we ask about the maror; we ask about the dippings; and we even ask about the leaning. But why don't we bother to ask about the four cups of wine that we have at the seder, "...on all other nights, we are not obligated to drink even one cup of wine, but on this night, we have four cups"?

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, better known as the Aruch HaShulchan after the title of his influential halachic work, offers two possible answers. When it comes to matters of salvation or joy, it's universal, i.e., not something unique to the Jewish people, for people to drink wine in celebration. It's hard not to picture people at a wedding raising their glasses for a toast, or a sports team celebrating their victory by dousing each other with as much, if not more, champagne than they manage to drink. *Dovid HaMelech* (King David) explains¹ the difference for us, "I will raise the cup of salvations and in the name of Hashem I will call out!"

In other words, *Dovid HaMelech* is saying that, when men raise their glasses to drink in celebration, they bless and acknowledge each other, but when I raise my glass, I don't bless other men, nor do I utter their names from my lips, only "in the name of Hashem I will call out," to Him will I bless and to Him will I give thanks. Therefore, since all men drink wine in celebration of occasions of salvation and joy, a question about why we drink the four cups was not included in the questions of the *Mah Nishtana* because it's not really a question at all. Celebrating with wine is something universal.

The four cups of Pharaoh

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud) asks² what is the source for having four cups of wine at the Pesach seder? Among the answers that are given, Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi says that the four cups at the seder correspond to the "four cups of Pharaoh." We said goodbye forever to Pharaoh at the splitting of the sea, so what does he have to do with the four cups that we drink each year at the seder?

After his brothers sold him, Yoseph wound up being transported down to Egypt, where he was sold as a slave, and later falsely accused of a crime by his owner, and thrown into prison. Following years of languishing in prison, Yoseph met two royal servants of Pharaoh who had been thrown in prison because Pharaoh had become angry with each of them. Each of these servants of Pharaoh also happened to have a dream on the same night and each of them related his dream to Yoseph, who was able to accurately interpret their dreams, which foretold of their impending fate.

The "four cups of Pharaoh" mentioned by Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi refer to the word *cos*, 'cup,' which is mentioned four times in the cupbearer's recounting of his dream to Yoseph and in Yoseph's subsequent interpretation of the dream: "Pharaoh's **cup** was in my hand...;" "...I squeezed [the grapes] into the **cup** of Pharaoh...;" "...I placed the **cup** in Pharaoh's hand;" and "...you will place Pharaoh's **cup** in his hand...."³

But what exactly is the connection between the dream of the cupbearer and the four cups of wine that we drink at the seder on Pesach?

¹ Tehillim 116:13

² Pesachim 68b

³ Bereishis 40:11 and 13

Seeing the bigger picture

We need to take a step back and consider why the cupbearer and the chief baker both wound up in prison. Rashi explains that the offense of the cupbearer was that a fly was found in Pharaoh's cup and the offense of the chief baker was that a pebble was found in a loaf of bread that had been served to the king. According to Rashi's explanation, the sin of the cupbearer was much greater than that of the chief baker because the cup for which the cupbearer was responsible was actually placed directly in the palm of Pharaoh, making it a certainty that the fly would reach Pharaoh and possibly even wind up in his mouth, whereas the pebble was merely in a whole loaf of bread that was placed on the king's table before him, not directly in his hand, and the odds were that the piece of bread that contained the pebble would never even reach the king. Contrary to what logic would dictate, however, Pharaoh decided to return the cupbearer to his position and hang the chief baker! What was Pharaoh thinking?!

And there's more to marvel at: how is it possible that the offenses of the cupbearer and the chief baker happened to occur at precisely the same time? And why did Pharaoh get so angry that he punished them as severely he did? Granted, his servants were careless, but Pharaoh could have just dismissed them both from their posts because of their negligence. Such offenses certainly didn't warrant throwing them in prison nor going so far as to issue a death sentence for the one for such a seemingly light offense like this. Finally, why does the Torah call their carelessness by the name "sin," stating⁴ that, "...the king of Egypt's cupbearer and the chief baker sinned against their master, the king of Egypt..."?

What really happened

To answer all of the above, the Aruch HaShulchan posits that these two ministers, the cupbearer and the chief baker, hated each other. Each one wanted to trip up the other in order to bring shame upon him in the eyes of Pharaoh and, thereby, have him removed from his post. So, the cupbearer took a pebble and placed it in the bread of the king in order to trip up the chief baker, and the chief baker took a fly and placed it in the cup of Pharaoh to trip up the cupbearer.

According to this reasoning, the primary offense that each of them committed was daring to act against the other by using things that were so closely connected to the king. But the offense of the chief baker was much greater than that of the cupbearer, as he shamelessly placed a fly in the very cup that would be placed directly in the hand of the king and from which the king would drink, and, therefore, he was sentenced to death. The cupbearer's actions, on the other hand, were not nearly as brazen, merely placing a pebble inside an entire loaf of bread and this is why the cupbearer was returned to his station and allowed to continue serving in his position.

Another reason

The *Yerushalmi* brings another reason for why we drink the four cups of wine at the seder: it corresponds to the four exiles/kingdoms: *Bavel* (Babylon), *Madai* (Persia/Medea), *Yavan* (Greece), and *Edom* (Rome). The simple explanation is that for each salvation from one of these exiles we drink a cup of salvation, as *Dovid HaMelech* writes, "I will raise my cup of salvations." Accordingly, if there would be only one exile, we would only drink one cup, but since there are four exiles, we are compelled to drink four cups.

The reason for most of our exiles is the sin of *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred). In fact, it was the sin of *sinas chinam* that caused our original exile, the Egyptian exile, whose roots can be traced back to the

⁴ Bereishis 40:1

sale of Yoseph by his brothers. It's well known that *sinas chinam* was responsible for the destruction of *Bayis Sheni* (the Second Temple), but what's not as widely known is that our Sages teach⁵ that the *sinas chinam* that existed amongst the *gedolei yisrael* (the leaders of the nation) is what caused the destruction of *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple).

Pharaoh's four cups and our four cups

We can now connect what transpired between the cupbearer and the chief baker with Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi's answer that the four cups that we drink at the seder correspond to the four times the word "cup" is mentioned in the dream of Pharaoh's cupbearer and its subsequent interpretation by Yoseph. This idea about the four cups was hinted to Yoseph with his being in prison and his being innocent from this sin of *sinas chinam*. These four cups were made known to Yoseph through the dream of the cupbearer and its interpretation. In other words, just as the *sinas chinam* between the cupbearer and the chief baker caused them both to be ejected from Pharaoh's court and imprisoned, so, too, because of the sin of *sinas chinam*, the *Bnei Yisrael* (Children of Israel aka Yaakov) will suffer four exiles and drink four cups of salvation, one cup of wine for each exile.

According to this explanation, we find that the four cups that we drink at the seder are not in any way a praise for us, but, rather, something shameful that we brought upon ourselves through the terrible sin of *sinas chinam*. Therefore, because drinking the four cups of wine is not something that brings honor to us, we don't draw attention to it by asking about the four cups in the questions of the *Mah Nishtana*.

Based upon the Aruch HaShulchan's Leil Shimurim

⁵ See Yoma 9b

Party For Five: Why Were All of Those Famous Rabbis in Bnei Brak?

The Haggadah famously speaks of the five rabbis who gathered in Bnei Brak for the Pesach seder – Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon – and who spent the entire night discussing the going out from Egypt, until their students came to inform them that the time had come for the morning reading of the *shema* – meaning that they had fulfilled their obligation of talking about the going out from Egypt to the fullest extent possible and, now, a new obligation, i.e., the reading of the *shema*, had begun.

Rebbe Eliezer¹ and Rabbi Tarfon² resided in Lod and Rebbe Yehoshua resided in Peki'in³, so why were they all sitting far from their own homes on Pesach in Bnei Brak, where Rebbe Akiva resided⁴?

Furthermore, Rebbe Eliezer and Rebbe Yehoshua were the teachers of Rebbe Akiva, so surely it would have been more appropriate for Rabbi Akiva to have been a guest at one of their homes, rather than the two of them spending Pesach at his home.

And the question can be made even stronger if we consider that Rebbe Eliezer famously held⁵ that it's prohibited to go out from one's house on the festivals. The gemara even tells a story of Rebbe Eliezer being in a different city on a festival and questions how it could be possible considering his own ruling, and concludes that it was not, in fact, a festival, but rather Shabbos when he had been in the other city. Accordingly, how is it possible that Rebbe Eliezer spent Pesach at his student's home, and not in his own home? What could have compelled him to be there? The commentators offer different answers.

Missing the boat

The Be'er Miriam answers that we find, for example, that Rabban Gamliel, who was the *Nasi* (lit: Prince; the leader of the people) and, as such, would have resided in Yavneh⁶, would often sail overseas for the needs of the community, with others in his company. In fact, Rabban Gamliel and those who accompanied him once returned on a boat from one of their trips on an erev Pesach.⁷ The midrash also notes⁸ occasions when Rabban Gamliel and others, including some of the above-named rabbis, made trips to Rome.

Based upon this, it's possible that on this particular Pesach on which the incident recorded in the Haggadah took place, Rabban Gamliel and his entourage had arrived back in the port of Yaffa on erev Pesach and did not have sufficient time to return to their homes for yom tov. Therefore, they chose to spend Pesach in the city of Bnei Brak, which is next to Yaffa, because it is the place where Rabbi Akiva resided and, since Rabbi Akiva would have likely travelled together with them on the boat, his home would be the obvious choice to spend Pesach. In fact, it's likewise entirely possible that Rabban Gamliel was also with them in Bnei Brak, as Yavneh would have been too far for him to get back to, but that he did not sit together with the others at the Pesach seder because they would

¹ Sanhedrin 32b, 68a; Chagigah 3b; Beitza 5a

² Taanis 19a, 25b

³ Sanhedrin 32b; Chagigah 3a

⁴ Sanhedrin 32b

⁵ Succah 27b

⁶ Rosh Hashanah 31b

⁷ See Yerushalmi Maaser Sheini 5:4; Tosafos d"h isur Bava Metzia 11a

⁸ Shemos Rabbah 30:9; Devarim Rabbah 2:24

not have been able to recline in front of him out of respect. Therefore, the Haggadah specifically emphasizes that “they were reclining,” to teach that, since Rabban Gamliel was not present with them, they were all able to recline as required, as one would normally not recline in the presence of a great *Talmud Chochom* or, in this case, the *Gadol HaDor* (leader of the generation).⁹

The question then becomes how Rabbi Akiva was able to recline in front of his teachers, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, as ordinarily the *halacha* is that a student does not recline in the presence of his teacher, even if the teacher is not his primary teacher, unless the teacher gives him explicit permission.¹⁰ Some suggest¹¹ that, perhaps, Rabbi Akiva was considered a *Talmid Chaver* of his teachers – which Rashi defines¹² as someone who is a *chochom* (learned) like his teachers, but that he learned from them one thing or more – and from this episode we see that a *Talmid Chaver* is obligated to recline before his teacher. Others maintain¹³ that Rabbi Akiva did not recline and that the intention of the statement that they reclined was not regarding him, as the primary purpose of relating the incident of the group staying up all night discussing the going out from Egypt had nothing to do with their reclining.

Another approach

The Aruch HaShulchan suggests an entirely different approach, explaining that we can arrive at a possible answer to why these rabbis were at the house of Rabbi Akiva by looking at the end of Mesechta Makkos¹⁴. The gemara there tells of a couple of famous incidents involving Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva, beginning with the following: They were once traveling together and they heard the noise of Roman crowds from a distance of 120 *mil* away (one *mil* is equal to approximately one kilometre) and they began crying, but Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him, “Why are you laughing?” He said to them, “Why are you crying?”

They said to him, “These non-Jews bow down and burn incense to idols and they dwell in safety and tranquillity and we, the House (i.e., the *Beis HaMikdash*, Temple), which is the footstool of our G-d, is burned in fire, and we shouldn’t cry?” He said to them, “For this [reason] I’m laughing. Just as this [i.e., safety and calm] is so for those who go against His will, how much more so it will be those who do His will!” ... They said to him these words, “Akiva, you have comforted us, Akiva, you have comforted us.”

Just what comfort?

It’s hard to understand what comfort was this that he provided for them? The Romans were living with ease and tranquillity despite their having destroyed Hashem’s House, whereas Israel was depressed and burdened with suffering. And, if Rabbi Akiva’s intention with his words of comfort was regarding *Olam HaBah* (The World to Come), it’s even more difficult, because surely the other Sages knew this already and, nevertheless, they cried on the great suffering of Israel in *Olam HaZeh* (This world) – so we must say that Rabbi Akiva’s words which had comforted them were regarding *Olam HaZeh*, so what exactly was this comfort?

⁹ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 472:5

¹⁰ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 472:5

¹¹ Rabbi Dovid Pardo, Chasdei Dovid

¹² Eiruvin 63a, d”h “Talmid Chaver”

¹³ Zachor L’Avraham

¹⁴ 24a and b

We can explain this by looking at the words of the *Navi* (prophet), Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) in *Eichah* (Lamentations), which was written before the destruction of *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple): “And I said, my strength is lost; my hope is from Hashem. To remember my sorrow and my bitterness, when I remembered, my soul was bowed low. This I shall recall, therefore, I hope: the *chesed* (kindness) of Hashem has not ended; His *rachamim* (mercy) is not exhausted.”

***Chesed* for them, *rachamim* for us**

The *Navi* speaks in the last sentence quoted of *chesed* and *rachamim*. Although they are one subject, there is a difference between them: *chesed* doesn't need to take precedence over *midas hadin* (the attribute of strict judgment), but this is not the case with *midas harachamim* (the attribute of mercy) which necessarily must take precedence over *midas hadin* (the attribute of strict judgment), superseding it.

For example, if we say that the king did a *chesed* with a certain wealthy man, that, for example, he gave him 1000 silver pieces as a gift, we are able to understand this; but, if we say that the king had *rachamim* upon a certain wealthy man and gave him 1000 silver pieces, this doesn't make sense because what sort of *rachamim* is there for a wealthy man when it comes to financial matters? *Rachamim* only applies in a case where, according to the strict letter of the law one result would apply – for example, that a poor person is owed nothing by me – but that doesn't stop me from having *rachamim* on him and giving him something to which he is not otherwise entitled.

Therefore, when the *Navi*, Yirmiyahu, saw with *ruach hakodesh* (Divine inspiration) the tranquillity of the nation of *Bavel* (Babylonia), which was responsible for destroying *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple), and the distress and suffering of Israel, he couldn't imagine for himself that there would be a revival and rejuvenation for Israel because how could this small, poor, conquered, and depressed people continue to exist among the many wolves of prey (i.e., nations of the world), so he shouted, “My strength is lost...,”¹⁵ and, “Recall my distress and my misery....”¹⁶

But then he changes course and says, “This I call to mind, therefore, I have hope”¹⁷ – what does the *Navi* call to mind that gives him hope? When he, again, considers the tranquillity of the nation of *Bavel*, and the tremendous *chesed* that flows to them from the Master of the World, from this he now takes strength and hope for the salvation of Israel, that Israel will not be destroyed by all of its suffering, because: “The *chesed* of Hashem has not ended.”¹⁸

In other words, if the *chesed* of Hashem has not come to an end for the nation of *Bavel* to whom, despite their wickedness, Hashem still gives them peace and tranquillity (i.e., He gives them a free gift which they are not owed, as with the gift of money given to the wealthy man), all the more so that Hashem doesn't exhaust His *rachamim*, His ability to go beyond the strict letter of the law, for His nation Israel, who He certainly will not forsake and who only need His *rachamim* to save them from any harsh judgment.

All the more so for those who do His will

Our Sages were not pained by the tranquillity of the Romans, rather they were pained by the tremendous oppression and suffering that the Romans had caused Israel. When this incident with the noise of the Roman crowds described above took place, it was, in terms of time, relatively close

¹⁵ Eichah 3:18

¹⁶ Eichah 3:19

¹⁷ Eichah 3:21

¹⁸ Eichah 3:22

to the destruction of *Bayis Sheini* (the Second Temple) and, like the *Navi*, our Sages found it difficult to imagine that there would be a restoration and revival of Israel – as many Jews likely felt after the Holocaust. Rabbi Akiva succeeded in comforting his colleagues by assuring them that, despite appearances, the eyes of Hashem were still on Israel and that Israel would not be destroyed, arguing that if Hashem showers so much *chesed* upon the Romans, who transgress His will as much as the Babylonians, how much more so will He shower *rachamim* on His nation Israel that they should not be destroyed.

So, out of gratitude to Rabbi Akiva for inspiring hope for the Jewish people after the terrible events of the *churban* (the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem), therefore, all of these Sages travelled to his city and to his house – with the exception of Rabban Gamliel, because he was the *Nasi* – specifically to speak about the going out from Egypt on the night of the festival of Pesach because the story of the going out from Egypt makes clear the eternity of Israel, that everything was created for Israel and no one will succeed in destroying Israel. So, too, the Haggadah is careful to note that they all spoke and elaborated on this subject until “their talmidim came and said, ‘our teachers, the time for the morning reading of the *shema* has arrived’” because the morning reading of the *shema* also serves as a source of strength, since, in the brachos after it, we say, “the Helper of our forefathers ... Shield and Saviour for their children after them in every generation” and other similar things like this, in which we are promised by Hashem that the Jewish people will exist forever.

Based on Leil Shimurim and the Mesivta Haggadah

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah and the Day that Forever Changed the World

We say it every year at the Pesach seder; in fact, it's one of the most well-known lines from the Haggadah: Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "I am like a seventy-year-old man" But what does it mean? Why did he say it and what was his point that he was "like" a seventy-year-old man? He needed an afternoon nap? He was suffering from aches and pains?

And why would he think his status of being "like a seventy-year-old man" would be sufficient to convince his colleagues that he was right regarding the debate of whether we need to remember *yetzias mitzrayim* (the exodus from Egypt) at night?

Your Haggadah may tell you that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was only eighteen years old when he made that statement – making it even more bizarre. It may even tell you that he was the *Nasi* (lit: the Prince), the leader of the nation. But why was a leader who was only eighteen years old chosen in the first place? Was there no one else more qualified who was a bit older and had some more experience going for him?

The final straw

As is popular today with storytelling, our story begins at ... the end, complete with flashbacks to help fill in the back story as to just how we got here. So, we'll start, as the gemara does, with the third strike that led to the *Nasi*, Rabban Gamliel, being called "out" and replaced with Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah – and in the course of recounting the story, we'll detail the other two strikes, the prior incidents that lead up to that final, fateful decision to remove him.

Our story begins with a question asked by one of the most well-known Rabbis from the gemara, the student of Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya whether *davening maariv* (the evening prayer) was optional or obligatory.¹ Rabbi Yehoshua answered that it was optional. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai then went and asked the same question to Rabban Gamliel, who was the *Nasi* at the time and who answered the exact opposite, saying that it was an obligation. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai wasted no time informing Rabban Gamliel of what Rabbi Yehoshua had said. Rabban Gamliel instructed Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to wait until the *chochomim* (Torah scholars) came to the *beis medrash* (study hall) and then to ask the question again in front of everyone, which he did, at which point Rabban Gamliel answered as he had before and then said to everyone present, "Is there anyone who disagrees?"

Rabbi Yehoshua said, "No," and Rabban Gamliel informed him that he'd already been told that Rabbi Yehoshua disagreed. Rabban Gamliel then said, "Yehoshua, stand on your feet so that they can testify against you!" Rabbi Yehoshua complied and stood on his feet, saying that he had no choice but to admit that he had indeed said it.

Rabban Gamliel sat down and began to teach, leaving Rabbi Yehoshua standing. Outraged by the tremendous disrespect being shown to Rabbi Yehoshua, all those present in the *beis medrash* immediately complained to the *turgamon* (the person responsible for repeating over what the teacher was saying, in this case Rabban Gamliel, so that everyone could hear, sort of like a manual public address system) that he should be silent, and he complied with their demand and was silent.

¹ Brachos 27b

You see, those present had finally reached their limit with Rabban Gamliel because this was far from the first run-in between Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua.

The first incident

They proceeded to review Rabban Gamliel's history of disrespectful behaviour towards Rabbi Yehoshua, starting with an incident that took place the previous year, when Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua had a dispute over the testimony of witnesses to the new moon, who had come to testify before the Sanhedrin, and Rabban Gamliel had again pained Rabbi Yehoshua. Although Rabban Gamliel had accepted the testimony of these two witnesses, Rabbi Dosa ben Hurkenos thought that these two witnesses were lying, and Rabbi Yehoshua agreed with him.

What did it matter? The determination of the new moon (i.e., Rosh Chodesh), which can fall out on only one of two days each month (which is why we celebrate two days of yom tov here in the diaspora), governs when yom tov falls out in that month. According to Rabban Gamliel's acceptance of the witnesses' testimony, yom tov, in this case Yom Kippur, would fall out, let's say on a Tuesday, and according to Rabbi Yehoshua, who held the new moon would only occur on the next day, Yom Kippur would, consequently, fall out a day later, on Wednesday. Obviously, this has significant implications because we are prohibited from doing *malacha* (certain creative labours) on yom tov, so we need to know which day it really is.

Rabban Gamliel sent a message to Rabbi Yehoshua, "I decree upon you that you will come to me with your staff and your money on the day that Yom Kippur falls out according to your calculation." In other words, Rabban Gamliel was saying: I want you *davka* to engage in what would be prohibited activities on the day that you think, according to your calculation, is yom tov! Rabbi Yehoshua's student, Rabbi Akiva, went to him and found him distressed over the *Nasi* having decreed upon him that he must desecrate the day that he maintained was Yom Kippur.

Attempting to comfort his teacher and explain why he needed to comply with Rabban Gamliel's decree, Rabbi Akiva brought a proof that Hashem has left it up to Beis Din (the Sanhedrin) to determine when Rosh Chodesh is and, as a consequence of that determination, when each yom tov falls out. And, even if, *chas v'shalom*, Beis Din is mistaken in its determination regarding Rosh Chodesh, which would obviously impact when yom tov is celebrated as well, nonetheless, the day that becomes designated as yom tov, as a result of their determination regarding the new moon, is yom tov, regardless of any errors involved. Rabbi Yehoshua told Rabbi Akiva that he had comforted him.

Rabbi Yehoshua then went to the person who had started the whole controversy, Rabbi Dosa. Rabbi Dosa explained to Rabbi Yehoshua why he himself did not press the issue with Rabban Gamliel and why they were obligated to accept the decision of whoever had been selected to be the leader of the generation, in this case, Rabban Gamliel. When Rabbi Yehoshua saw that even Rabbi Dosa, who had originally pointed out the error in Rabban Gamliel's judgment, no longer stood in opposition to Rabban Gamliel, he took his staff and his money in his hand and he went to Yavneh, where Rabban Gamliel resided, on the day that he had calculated Yom Kippur to fall out. When he came before Rabban Gamliel, Rabban Gamliel stood and kissed Rabbi Yehoshua on his head, saying, "Come in peace, my teacher and my student; my teacher in wisdom, and my student because you have accepted what I said."

The second incident

But there was more. Those present for the latest incident between Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua continued their discussion, recalling yet another incident, revolving around when Rabbi

Tzaddok had come to inquire² from the two of them and Rabban Gamliel had again pained Rabbi Yehoshua with his behaviour. Rabbi Tzaddok, who was a Kohen, had come to inquire regarding a firstborn animal of his that had split its lip while eating. The question was whether there was a difference between a Kohen *chaver* (someone who is precise in his mitzvah observance) and a Kohen *am ha'aretz* (someone who is uneducated and ignorant about mitzvos) and whether a Kohen *chaver* could be relied upon to say that a firstborn animal belonging to him had become accidentally blemished. A firstborn animal must be given to a Kohen, who then must bring it as a *korban* (offering), unless it gets a blemish, in which case the Kohen can *shecht* it and eat it – so clearly a Kohen would have a vested interest in seeing that a firstborn animal would become blemished so that he could take it for his own.

Rabbi Yehoshua said that there was a difference (i.e., a Kohen *chaver* could be relied upon to say that the animal had been unintentionally blemished), but Rabban Gamliel said that there was no difference (i.e., the testimony of a Kohen *chaver* was given no greater validity than that of an *am ha'aretz*). Again, Rabban Gamliel found out about Rabbi Yehoshua's contradictory answer and instructed Rabbi Tzaddok to wait until the *chochomim* came to the *beis medrash* and repeat the question in front of everyone, which he did, at which point Rabban Gamliel answered as he had before and then said to everyone present, "Is there anyone who disagrees?"

Rabbi Yehoshua said, "No," and Rabban Gamliel informed him that he'd already been told that Rabbi Yehoshua disagreed. Rabban Gamliel then said, "Yehoshua, stand on your feet so that they can testify against you!" Rabbi Yehoshua complied and stood on his feet, saying that he had no choice but to admit that he had indeed said it. Again, Rabban Gamliel sat and began to teach, leaving Rabbi Yehoshua standing as he was, until all those present, who were outraged at the disrespect being shown to Rabbi Yehoshua, complained to the *turgamon* to be silent and he complied with their demand.

Three strikes, you're out

Those present in the *beis medrash* for the argument over Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's question, the third such occasion in which Rabban Gamliel had been disrespectful to Rabbi Yehoshua and subsequently pained and disrespected him, decided that enough was enough and removed Rabban Gamliel from his position as *Nasi*. Their next order of business was to consider who to appoint in his place. They first considered appointing Rabbi Yehoshua, but quickly decided against it because he was a party to the incident and, were they to appoint him in place of Rabban Gamliel, it would, no doubt, cause great pain to Rabban Gamliel. They next considered appointing Rabbi Akiva, but again, quickly dismissed the idea, recognizing that Rabban Gamliel might cause Divine punishment to come upon Rabbi Akiva and that Rabbi Akiva, who was descended from *geirim* (converts), lacked *zechus avos* (merit from the forefathers) to save him.

Finally, the moment we've all been waiting for ... they considered appointing none other than Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah because, despite his tender years, he possessed all of the traits that would make him an ideal replacement: firstly, he had wisdom – meaning that if he was asked something, he could answer. In fact, Rabbi Yehoshua would later say about him³ after he had been appointed as *Nasi* that, "No generation is considered orphaned [i.e., without leadership] in which Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah lives." Secondly, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah had wealth – meaning that he was able to pay tribute to the Caesar and even, if necessary, travel on behalf of the people to the Caesar. The

² Bechoros 36a

³ Chagiga 3b. The comment is especially ironic, as it was Rabbi Yehoshua who sought to see Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah removed as *Nasi* after he had forgiven Rabban Gamliel!

gemara⁴ notes that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah would separate 12,000 calves for the tithe of his cattle each year, meaning that he had 120,000 cattle born annually to his herds – a mindboggling number. Finally, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah had *yichus* (lineage) – he was a tenth generation descendent of Ezra the Scribe, so he had *zchus avos* and, therefore, he would be saved from any Divine punishment that Rabban Gamliel might cause to come upon him.

So, they went to Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah and asked him if he would become the *Nasi*. He said that he first needed to consult with his family and immediately proceeded to go and consult with his wife, who would be significantly affected by his change in position and the demands on his time that it would entail. She said, “Maybe they’ll remove you (i.e., like they’re doing to Rabban Gamliel)?” He responded with what must have been a well-known saying, “Let a man use a (glass) cup of honour for a day even if it will be broken tomorrow!” She said, “You don’t have any white hair in your beard.” He was eighteen years old that day and a miracle occurred, eighteen rows of white hair appeared in his beard, which explains what Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said [in a prior mishna in the same *mesechta*], “Behold, I am like a seventy-year-old man....”

When Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah made this statement, the very statement which we find included in our Haggadah, he was saying that, although he had merited to become the *Nasi*, the leader of the Jewish people, he still could not convince his colleagues that he was right about the obligation to recall the exodus from Egypt each night. As we’ll see in a moment, it was Ben Zoma who made the winning argument, but it was thanks to Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah that Ben Zoma was able to do it!

A very special day

Under Rabban Gamliel’s tenure as *Nasi*, a guard was placed at the door to the *beis medrash* and only the very best of the best students were allowed to come inside. On the day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah assumed the position of *Nasi*, however, he removed this guard, and every student was given permission to enter. So many students came that they needed to add many more benches – according to one opinion, 400 more benches, and according to another opinion, 700 more benches. When Rabban Gamliel saw how many students had come into the *beis medrash*, he feared that, on account of his extremely restrictive entrance policy, Torah had been withheld from Israel. In order to comfort him, he had a dream that assured him that the students whom he had prohibited from entering were not fit – but this was not, in fact, the case – he had, indeed, erred.

On that day that the *beis medrash* was opened for all students to enter, the result was an entire *mesechta* full of teachings – *mesechta Eduyot* (lit: Testimonies) – that were transmitted and recorded. In fact, so great was the learning that took place on that day that there was no halacha that hung in doubt, and which was not fully explained. Rashi comments⁵ that it was this very same day that Ben Zoma came to the *beis medrash* and made his argument that we find in our Haggadah regarding the obligation to recall the exodus from Egypt each and every night!⁶

Despite his having been removed as the *Nasi*, even Rabban Gamliel came to the *beis medrash* that day. Imagine being demoted as a senior lecturer and still showing up to the class to study! And, hard as it may be to believe, on that very day, Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua had, yet, another

⁴ Shabbos 54b

⁵ Brachos 12b

⁶ But see Likutei Vassar Likutei on Avos 4:1 and Brachos 12b, in which Rabbi Shmuel Alter argues that the statement made by Ben Zoma that day which convinced the Sages to listen to Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was the one found in Avos 4:1, “Ben Zoma said, ‘Who is wise? He who learns from every man....’” (With thanks to Aron Ziegler for showing me this.)

disagreement. This time, however, Rabban Gamliel's opinion was not simply accepted as the final judgment and he and Rabbi Yehoshua debated the topic in front of everyone. To his great surprise, the debate was settled in favour of Rabbi Yehoshua. When he saw what had happened, Rabban Gamliel decided to go and appease Rabbi Yehoshua, eventually succeeding in obtaining his forgiveness.

The aftermath

As it turned out, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's wife was right to be concerned that the same thing that happened to Rabban Gamliel might happen to him, as the *chochomim* nearly removed him as *Nasi* straight away as a result of Rabbi Yehoshua having forgiven Rabban Gamliel. In fact, even Rabbi Yehoshua himself advocated for Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah to be removed and for Rabban Gamliel to be restored to his former position. After some debate as to how respectfully to handle the situation, however, it was decided that it would be inappropriate simply to remove Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah as *Nasi* and, instead, a compromise solution was settled upon: Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah would share the position, with Rabban Gamliel giving the *shiur* in the *beis medrash* three weeks out of every four and Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah giving it the remaining week.

A nagging question

So, why would Rabban Gamliel behave in such a fashion? Surely Rabbis don't make a habit of embarrassing their colleagues or behaving inappropriately – there must have been something else going on. We find the answer in one of the most famous and well-known incidents in the *gemara*⁷, which rather interestingly also appears to testify to Rabbi Yehoshua's change of heart as well.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanas had a dispute with the *chochomim* over the ritual purity status of an oven. Rabbi Eliezer brought "all the answers in the world," but still, the *chochomim* refused to accept what he said. Rabbi Eliezer then began moving Heaven and earth – quite literally – to prove that he was right, asking for objects such as a carob tree, a stream, and even the walls of the *beis medrash* to testify on his behalf, before finally crying out to Heaven and having a *bas kol* (a Heavenly voice) call out in his favour, asking those present why they were arguing with Rabbi Eliezer since the halacha was always like him and seemingly settling things in his favour once and for all.

Ironically, it was none other than Rabbi Yehoshua who stood up against Rabbi Eliezer, perhaps, having learned from his own previous experiences, rising to his feet to defend the *chochomim* against Rabbi Eliezer by quoting the well-known verse⁸ from the Torah, "*Lo b'shamayim hi* – the Torah is not in Heaven," meaning that Hashem gave His Torah into the hands of man, and provided along with it, rules for how to settle disputes when they arise. Rabbi Yehoshua insisted that Rabbi Eliezer play by those rules and follow the opinion of the majority.

As a result of his unwillingness to back down and accept the majority's decision, however, Rabbi Eliezer was placed in *cherem* (excommunicated) and, when he was later informed of this, he was so upset that he nearly destroyed the world. Rabban Gamliel, who was the *Nasi* and who Rabbi Eliezer blamed for his predicament, was travelling on a ship at the time, when suddenly a tremendous wave, a tsunami, arose, threatening to destroy the ship and drown him. Recognizing immediately that it had to be because of Rabbi Eliezer, he stood up and called out, "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that, not for my honour did I act, nor for the honour of the house of my father, only for Your honour, that *machlokes* (arguments) should not increase in Israel (i.e., that

⁷ Bava Metzia 59b

⁸ Devarim 30:12

an individual should not become accustomed to going against the majority).” And the sea calmed from its raging. (Although Rabban Gamliel survived that day, Rabbi Eliezer eventually succeeded in bringing about his demise.) So, we see why Rabban Gamliel behaved the way that he did with Rabbi Yehoshua, choosing to make an example of him in order to prevent others from copying behaviour that Rabban Gamliel saw as potentially destructive for the nation.

And that’s the story behind how an eighteen-year-old became the leader of the Jewish people, meriting to be mentioned not once, but twice in the Haggadah.

The Four Sons: Just What Makes the Wicked Son So Awful?

In the Jewish world, the Four Sons and their questions are even more famous than the Fab Four. Each of the questions that gets attributed to a different son comes straight out of the text of the *Chumash*:

The Chochom (Wise Son): “What are the testimonies, ordinances, and laws that Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?”

The Rasha (Wicked Son): “What is this *avodah* (service) to you?”

The Tam (Simple Son): “What is this?”

The fourth son doesn’t actually ask a question. The answer given to the son referred to as **The Sh’eino Yodei’a Lishol (The Son Who Doesn’t Know How To Ask a Question)** comes from a verse that implies that the father is giving an answer to his son without actually referencing any question having been asked previously by the child: “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of this that Hashem did for me when he took me out of Egypt.’”

But, if we look up each of these questions in the *Chumash*, there’s no indication whatsoever given regarding the type of person who is actually asking these questions. It simply speaks of ‘your child’ or ‘your children’ in generic terms. So, how did our Sages decide to attribute each of these questions to such disparate personalities?

It’s easy to understand why they saw the question of the *Tam* as being, well, simple. The way the question is phrased reveals the limited aptitude of the one asking it, as such a question – “What is this?” – could be applied to literally anything and any situation. So, too, in just the opposite way, we see how the question attributed to *Chochom* shows how he possesses a higher level of intelligence by the fact that he can distinguish between the different commandments that Hashem gave to us – referring to them in his question as, “testimonies, ordinances, and laws.”

So, what exactly did our Sages see in the question, “What is this *avodah* to you?” that lead them to attribute it to the *Rasha*? What was really so bad about it? The answer given in the *Chumash*¹ certainly doesn’t hint to anything unusual or even nefarious about the question or the children asking it: “You will say to them [i.e., your children], ‘It is the Pesach offering to Hashem, Who passed over the houses of the *Bnei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and He saved our houses and the people bowed and prostrated themselves.’” In fact, Rashi explains that the reason that the people bowed and prostrated themselves was because of the good news contained here regarding their impending redemption and their coming into the land of Israel (mentioned in the prior verse, not quoted here) and because of the good news that they would have children!

But, if we look in the Haggadah, we see that our Sages were quick to take the *Rasha* to task for the way the question is phrased, emphasizing that he said, “to you,” which implied that his question about the *avodah* and what it was all about didn’t apply to himself. There’s just one small problem ... if we look carefully at the question attributed to the *Chochom*, he appears to make this same fatal mistake, saying, “commanded you,” implying, like the *Rasha*, that his question also didn’t apply to himself.

¹ Shemos 12:27

In fact, to avoid this very obvious problem with the *Chochom's* question, we find a different text for the Four Sons contained in the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, the Jerusalem Talmud. The text found in the *Yerushalmi* actually changes the question of the *Chochom* – going so far as to edit the actual text drawn from the *Chumash*! – changing the ending of the question from “commanded you” to “commanded us,” thereby seemingly “solving” the dilemma. (The *Baruch She'amar* finds another way to redeem the question of the *Chochom*, noting that the *Chochom* alone mentions the name Hashem and, in so doing, includes himself with the entire nation of Israel, stating in his question the words, “our G-d.”)

But it really doesn't solve anything, as we've still failed to answer satisfactorily our original question: why did our Sages see fit to ascribe this particular question, “What is this *avodah* to you?,” to the personality of the *Rasha*?

To understand this, we need to look back at the context in which each of these questions occurs in the *Chumash*. The question attributed to the *Chochom* is preceded by the phrase, “When your son asks you tomorrow, saying...” So, too, the question attributed to the *Tam* is preceded by the phrase, “When your son will ask you at a later time², saying...” But what precedes the question attributed to the *Rasha* is entirely and noticeably different: “And it shall be when your children will say to you ...” Notice the difference?

Each one of the questions attributed to these three sons begins with the Hebrew word *mah*, ‘what,’ clearly indicating that they are each asking a question. But the Torah informs us regarding the statements attributed to the *Chochom* and the *Tam* that they are actually asking something – that what follows after these introductions are actual questions from them: “your son will *ask* you.”

The *Rasha* on the other hand isn't asking anyone anything; on the contrary, he's making a statement – “your children will *say* to you” – a statement which, without considering the context in which it appears, can easily be misconstrued as a question. After all, he begins with the word ‘what.’ And, taken out of context as it is in the Haggadah, it's easy to mistake his “question” for being a genuine one. But the *Rasha* isn't actually asking anything; his manner of phrasing is purely a rhetorical device, what we would call in our day a rhetorical question, a question which doesn't seek or expect an answer, but instead serves to put across the opinion of the person asking it, just as the *Rasha* intends to do here.

Another clue that the *Rasha* is not asking a question can be seen by the answer that our Sages chose to give him. They chose to give the same answer to the *Rasha* – “It is because of this that Hashem did for me when He took me out from Egypt” – as they did to one of the other four sons, none other than *The Sh'eino Yodei'a Lishol* (*The Son Who Doesn't Know How To Ask a Question*). The implicit message: just as the response to *The Sh'eino Yodei'a Lishol* isn't answering a question that he had previously asked, so, too, the response to the *Rasha*, likewise, is not answering a question – because the *Rasha* wasn't asking one!

It also helps to have a look at the way the *Rasha's* “question” is emphasized and elaborated upon in the alternate text of the Four Sons that we find in the *Yerushalmi*, which differs significantly from the way the question is asked and answered in the text of the Haggadah and which makes it entirely clear that the *Rasha* is not asking anything – that his question is entirely rhetorical as its context in the *Chumash* implies – and his entire point is to deride what he sees before his eyes, which is what, in fact, actually makes it quite obvious that he is indeed a *Rasha*.

² See Rashi

After stating the original question from the *Chumash*, “What is this avodah to you?,” the *Yerushalmi* then adds to the “question” of the *Rasha*: “What is this burden with which you bother us each and every year?!” The *Rasha* isn’t interested in knowing anything about the seder or in asking anything, he just wants to express how he feels about the whole thing. How does he feel about the seder and everything related to it? It’s an incredible nuisance and he’s had more than enough of it over the years and is quite tired of it. He has nothing but disdain for what he’s witnessing in front of his eyes.

It’s for precisely this reason that our Sages saw in his question – or, more precisely, the context of his question – that such an attitude personifies a *Rasha*, a person who has no interest in what we do as Jews. He’s not asking anything. Instead, he’s ridiculing what he sees. He knows little to nothing and, as a result, has even less to add to the conversation. He has no interest in learning anything, happy to remain blissfully ignorant, but strongly opinionated.

What’s, perhaps, most shocking is the answer that our Sages chose to give to the *Rasha*. After all, one of the hallmarks of Judaism – especially when compared to other religions – is how much questions are welcomed. Jewish children who receive a Torah education are literally trained to ask questions and generally rewarded and praised when they ask especially good ones. So, why not just ignore the tone and attitude in the *Rasha*’s question and answer him! Our Sages say that, since the *Rasha* is a *kofer b’ikur* (one who denies fundamental principles – i.e., Hashem) and has taken himself out from the congregation, it’s not appropriate or worthwhile to enter into a debate with him; it’s better simply to blunt his teeth and leave it at that.

That said, our Sages also famously teach in Pirkei Avos³, “Be diligent in Torah study and know what to answer a heretic ...” We need to know for ourselves – and, perhaps, also and especially, for those who might feel challenged by the so-called “questions” of the heretic – what to answer, but the importance of answering, as we see from the response given to the *Rasha* in the Haggadah, is not for the sake of the heretic himself, but rather for those around him. We need to know what to answer such a person, but that doesn’t mean we actually need to answer him and engage him in debate. Someone so far gone doesn’t deserve an answer, but those, who he might negatively influence, do. So, we must know what to answer such a person, even if we don’t share that answer with him.

The questions (highlighted) attributed to the Four Sons in the context of the Chumash, as well as the answers given there:

The Chochom – Devarim 6:20-21

“When your son asks you tomorrow, saying, ‘**What are the testimonies, ordinances, and laws that Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?**’ You will say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and Hashem took us out from Egypt with a strong hand.’”

The Rasha – Shemos 12:26-27

“And it will be when your children say to you, ‘**What is this avodah to you?**’ “You will say to them, ‘It is the Pesach offering to Hashem, Who passed over the houses of the *Bnei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and He saved our houses and the people bowed and prostrated themselves.’”

³ 2:19

The Tam – Shemos 13:14

“And it will be, when your son will ask you at a later time, saying, ‘**What is this?**’ You will say to him, “With a strong hand, Hashem took us out from Egypt from the house of slavery.””

The Sh’eino Yodei’a Lishol – Shemos 13:8

“And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of this that Hashem did for me when he took me out of Egypt.’”

The Four Sons as they appear in the Haggadah:

“The Torah speaks about four sons: one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who doesn’t even know how to ask.

The wise son, what does he say? ‘What are the testimonies, ordinances, and laws that Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?’ You say to him about the laws of the Pesach (offering): we don’t add *afikomen* (dessert) after the Pesach offering.

The wicked son, what does he say? ‘What is this *avodah* (service) to you?’ ‘To you’ and not ‘to him.’ Because he has taken himself out from the congregation, he denies the fundamental principles (i.e., Hashem). You blunt his teeth and say to him, ‘It is because of this that Hashem did for me when He took me out from Egypt.’ ‘For me’ and not ‘for him;’ If he was there, he would not have been redeemed.

The simple son, what does he say? ‘What is this?’ Say to him, ‘With a strong hand, Hashem took us out from Egypt from the house of slavery.’

The son who doesn’t know how to ask, you must open up (the discussion) for him. As it says, ‘And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, “It is because of this that Hashem did for me when He took me out from Egypt.”’”

The Four Sons as they appear in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:4, 70b):

Rabbi Chiya taught, “The Torah speaks about four sons: the wise son, the wicked son, the foolish son, and the son who doesn’t know how to ask.

The wise son, what does he say? ‘What are the testimonies, ordinances, and laws that Hashem, our G-d, commanded us?’ You say to him, ‘With a strong hand Hashem took us out from Egypt, from the house of slavery.’

The wicked son, what does he say? ‘What is this *avodah* to you? What is this burden with which you bother us each and every year?!’ Since he takes himself out of the congregation, you say to him, ‘It is because of this that Hashem did for me ...’ For me, He did; for this man, He would not do. If this man was in Egypt, he would never have witnessed the redemption from there.

The foolish son, what does he say? ‘What is this?’ Teach him the laws of Pesach: we don’t add *afikomen* (dessert) after the Pesach offering; we don’t stand in this group (for partaking of the Pesach) and then enter into another group; etc.

The son who doesn’t know how to ask? Open up (the discussion) for him first.” Rabbi Yusa says, “We learn in a Mishna that if the son does not know (i.e., how to ask), his father must teach him.”

Based on the Mesivta Haggadah

כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה

The text of the Four Sons as it appears in our Haggadah is based on the Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael (on Shemos 13:14). A similar discussion is also found in the Talmud Yerushalmi (see below) albeit with significant differences. The questions (highlighted in yellow below), however, are the same in both and based upon four places in the Chumash (see below) that speak of the things that we will say to our children regarding *yetzias Mitzrayim*. It's interesting to take note of the *lashon* used to introduce these questions in the Chumash (e.g., the Abarbanel notes that the Rasha uses a *lashon* of *amira* while the *Chochom* uses a *lashon* of *sh'eila*), the answers given there, and how those answers differ from those given in both the Mechilta and the Yerushalmi. (Based on the Haggadah Shel Pesach Mesivta)

תלמוד ירושלמי פסחים ע:

תני ר' חייא כנגד ארבעה בנים דיברה תורה בן חכם בן רשע בן טיפש בן שאינו יודע לשאול. בן חכם מהו אומר (דברים ו) **מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקינו אותנו** אף אתה אמור לו (שמות יג) בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים. בן רשע מהו אומר (שמות יב) **מה העבודה הזאת לכם** מה הטורח הזה שאתם מטריחין עלינו בכל שנה ושנה מכיון שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל אף אתה אמור לו (שם) בעבור זה עשה ה' לי עשה לאותו האיש לא עשה. אילו היה אותו האיש במצרים לא היה ראוי להגאל משם לעולם. **טיפש מה אומר** (שם) **מה זאת** אף את למדו הלכות הפסח שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן שלא יהא עומד מחבורה זו ונכנס לחבורה אחרת. בן שאינו יודע לשאול את פתח לו תחילה א"ר יוסה מתנייתא אמרה כן אם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו:

חכם (דברים ו:כ-כה)

כִּי־שִׁאֲלֶךָ בְּנֶךָ לֵאמֹר מַה הָעֲדוּת וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֹתְכֶם:
וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבְנֶךָ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרֹעַ בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיּוֹצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה:
וַיֹּתֶן ה' אוֹתוֹת וּמִפְתִּים גְּדֹלִים וְרַעִים | בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּפָרְעֵה וּבְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ לְעֵינֵינוּ:
וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הָבִיא אֹתָנוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם:
וַיִּצְנֹנוּ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַחֲקִים הָאֵלֶּה לִּירְאָה אֶת־יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל־הַיָּמִים לְחִיתָנוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
וַיִּדְבָּר ה' תְּהִי־לָנוּ כִּי־נִשְׁמָר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּנוּ:

רשע (שמות יב:כה-כח)

וְהָיָה כִּי־תִבְאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן ה' לָכֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וְשִׁמַּרְתֶּם אֶת־הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת:
וְהָיָה כִּי־לֹאֲמַרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם **מַה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם:**
וְאָמַרְתֶּם זֶבַח־פֶּסַח הוּא לִי אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל־בְּחֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּגֹגְפוֹ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־בְּתִינוּ הַצֵּל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ:
וַיִּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כֹּן עֲשׂוּ:

תם (שמות יג:יד-טז)

וְהָיָה כִּי־שִׁאֲלֶךָ בְּנֶךָ לֵאמֹר **מַה־זֹּאת** וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בַּחֲזָק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:
וַיְהִי כִי־הִקְשָׁה פָּרֹעַ לְשַׁלְּחַנוֹ וַיַּהַרְג ה' כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכֹר אָדָם וְעַד־בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לִי כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם הַזָּכָרִים וְכָל־בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי אִפְדָּה:
וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל־יְדְּכֶם וּלְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בַחֲזָק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם:

שאינו יודע לשאול (שמות יג:ח-י)

וְהִנָּדַת לְבָבְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם:
וְהָיָה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל־יְדְּךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאֲךָ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם:
וְשִׁמַּרְתָּ אֶת־הַחֻקָּה הַזֹּאת לְמוֹעֵדָה מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה:

Chad Gadya: Not Kidding Around

The beloved song from the Pesach Seder, Chad Gadya, may sound like it's just a children's song, but the meaning behind the imagery is truly profound. Written in Aramaic, the song Chad Gadya (Aramaic for "One Kid") is the final song sung at the Pesach Seder. Its author is unknown. Why Aramaic? Our Sages wanted to conclude the Haggadah in the same language with which it began – "*Halachma anya...*" "This is the bread of affliction..." – so they established that Chad Gadya be said in Aramaic.¹

Chad Gadya tells of a father who buys a kid (a young goat) for two *zuzim* (coins, aka silver *dinars* – for reference, our Sages required that a husband promise a minimum amount of 200 *zuzim* to be paid to a wife upon the dissolution of a marriage²). A cat comes and eats the kid. A dog comes and bites the cat. A stick comes and hits the dog. A fire burns the stick. Water extinguishes the fire. An ox drinks the water. A *shochet* slaughters the ox. The *Malach Hamaves* (angel of death) slaughters the *shochet*. And Hashem comes and slaughters the *Malach Hamaves*.

There are many different and far-ranging explanations (well beyond the scope of this article) for the allegory contained in the song. Because of its various interpretations, some³ see Chad Gadya as an opportunity to expand on the discussion of the going out from Egypt (one of the Torah mitzvos of the evening!) – as the more one talks about the going out, the more praiseworthy he is – which is specifically why Chad Gadya was chosen to be said at the end of the seder.

There are those⁴ who say that the song pokes fun at the nations of the world and their gods. The ancient nations, including the Egyptians, served idols, just like the types of animals and things listed in the song – in fact, the Egyptians served the *gedi*, the kid. These nations would sculpt their gods in the images of different living creatures out of wood and stone. So, too, they would worship natural forces, such as fire and water, as gods. Each nation would proudly declare that its god was greater than the god of its fellow nation.

Similarly, the Midrash⁵ tells of how Nimrod asked Avraham, "Why don't you worship fire?" to which Avraham replied, "Why don't you worship water, since it extinguishes fire – or the clouds, which carry the water?" And so on and so forth, until Avraham said to Nimrod that he should serve Hashem – so, too, we said to the Egyptians, "You serve the kid; why not serve the cat which is stronger than the kid?" And so on and so forth, as with the progression that we see in Chad Gadya, until we said to them that they should serve Hashem.

The Vilna Gaon, for example, explains that the intention of Chad Gadya is to show the development of the Children of Israel in Egypt and the chain of generations from the beginning until the end. According to him, the song is meant to be understood as follows:

¹ Haggadas Vayigad Avraham

² Kesuvos 10b

³ Tashbatz

⁴ E.g., Rabbi Tavala Bandi

⁵ Bereishis Rabbah 38:13

One kid, one kid – these are the two goat-kids that Yaakov brought to his father⁶, Yitzchak, one for the *korban Pesach* (the Pesach offering) and one for the *korban Chagigah* (the festival offering) when, at Rivkah's instruction, Yaakov impersonated his twin brother Eisav in order to receive the blessings from Yitzchak.

That father bought – it was in the merit of these two kids that our father, Yaakov, received the blessings from Yitzchak, which he then passed to his son Yoseph, and which caused the brothers of Yoseph to become jealous.

Then came the cat – these are the brothers who were jealous of Yoseph, as it's the nature of the cat to be jealous.

And ate the kid – the brothers sold Yoseph to the Ishmaelites.

Then came the dog – this is Pharaoh.

And bit the cat – the brothers of Yoseph were enslaved to the Egyptians.

Then came the stick – this is the staff with which Moshe did the signs (and on which was engraved the abbreviation of the Ten Plagues).

And struck the dog – struck Pharaoh.

Then came the fire – this is the *yetzer harah* (the evil inclination) of idol worship.

And burned the stick – the fire of idol worship destroyed the merit of Moshe's staff – and because of this idol worship, the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple) was burned.

Then came the water – this is the Jewish people.

And extinguished the fire – with their prayers, the Jewish people overpowered the *yetzer harah* for idol worship and removed it from the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Then came the ox – this is the nation of *Edom* (Rome).

And drank the water – *Edom* exiled the Jewish people.

Then came the *shochet* – this is *Mashiach ben Yoseph* (the messiah who is destined to descend from Joseph; there is another *mashiach*, *Mashiach ben Dovid*, who is destined to descend from *Dovid HaMelech* – King David).

And slaughtered the ox – *Mashiach ben Yoseph* will kill Edom.

Then came the *Malach Hamaves* and slaughtered the *shochet* – *Mashiach ben Yoseph* will be killed.

Then came Hashem and slaughtered the *malach hamaves* – and Hashem will return everything that the Jewish people lost.
(Based on *Haggadah Shel Pesach Mesivta*)

⁶ Bereishis 27:9

A Month We Can Count On: Why Hashem Chose to Redeem Us in Nissan

The Hebrew month of Nissan is, without a doubt, a very special month. After all, it's the month that Hashem chose to take us out from Egypt and openly reveal to the world, for the first time in history, that He was its Creator and demonstrate His total and utter control over every aspect of Creation via the many miracles that He did for us. In fact, Moshe's father-in-law, Yisro, who was known for having studied all of the religions of the world, would later come to convert to Judaism as a result of seeing Hashem's overt display of His hand in our wondrous exodus from Egypt. Was he merely impressed by Hashem's show of force, or was he, perhaps, just a little afraid to stand apart from the Jewish people? Yisro explained to Moshe his motivation for converting when they met up following the exodus, "Now, I know that Hashem is greater than all the gods, because [the Egyptians were repaid] in the very thing that they conspired against [the Jewish people]." As Rashi explains, Yisro had been aware of Hashem in the past, but now, following these events, he was forced to take another, closer look. As a former adviser to Pharaoh, Yisro was well aware that the Egyptians had tried to destroy the Jews via water, by casting Jewish male offspring into the Nile. So, when Yisro heard that the Egyptians had been destroyed by Hashem through water – that by the very means, with which they had intended to destroy the Jews, they themselves had been destroyed – it was apparent to him that only G-d could do such a thing because Hashem's justice is not arbitrary, it's precise to a hairsbreadth.

Why Nissan?

But, to say that Nissan is special because Hashem redeemed us in that month only begs the question, as Hashem could have miraculously taken us out from Egypt in any month, and whatever month He chose to redeem us in would, likewise, have become just as special. So, why did Hashem choose to take us out in Nissan rather than one of the other eleven months of the year? And we can strengthen the question, as Hashem didn't just take us out in Nissan, but He tapped Nissan to be the first month in our calendar, leaving us with a rather unusual situation where we count the passing of our years from the Hebrew month of Tishrei, but the passing of our months from Nissan.

Although it may be hard to believe, the choice to redeem the Jewish people in Nissan had everything to do with what that particular month meant to the Egyptians and its connection to their idolatrous religious beliefs! And this shouldn't come as much of a surprise, as part of the aim of the exodus was to demonstrate the pointlessness of the Egyptians' idol worship. For example, the Egyptians famously worshipped the Nile,¹ so Hashem used the very first plague, *dam* (blood), to attack it and show how helpless their god was. The Egyptians also connected many of the gods that they worshipped with animals. In fact, one of the justifications that Moshe gave to Pharaoh for why we couldn't remain in Egypt to worship Hashem, but instead needed to make a three-day journey away from there, was because Moshe knew it would be very upsetting to the Egyptians to witness the Jews sacrificing animals that the Egyptians associated with their gods.² So what does the Egyptians' idol worship have to do specifically with Nissan? Many of the Egyptians godheads were depicted with the head of a ram, including the Egyptian god of the Nile. From the beginning of the world, the stars, planets, and constellations served as the basis for many idolatrous religions, so much so, in

¹ See Rashi on Shemos 7:17

² See Shemos 8:22 and Rashi on that verse

fact, that our Sages even refer to idolaters by an abbreviation, *akum*, which stands for “worshippers of stars and constellations.” Each constellation corresponds to a different month, and the constellation, which stands at the head of the circle of twelve constellations (known as the zodiac) and which corresponds to Nissan, was none other than the ram (aka the male lamb, the female called a ewe), nowadays called by the name Aries.

As the zodiac turns

If we take a look at how the Ten Plagues played out, we’ll notice something interesting. Following the utter devastation to the food supply wrought by the seventh plague, *barad* (hail), Pharaoh appears utterly broken and ready to throw in the towel, openly saying to Moshe and Aaron: “This time I have sinned; Hashem is the righteous one and I and my people are the wicked ones ... I shall send you out.”³ In spite of this, however, following the eighth plague, *arbeh* (locusts), Pharaoh starts completely changing his tune. The Torah tells us that, “[Pharaoh] drove them [i.e., Moshe and Aaron] out.”⁴ And then, with the ninth plague, *choshech* (darkness), Pharaoh becomes completely and unabashedly *chutzpahdik*, saying to Moshe, “You will not see my face anymore!”⁵ What was responsible for this 180-degree change in Pharaoh’s attitude? Pharaoh saw that Nissan was drawing close, and he placed his faith and trust in the ram, the zodiac sign associated with that month. Pharaoh thought that if he could just stall until the month of Nissan, especially if he could make it until the middle of the lunar month, he would be able to defeat Hashem. Make no mistake, Pharaoh believed in god – he just believed in the wrong god (or to be more precise, gods), foolishly placing his trust in the strength of the god whose zodiac sign was associated with the month Nissan.

A Shabbos Becomes The Great Shabbos

But Hashem had other plans in mind. Immediately after Moshe angrily left Pharaoh following Pharaoh’s final outrageous outburst, Hashem informed Moshe about the very first mitzvah that would be given to the Jewish nation: *Rosh Chodesh* (lit: the head of the month), aka sanctifying the start of each lunar month, which is vital to the determination of when our *Chagim* will take place. Hashem comforted Moshe, “This month [i.e., Nissan] will be the first of the months for you [i.e., not for Pharaoh].”⁶ In other words, Pharaoh, who thinks this month is going to be a game-changer, is in for a big surprise, as things are going to change dramatically – only it’s going to be for the worse for him and his people! And then, as if to emphasize the point, Hashem told Moshe to inform the Jewish people: “On the tenth day of this month, each man [shall take] a lamb for his family....a male lamb [aka a ram]....you shall safeguard it until the 14th day of this month and [then] slaughter it....and eat it.”⁷ This was the famous Paschal Lamb (aka the *korban Pesach*), symbolized on our seder plates nowadays by the shankbone (aka *zeroa*).

Our Sages explain in greater detail the events that transpired. The very first Pesach, which was celebrated while we were still in Egypt, took place on a Thursday. Although the celebration of Pesach begins with nightfall on the 15th of Nissan, we’re commanded to slaughter the *korban Pesach* just a

³ *Shemos* 9:27-28

⁴ *Id.* 10:11

⁵ *Id.* 10:28

⁶ *Id.* 12:2

⁷ *Id.* 12:3-8

few hours earlier, on the afternoon of the 14th of Nissan. If we do the math, this means the day that Hashem wanted us to take the lambs (i.e., the 10th of Nissan) was Shabbos. The midrash⁸ tells us that, at Moshe's request, Pharaoh agreed to give the Jews one day off each week so they could rest from their backbreaking labour, thus enabling the Jews to keep Shabbos in Egypt even while they were enslaved. Accordingly, our Sages explain⁹ that the Egyptians were well aware that the Jews kept Shabbos. So, the Egyptians stood there on that fateful Shabbos watching the Jews, aghast and bewildered at what was transpiring before their very eyes, as each Jewish family took a lamb into their home and then proceeded to tie it to a bedpost. The Egyptians were bothered by two things: firstly, we were taking an animal that they connected with one of their gods and even worshipped, and, secondly, they thought we were violating Shabbos by tying the lambs to our bedposts (the Egyptians didn't realize that there's a distinction in halacha between tying a permanent knot and tying a knot that isn't permanent). So, seeing this all transpire, the Egyptians couldn't help but ask the Jews, "What's going on here?" To which the Jews responded quite matter-of-factly, "Hashem commanded us to take these lambs, tie them to our bedposts, and slaughter them." And an open miracle occurred, as the Egyptians were left literally speechless, having been prevented by Hashem from doing anything to harm us in response to our actions, let alone even so much as verbally express their great displeasure to us. This miracle came about because of Shabbos – because the Egyptians knew that we kept Shabbos and this caused them to take notice of our very strange actions on that day. This is one of the reasons that the Shabbos before Pesach came to be called *Shabbos HaGadol*, aka "The Great Shabbos."

An oddity explained

Have you ever noticed that Pesach is the only holiday for which the Torah commands us to slaughter the offering associated with that holiday on the day before the holiday actually starts! A lunar month is 29.5 days. The height of a lunar month is actually the middle, as the moon starts out entirely dark, waxes during the first half of the month to its fully illuminated glory in the middle of the month and then wanes the other half of the month until it goes completely dark again. Hashem wanted to make clear once and for all that the stars and constellations, which had been worshipped since almost the beginning of Creation, were not powerful gods to be worshipped. So, to emphasize this point, he commanded us to slaughter the *korban Pesach* on the afternoon of the 14th of the month – in the middle of the lunar month, at the time that the stars and constellations were considered to be at the height of their power.¹⁰ The whole point was to demonstrate that the Egyptian gods – and all other gods – were really nothing at all. This is why Nissan was chosen as the month in which Hashem would formally announce to the world that "only He is G-d, in Heaven above and on Earth below,"¹¹ that He was the Creator of our world and remains constantly involved in all aspects of its control, and that we are His treasured people whom He watches over.

*Adapted from Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, zt"l, the Aruch HaShulchan*¹²

⁸ *Shemos Rabbah* 1:28

⁹ *Prisha on Tur* O.C. 430

¹⁰ *Haggadah Leil Shimurim on Yachol meirosh chodesh*

¹¹ *Devarim* 4:39

¹² *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 429:1 and 430:1, 3

Lessons From the *Mitzvah* of Eating *Matzah* and the Prohibition of *Chometz*

Mix flour from any one of the five grains – wheat, oats, spelt, rye, or barley – together with cool water, and leave that mixture unattended, and, within minutes, that mixture, which will form a basic dough, will become *chometz* (leavened). *Chometz* is the result of a natural process that takes place over a certain period of time. For bread to qualify as *matzah* (unleavened bread), it must be made from something that could have become *chometz*. In other words, *matzah* and *chometz* are made out of the very same ingredients – flour from one of the five grains mixed with water – the only difference between them being one thing: the passage of time. Unless prevented by ceaselessly working with the dough (or by some other means), the dough that's formed from mixing flour with water will naturally begin to become *chometz* without us having to do or add anything else to that mixture.¹

In contrast to *chometz*, *matzah* requires us to work as fast as possible and without any interruption, so as to prevent the natural *chometz* process from occurring. We must ceaselessly work the dough from the time that the flour and water are mixed, divide it up into portions, roll it out, and then bake it – all within just a few minutes, before the *chometz* process has a chance to start. *Matzah* is created suddenly, in great haste, overcoming the constraints and natural influences of time, reminding us of the fact that “in haste [we] went out from Egypt.”² *Matzah* teaches us how Hashem is able to conduct things beyond the constraints of the natural world.

Out of time

Our redemption from Egypt was not natural. It was not part of any historical, political, or other emancipation process. Hashem emphasized this by taking us out in a way that only He could accomplish: miraculously, openly breaking the bounds and laws of nature, and with incredible speed, acting even beyond the constraints of time, and by His forcing the Egyptians to send us out against their will. While the many miracles that took place during the Ten Plagues and the exodus were what we would call supernatural – beyond the bounds of nature – the exodus itself was an event that was even beyond the constraints of time.

As a remembrance of our going out from Egypt being in this great haste, Hashem prohibited us from having *chometz*, which represents the bounds of the natural world, existing solely as a result of the passage of time, just one of the many causes and effects that Hashem set in place when He created the world. And He simultaneously commanded us to eat *matzah*, which exists without any investment of time in it – requiring that it be produced in great haste, because we went out to our freedom in a miraculous way that demonstrated that we were not bound by the constraints of time.

In other words, the lesson of the prohibition of *chometz* and the mitzvah to eat *matzah* is to consider and to recognize that, in truth, the natural order of things is not conducted in an independent way in

¹ If one uses warm water, or substitutes it with fruit juice, or adds eggs, or sugar, or other ingredients, the *chometz* process will take even less time to begin.

² Devarim 16:3

creation (i.e., Mother Nature), but that everything that happens, it is all done by Hashem. It is prohibited for us to consume *chometz* on Pesach in order to eradicate from our hearts the thought that everything runs according to nature without the hand of Hashem directing it and controlling it at every moment.

One night only

So, we can ask an obvious question: why are we only obligated to eat matzah at the seder on the first night of Pesach³, whereas *chometz* is prohibited the entire seven days (eight day outside of Israel) of Pesach – especially since both are meant to strengthen the belief that Hashem alone controls and does everything?

The Haggadah says, “Why do we eat this matzah? Because our forefathers did not have time for their dough to rise ... as it says, ‘They baked their dough that they took out from Egypt (into) cakes of matzah that did not become *chometz* because they were driven out from Egypt.’” Simply put, matzah comes to remind us that the redemption began with our being driven out from Egypt. Even though we did not actually leave Egypt until the daytime, as Hashem did not want us to leave like thieves in the night⁴, the beginning of the redemption was on the night of Pesach – therefore, the mitzvah of eating matzah is only on the evening of the first day of Pesach.⁵

But there’s another reason. As noted, we eat matzah in order to remind us that we left Egypt in haste. Why did we leave in haste? Because the Egyptians suddenly decided to act against their own wishes, in the absence of any natural cause for so doing, and drive us out from their land, showing Hashem’s absolute dominion over everything – the world, as well as all of its inhabitants. We didn’t leave when they told us to get out, however, we left on Hashem’s schedule. Accordingly, matzah reminds us of Hashem’s absolute control over His world. In this way, matzah teaches us the peak and perfection of *emunah* (belief) that, in fact, there is no nature at all, that everything and every moment is merely the will of Hashem.

On the night of the exodus from Egypt, Hashem gave us a special gift of perfection in perceiving the way in which He conducts His world, thereby removing us from the impurity of Egypt into which we had sunk so deeply. Immediately afterwards, however, we descended from that elevated level that Hashem had given to us. We then had to work on ourselves, during the 49 days between Pesach and when the Torah was given to us (i.e., Shavuot), in order to reach, through our own efforts, the level that we had previously received as a gift from Hashem on that first night of Pesach.

Matzah represents the peak of perfect *emunah* (faith) – a level that we’re meant to toil to reach in our service of G-d, living with that perfect faith in our hearts and all of our actions. Since it’s not possible to remain at that peak, however, the obligation of eating matzah is only on the first night. After that, we merely continue to refrain from eating *chometz*, so as to accustom ourselves to

³ The eating of matzah on the second night of Pesach in *chutz l’aretz* (outside of Israel) is a Rabbinic commandment.

⁴ Ramban on Shemos 12:31 d”h “*Vayikra l’Moshe u’l’Aharon Layla.*” (My thanks to Aron Ziegler for locating this source.)

⁵ Some authorities maintain, e.g., the Gra, that eating *matzah* the rest of Pesach is a *mitzvas reshus* (i.e., something we can choose to do and for which we then get credit for having done a mitzvah)

recognize, over the course of the seven days of Pesach, that nature does not control the world, but that everything is the will of Hashem.

The importance of our actions

The preparation and tremendous toil required for Pesach – the search, removal, and destruction of every single crumb of *chometz*, along with all of the work involved with the baking of the matzos – is a remembrance of those things that we did in Egypt while preparing to go out to our physical freedom⁶, and which would, ultimately, enable us to go out to our spiritual freedom when we later received the Torah at Har Sinai.

The *Sefer HaChinuch*, the anonymously authored *Book of Mitzvah Education*, explains what is at the root of another Pesach mitzvah, the mitzvah prohibiting us from breaking any of the bones in the *korban Pesach*, the lamb or sheep that was slaughtered on the afternoon of the 14th of Nissan and then eaten on the night of the 15th of Nissan at the Pesach seder. He says that it is not befitting the honour of the children of kings to chew bones and break them like dogs, something the poor do because of hunger. We are meant to be a “treasure from all the nations, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”⁷

He explains that a man’s heart and all his thoughts follow after the actions with which he occupies himself, whether for good or for bad. Even if a man will be perfectly righteous, if he will occupy himself with doing inappropriate things then he will, at some time, turn from his righteousness and he will become a completely wicked person. Therefore, it should not be difficult to understand why many mitzvos in the Torah are precisely for the purpose of remembering the miracles of Egypt because our involvement with such things causes us to become affected by them in a most profound way. So, each and every year, it’s appropriate for us to engage in actions that reflect the higher level that we are on at this special time so that those actions can accordingly influence us.

Crumbs

Our Sages teach that *chometz* is representative of the *yetzer harah* (the inclination or drive to do evil). The gemara⁸ says, “Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that it is our desire to do Your will – and what stops us? The leaven in the dough!” Rashi explains that this expression, “the leaven in the dough,” refers to the *yetzer harah*. And the Zohar likewise compares *chometz* and matzah to, respectively, the *yetzer harah* and the *yetzer hatov* (the inclination or drive to do good).

Why is it that the Torah is so stringent when it comes to the prohibition of *chometz* – more so than any other prohibition in the entire Torah? And, so much so, that we are not even allowed⁹ to see or to find any *chometz* during Pesach – requiring us before the start of the yom tov to go on a search

⁶ The gemara teaches that among the differences between Pesach in Egypt and every other Pesach thereafter was that, in Egypt, the prohibition of *chometz* was only one day.

⁷ Shemos 19:6

⁸ Brachos 17a

⁹ The prohibitions refer to our own *chometz*, not to *chometz* that belongs to others.

and destroy mission, making sure to look in every nook and cranny, so that we shouldn't leave behind even a single crumb?

Interestingly, the Torah also prohibits us from offering up *chometz* on the *mizbeyach* (the altar) all year round. The *Sefer HaChinuch* teaches that by keeping *chometz* (which takes time to make) out of an offering to Hashem, a person will acquire the character trait of *zerizus* through being forced to move quickly in the preparation of his dough, so as to prevent it from becoming *chometz*. The Hebrew word *zerizus* does not translate easily into English. We might refer to someone who has this quality as a "self-starter," the kind of person who can be counted on to get things done, who identifies a problem and then finds a way to solve it. It's a combination of quickness, zealotness, eagerness, and doing things right away.

Laziness

Where does laziness come from? Man is, by his very nature, lazy. Why? Because he was made from coarse, heavy, physical material, i.e., the earth, and therefore, he doesn't want to do work or to be burdened with anything. A man, quite literally, needs a miracle to overcome the laziness that is inherent in his nature, so as to avoid falling into the hands of the *yetzer harah*, otherwise he will certainly not succeed.

In order for dough to rise, there's no need to add any additional ingredient – automatically, as a result of the passage of time, of just waiting, of mere inactivity it will become *chometz*. And it's the same with laziness. Simply by refraining from doing anything, the *yetzer harah* enters inside a person's heart. Our Sages teach, even though laziness doesn't necessarily actively bring about evil, as a result of getting up and actually doing something, it nevertheless can passively bring about evil, simply by a person sitting and doing nothing.

Why was man named after the earth?

Why was a man called Adam, after the earth, *adamah*, from which he was formed, i.e., the physical part of him, and not after the spiritual part that's in him, which Hashem Himself breathed into him, and which, our Sages say, refers to the fact that Hashem blessed man with the abilities to know and to speak – and, therefore, he could have been called something more noble like "knower" or "speaker," rather than "earth"?

Man's purpose in the creation, and the challenge for him in this world, is specifically to change his nature – choosing to elevate his spiritual nature above his foul, coarse physical nature rooted in the earth from which he was formed. The greatest expression of this is when a man overcomes his natural tendency to be lazy.

Chometz is the *yetzer harah* of laziness and this is why even a crumb of *chometz* cannot be nullified. The way of waging war with the *yetzer harah*, as with *chometz*, is to completely destroy it because even a single, solitary crumb left remaining is able to spread within a person, like a slow-acting venom, and return him to his natural state of being lazy.

Guarding mitzvos from *chometz*

The Torah teaches¹⁰, “You shall guard the *matzos*,” and our Sages teach regarding this mitzvah, using a play on words, “Don’t read, ‘You shall guard the *matzos*,’ rather, ‘You shall guard the mitzvos,’ [a difference in spelling of a single letter, *vuv*], just as we must not allow matzah to become *chometz*, so, too, we must not allow a mitzvah to become *chometz* – instead, when a mitzvah comes into our hands, we must do it straight away.”

Our Sages are teaching that there is a hidden lesson in the mitzvah of matzah – that we need to study the haste with which we went out from Egypt in order to learn from it the quality of *zerizus*. Just as it was only through haste, through acting quickly, that we could come to experience freedom, so, too, it’s only possible to come to fulfil the Torah and its mitzvos with the quality of *zerizus*. Therefore, the commandment to “guard the matzos” is in fact an obligation to behave with *zerizus* in all of the mitzvos of the Torah – to “guard the mitzvos.” The quality of *zerizus* is so important that the Shulchan Aruch (the Code of Jewish Law) begins the large section of laws that apply to daily Jewish living by stating, “Be mighty as a leopard, light as an eagle, fast as a deer, and strong as a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven.”

Our Sages further emphasize, “Don’t let a mitzvah that comes into your hands become *chometz*.” Even after we are involved with doing a particular mitzvah, even a slight pause in its performance can allow the *yetzer harah* to creep in, causing that mitzvah to become *chometzdik*, just like dough will become *chometzdik* as a result of even a small delay in working with it.

Rising up

From *chometz*, we can also learn about another negative character trait that is despised by Hashem in even the tiniest amount. The *Sefer HaChinuch* teaches that leaven inflates itself and, therefore, we keep away from it as a hint to the character trait of arrogance, which is repulsive to Hashem. Just as flour and water when mixed into dough will, over time, inflate and increase in size even if there isn’t anything else added to the mixture, so, too, a man’s opinion of himself can and will increase, becoming exaggerated, in the absence of any reason for so doing.

Dough that has become *chometz* also appears to be more than it is, the air bubbles trapped inside it puffing it up to make it appear bigger than it actually is, its size built entirely upon nothingness, upon a bunch of hot air and a total lack of substance – just like someone who is arrogant. Whereas with dough that is still matzah, it’s just the opposite, as its appearance hides nothing – what you see is what you get.

Even though the primary mitzvah regarding matzah is eating it, not baking it, our Sages teach that it’s appropriate for a person to exert labour in the baking of matzos, so that he may learn from it the character trait of *zerizus*.

¹⁰ Shemos 12:17

From slavery to freedom

Pesach is called by our Sages, “*zman charusainu*,” the time of our freedom. Our going out to freedom meant leaving Egypt. We normally translate the word *mitzrayim* to mean “Egypt,” but the root of the word, *metzer*, literally means “bounded” or “limited.” The Haggadah teaches, “A man is obligated to see himself each year as if he went out from *Mitzrayim*,” because each and every year the obligation is renewed to wage war with the enslavement of the *yetzer harah* and to go out to freedom. This is the exodus from Egypt in every generation, going out from the *mitzarim* – the boundaries and the limitations of the *yetzer harah*. To escape those shackles, we must keep searching for and guarding against even the smallest amount – a single, solitary crumb of *chometz* – of our *yetzer harah*.

Making the most of Pesach

The days leading up to Pesach, as well as the actual seven days of Pesach, are days that are appropriate for going out from the enslavement of the *yetzer harah* to freedom. As we busy ourselves with searching for, removing, and destroying every last crumb of *chometz* in our homes, so, too, we must arouse and inspire ourselves to do the same with the *yetzer harah* lurking deep inside us. A person acquires his freedom only through destroying the *yetzer harah*. Without constantly searching after it, however, it’s impossible to find. Just like the search for *chometz*, the search for the *yetzer harah* needs to be in the tiniest cracks and crevices; anywhere it might be able to hide from sight.

We must start our search with the things that are the largest and end with the smallest things in our lives, keeping in mind that the *yetzer harah* isn’t only able to hide in evil deeds, but can even hide in good deeds (i.e., we don’t know entirely what motivates us to do things, including even mitzvos – for example, praise, recognition, and honour, or a sincere desire to serve Hashem?). Our Sages teach that the mitzvah of telling over the going out from Egypt at the seder must “begin with our embarrassment, our shame, and conclude with our praise.” The *yetzer harah* is our embarrassment, tripping us up to do shameful things, but when we wage war with it and manage to fight off its clutches and go out from being enslaved to it, then we become worthy of praise.

Adapted from sichos by the Sifsei Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, zt”l.

Was There a Precise Moment That the Jewish People Became Free?

When did we truly become liberated from our Egyptian slavery? Was there a precise point in time – even a precise location that we can point to – when Hashem took us out from Egypt where we were truly emancipated once and for all?

In fact, the Torah tells us that there was such a moment where we gained our freedom, including a physical location where it took place: “Speak to the Children of Israel and have them turn back and encamp before *Pi HaChiros* [lit: The Mouth of Freedom], between *Migdol* [the name of a place] and the sea, facing *Ba’al Tzephon* [the last standing Egyptian idol].”¹ Rashi explains that this place had originally been called *Pisom* (lit: Enclosed Mouth) – one of the two Egyptian cities, the other named *Ramses*, built by Jewish slaves – but now it was called *Pi HaChiros* because the Children of Israel became free men there.

So why was it precisely in this place and at this point that we became free? What was so special about it and what exactly happened there?

A fatal blockage

The primary stumbling block for the Children of Israel in Egypt was *avodah zarah*, the worship of idols and other foreign, false gods. And even after we left Egypt, this was the accusation made against us by the ministering angels² when we faced off against the Egyptian army at the Sea of Reeds. The ministering angels argued to Hashem, “These are idol worshipers, and these are idol worshipers!” – in other words, how can You choose between them Hashem, saving the one nation and destroying the other one?! It was when we reached the location of *Pi HaChiros*, when we were encamped in front of the last Egyptian idol, *Ba’al Tzephon* – it was then that we saw clearly that there was nothing real about these idols and false gods and finally abandoned them. This recognition was what truly made us free.

So, what happened there that woke us up to the emptiness of idol worship?

The last idol standing

Ba’al Tzephon was the idol that “guarded” the entrance to Egypt. During the final plague – the death of the first born – Hashem destroyed all the Egyptian idols; the ones that were made of metal, melted; the ones that were made of stone, broke; the ones made of clay pottery, cracked; and the ones that were made of wood, rotted.³ All of the Egyptian idols were destroyed during the last plague with the exception of just one: *Ba’al Tzephon*.

Why did Hashem spare that one idol? Hashem wanted to give the Egyptians an opportunity to stumble and choose to think that their idols wielded real power. The Midrash⁴ tells us that when the Egyptians saw that the Children of Israel had turned around when they reached *Ba’al Tzephon*, encamping before it, appearing lost and stopped cold in their tracks, Pharaoh thought that it was

¹ Shemos 14:2

² Midrash Tehilim 1:20, 15:5; Yalkut Reuveini Beshalach 82, 89 (with thanks to Aron Ziegler for locating this reference)

³ Tamtzi HaTargum (See also Rashi on Shemos 12:12; Mechilta)

⁴ Tanchuma Beshalach 8

this idol that was the cause for this strange behaviour and he began to slaughter animals, burn incense, and pour libations in service to it.

As a result of this episode, Pharaoh and the Egyptians stumbled and decided to pursue after the Children of Israel, confronting them at the Sea of Reeds, where Pharaoh and his entire army were drowned in the sea when Hashem, after having split those same waters for the Children of Israel, returned the waters to their place. *(Some, however, say that Pharaoh was spared at the sea, did teshuva, and later became the king of Ninveh, mentioned in the Book of Yonah which we read on Yom Kippur, which explains why the king of Ninveh was so quick to repent when informed by the prophet Yonah of Hashem's decision to destroy the city!)*

Go in sick and come out healed

So, why was it only when we encamped by *Ba'al Tzephon* that we finally realized that there was nothing real about idols and their worship? What happened there to change our view of things? The power of idol worship is explained⁵ in the gemara with a discussion regarding two episodes. In the first episode, someone asked Rabbi Akiva, since they both knew that there was nothing real about idols, that idols had no real power, how was it possible that they would see men who were crippled enter into idolatrous temples and come out seemingly cured! Rabbi Akiva answered with a parable: Imagine a trustworthy man who lived in a city where all the townspeople deposited their money by him without the need for any witnesses for their deposits. There was one man who insisted on using witnesses when he made his deposits. But, on one occasion, this same man forgot to bring witnesses and, yet, deposited his money anyways. The wife of this trustworthy man said to him, "Come, let's deny this man's deposit!" The trustworthy man said to her, "Because this fool acted in an inappropriate way, we should destroy our reputation for trustworthiness?"

So, too, Rabbi Akiva explained, it was the same with sufferings that were sent to a person. At the time that sufferings are sent to a person, an oath is imposed on them that they will only come upon a man on such-and-such a day, and that they will only leave him on such-and-such a day, at such-and-such an hour, through the actions of so-and-so, and through such-and-such a medicine. What if it just so happens that, at the time when the sufferings are meant to leave the man, he walks into an idolatrous temple. The sufferings say, "It's right that we shouldn't leave him and make it seem like the man's decision to enter into the idolatrous temple had any influence whatsoever on our leaving him," but then they consider the matter further and decide, "Because this fool acted inappropriately, we should have to break our oath?!" So, too, our Sages taught that this is why the Torah refers⁶ to sufferings as "evil and faithful sicknesses;" "evil" – in their mission, "and faithful" – in their oath [i.e., to go out when they swore to do so regardless of other events].

Who'll start the rain

The gemara then continues with the second incident: There was an idolatrous temple in a certain place and whenever the world was in need of rain, [the idol] would appear to the people in a dream and say to them, "Slaughter a man to me and I will make it rain." The people would do as the idol said and slaughter a man to it, and the rain would come! Our Sages explain this episode using the following verse⁷ from the Torah that refers to idolatry, "So that you [i.e., the Children of Israel] should not raise your eyes to heaven, and see the sun and the moon and the stars ... and should be drawn away and bow to them and serve them ... Hashem, your G-d, has allotted (*chalak*) them to all the nations" In other words, Hashem made the words of the idols "smooth" (*hechalikan* – from

⁵ Avodah Zarah 55a

⁶ Devarim 28:59

⁷ Devarim 4:19

the same root as *chalak*, allotted) so that the nations of the world could err, believing that their idols and the things that those idols said were real, in order that He could banish idolaters from the world.

The power to deceive

From this passage, we learn⁸ a fundamental lesson regarding the power of the *Satan*, the angel tasked with placing stumbling blocks before us. In truth, the *Satan* does not have the power to do anything, but what it can do is deceive us and show us with certainty that it made everything! This is what was going on in the first episode in the gemara – regarding the people who went into the idolatrous temple crippled and came out healed. The sufferings needed to go out at precisely that moment anyhow, just as they had previously sworn to do so. So, if, at that very moment that the sufferings were meant to go out, the man who was afflicted by them entered into an idolatrous temple, the sufferings would still be removed anyways because that's when the sufferings were supposed to be removed, that's when they had sworn that they would go out. While the idol, like the *Satan*, has absolutely no power to do anything, let alone heal, it does, however, have the ability to lie and take credit for healing.

And it's the same regarding the second episode brought in the gemara – regarding the rain falling after the man was slaughtered to the idol. The rain needed to come at that instant regardless. The idol said to slaughter a man to show that it was bringing the rain, but, in truth, the rain was going to fall anyhow. The sole power of the idol is to "smooth" with words – what we'd call nowadays a "smooth talker," someone who can be very convincing with his words even though he's really lying through his teeth. But, to actually do something – to do anything – that the idol simply has no power to do.

A terrifying power

If the *Satan* had been granted the ability to do things from its own power, it would certainly be very limited in its ability to act, but now we can see that it actually has an incredibly awesome power because whatever Hashem can do, it can, in turn, claim responsibility for that very thing, appearing "all powerful" and without any limitations simply by its association with the Creator. In fact, other religions see the *Satan* as having the ability to challenge and defy G-d's will, when, in reality, all it can do is take credit for things it never did.

In Egypt, the Children of Israel worshipped idols, never realizing that there was nothing real about those idols, that the idols were, in fact, powerless – despite the fact that Hashem destroyed all of the Egyptian idols, save one, during the last plague. Why? Even though Hashem was clearly stronger, handily defeating the Egyptian idols in an incredible display of His power, that didn't mean that those idols didn't have any power at all; it just meant that, in comparison to Hashem, they were much weaker. For example, when we see two rivals arguing and the one is clearly stronger than the other, this isn't a proof that the weaker one is completely and utterly lacking in ability and strength. Therefore, even though the Children of Israel witnessed the strength of Hashem against all of the Egyptian idols, they were still not freed from their desire to worship those idols because they couldn't see that the idols were utterly powerless, not simply weaker in relative comparison to Hashem.

⁸ Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus heard this explanation from Rabbi Yoseph Liss who had heard it from the Brisker Rav

Truly seeing for the first time

But now that the Children of Israel had gone out from Egypt, something new happened: they entered into the domain of Hashem and they saw not only the downfall of the Egyptian gods, but also the falseness of them.

What did they see?

Hashem said, “Turn back and encamp before *Pi HaChiros*,” so the Children of Israel turned around and headed back towards Egypt. Pharaoh was convinced that his god, *Ba’al Tzephon*, had the Children of Israel in its grasp and was “causing” them to return to him. This was, as we have explained above, the well-known conduct of these false gods and idols, connecting everything that Hashem does to themselves and claiming credit for it!

Until now, the Children of Israel had been stuck by Pharaoh and saw things only from the perspective of the false gods and idols. But now that they had entered into Hashem’s domain, they saw both sides of what was happening, and they could finally see the falseness of the Egyptian gods. Hashem had said to them to stay there in *Pi HaChiros* and the Egyptian idol subsequently took credit for this action, saying: “They’re in my grasp!” and Pharaoh cried out, “Our god is all-powerful; it has trapped Israel!”

The Children of Israel could now see everything and, for the first time, they had the ability to see clearly how Hashem gives the power to idols to deceive their worshippers and to cry out falsely on Hashem’s deeds, claiming that those deeds, in fact, belong to them, when, in truth, the idols have no power whatsoever to do anything other than to lie and to deceive people – akin to looking behind the curtain and seeing the reality of the “great and powerful Oz.” Now, when the Children of Israel saw clearly the foundation of falseness and lies upon which those false gods and idols stood, they finally merited to be truly free from the desire to believe in them and to worship them. And that was the point at which we became truly free from the shackles of Egypt.

Based upon Tiferes Shimshon al HaTorah (Shemos) – Parshas Beshalach

I Wouldn't Step on That Scale If I Were You

Regarding the *sotah*¹, a married woman who behaved in a way that gave rise to a suspicion of her having committed adultery, the gemara teaches a fundamental lesson: “*B’midah sh’adam modeid, bah modi’déen lo* – With the measure that a man measures, with it, he is measured.”²

In other words, we are judged according to how we judge – and we are rewarded, or in the case of the *sotah*, punished – for the way that we behave. But more than that, Hashem does so in accordance with our very own behaviour. And this is the source for the principle of *middah keneged middah* (measure for measure), what we often describe as “what goes around, comes around.”

So, what does this concept have to do with the *sotah*, this woman who was suspected of adultery? Our Sages understand that everything that befalls her is a direct consequence of the way that she herself behaved. For example, she got all dressed up and adorned herself for the sake of committing a transgression, so Hashem commands that she now be made repulsive. How is this accomplished? They uncover her hair; they dress her in ugly clothing; they remove her jewellery; etc. Moreover, just as she uncovered herself in an immodest way for the purpose of attracting inappropriate attention, so Hashem commands that she be stood at one of the gates to the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Temple) and exposed so that everyone can come and see her shame, in order that people will learn a lesson from her humiliation. Moreover, because she fed delicacies to this man with whom she is suspected of having committed adultery, her *korban* (offering) consists of food fit for an animal. And because she gave this man fine wine to drink in ornate vessels, so she’s given bitter water to drink and in a lowly earthenware vessel. And the list goes on and on.

The gemara then brings other examples of this principle: Shimshon, the famous Sampson, followed inappropriately after his eyes, so he wound up being blinded by the *Plishtim* (Philistines); and Avshalom, one of King David’s sons, was haughty about his hair, so he wound up being hung by it.

Earning dividends

The gemara then explains that this principle of being judged *middah keneged middah* also applies with regard to good actions as well – with one significant difference – that the measure when it comes to rewarding is considerably greater than that of the measure when it comes to punishing. And the gemara again provides examples.

When Moshe was three months old and, as a result of Pharaoh’s decree that baby boys be killed, his mother, Yocheved, put him a box and placed him in the Nile. His sister, Miriam, stood and watched for a moment – she paused for one moment to see what would happen to him. And for this simple act done by Miriam of waiting a mere moment, many years later, when she became stricken with *tzara’as*, the spiritual illness that results chiefly from speaking *lashon harah* (in this case about her own brother Moshe), Hashem rewarded her by having the entire Jewish nation wait for her for seven days until she could return to the camp and was able to travel once again.

¹ See Bamidbar 5:12-31

² Sotah 8b

The great Yoseph HaTzaddik (Joseph) who rose to become the Viceroy of Egypt, second in command to only Pharaoh himself, went and buried his father Yaakov (Jacob) with tremendous honour. In return, Hashem rewarded him by having Moshe Rabbeinu busy himself with Yoseph's burial. And in return for this, who did Moshe merit to have bury him? None other than Hashem Himself.

So, we see that whatever we do comes back to us. If we do something bad, it comes back to us in kind. And if we do something good, it not only comes back to us, but it does so with significant interest added onto it.

Pharaoh's heart

Many years ago, before I became Torah observant, when I was in graduate school studying Political Philosophy, I once took a class called, "The Bible and Political Order." The objective of the class was to see what political teachings could be gleaned from the Bible. In order to assist him, the professor had asked an acquaintance, who happened to be quite well-versed in Biblical Hebrew, to sit in on the class and to offer commentary where appropriate.

When it came to the exodus from Egypt, this man pointed out a couple of very interesting observations regarding what was happening to Pharaoh's heart³, as Pharaoh stubbornly remained steadfast in the face of the many plagues with which Hashem struck him and the entire Egyptian people. As a preface to his observations, I need to explain that there are two Hebrew roots that are used to describe what happens to Pharaoh's heart: *chazak* – which is generally translated as "to strengthen" – as in "Hashem strengthened Pharaoh's heart"⁴; and *kaveid* – which is generally translated as "to harden" or "to become stubborn" – as in "Pharaoh's heart is hard (i.e., stubborn)."⁵

This man had noticed that the Hebrew root *kaveid*, rather than being translated as "to harden", could also be accurately translated as "to heavy." In other words, this wasn't just a case of Pharaoh's heart becoming hard – some sort of ancient coronary artery disease if you will – but of Pharaoh⁶, and then later Hashem⁷, making Pharaoh's heart "heavy." And this man noted that the weight of Pharaoh's heart was particularly interesting when considered in light of Pharaoh's own religion⁸, which he then proceeded to explain.

³ There are two different expressions used for what happens to Pharaoh's heart, both as a result of his own doing and as a result, *l'havdil*, of what Hashem does to him: (1) *chazak* – to strengthen – see e.g., Shemos 4:21; 8:15; 9:12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; (2) *kaveid* – to harden; to heavy; and with regard to the heart, to be stubborn – see e.g., Shemos 7:14; 8:11, 28; 9:7, 34; 10:1.

⁴ See e.g., Id. 9:12

⁵ See e.g., Id. 7:14

⁶ See e.g., Id. 8:11

⁷ See e.g., Id. 10:1

⁸ The details which follow above regarding the ancient Egyptian religion are based upon the following sources: <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/a/anubis.html>;
http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/discover/museum_explorer/ancient_egypt/death/weighing_the_heart.aspx;
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anubis>;
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ammit>.

The ancient Egyptians believed that, after a person died, he would be subjected to a test to determine whether his soul was deserving of an afterlife. At the entrance to the afterworld, a god named Anubis, who had a humanoid body and the head of a jackal, would stand holding a set of scales in his hand. The heart of the deceased would be placed by Anubis on one side of the scales and then weighed against a single ostrich feather, which belonged to Ma'at, the goddess of truth. If the heart was as light as the feather that sat opposite it on the scales, then the soul of the deceased would be granted immortality and escorted to Osiris, the god of the afterlife. If, however, the heart was heavier than the ostrich feather, then the soul of the deceased would be utterly destroyed. Eagerly awaiting the outcome of this weigh-in was a demon named Ammit, whose body was composed of parts from a lion, a hippopotamus, and a crocodile (three of the most dangerous animals known to the ancient Egyptians), who would gladly devour the unworthy hearts.

Pharaoh's judgment

Those were his observations and they obviously made quite an impression on me. When I eventually learned about the concept of *middah keneged middah*, I remembered what this acquaintance of the professor had noticed, and his observations served as the basis for an entirely different understanding of what was actually happening between Hashem and Pharaoh throughout the story of the exodus.

So, let's envision what happens when Pharaoh gets up to *shamayim* (Heaven) and has his day of judgment before the King of kings, Hashem. What kind of argument can he make? I think that he could easily contend: "Hashem! You do exist! Wow, it's really nice to meet you. I honestly thought that Moshe and Aaron were just making You up. You see, You never appeared to me personally, as You did with Moshe. You never spoke directly to me, like You did to Moshe. And since this was the very first time that You sought to make Yourself known to the world in such a public way, You'll excuse me if I found the whole thing a little hard to swallow. So, You can't possibly hold what happened against me, right?"

And what could Hashem respond?

"Pharaoh, you make a good argument. But there's one small problem. Regardless of the fact that you didn't realize that I existed, according to your own belief system, a person who has a heart that's heavier than the feather of Ma'at doesn't get an afterlife. And You chose to make your own heart heavy! So, even if I were to judge you only according to your own value system, according to the false religion by which you yourself chose to live, then you should have known at the time that you were doing these things, that you were doing something wrong; you should have felt that your heart was heavy because you weren't living a life of truth. And not only did you make your own heart heavy, but I also made your heart heavy as well. In other words, I communicated with you in your own language – according to a system that you did understand and even subscribed to and embraced! So, your argument is a good one, but Mine's a better one. According to your own religion, your own beliefs and judgment of things, you don't deserve an afterlife."

Serving as our own judge

For many years, I gave over the above idea based on *sevarah* (logic). Recently, however, my dear friend, Aron Ziegler, shared with me a wonderful Torah insight⁹ into the reason that our Sages instructed us regarding things like “not judging others” and “judging others favourably” that gives support to this interpretation. There is a famous episode in Tanach¹⁰ where Nossan HaNavi (Nathan the Prophet) comes to Dovid HaMelech (King David) to rebuke him for his behaviour in the terribly misunderstood episode with Batsheva.¹¹ So misunderstood is this incident, in fact, that our Sages teach, “Anyone who says that [King] David sinned [with Batsheva], that person errs!”¹² Contrary to popular misconceptions, King David was guilty neither of the murder of Batsheva’s husband, Uriah, because he, in fact, deserved the death penalty for treason, nor of adultery with Batsheva because she wasn’t married at the time that she and King David were together. In fact, Jewish law prohibits a woman from marrying a man with whom she committed adultery¹³, and King David and Batsheva not only married, but one of their children, Shlomo¹⁴ (Solomon), ascended to the throne after David and even went on to build¹⁵ the first *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple)!

What precisely King David did do wrong is a complicated discussion beyond the scope of this article, but his response to Nossan HaNavi does give some indication, “*Chatasi Lashem* – I have sinned against Hashem.”¹⁶ In other words, whatever King David did wrong was something that he’d done against Hashem, not against another person.

Nossan hid his rebuke of Dovid in a *moshel* (a parable), describing for Dovid the case of a wealthy man with large flocks and herds who, when a traveller came to him, chose unjustly to take the single sheep belonging to a poor man to prepare for this traveller rather than take anything from his own flocks and herds. Dovid became angry and said that the wealthy man deserved to die for what he had done. It was then that Nossan informed Dovid that he was, in fact, the man being described in the *moshel*!

The Ba’al Shem Tov explains that we can learn from this that the way we see the world – the scale that we use to judge others and the resulting judgments that we make about them – winds up being the very same scale and the very same judgments that we render for ourselves, and which will ultimately be used against us. And this is why our Sages instruct us with teachings such as¹⁷, “Don’t judge your fellow until you reach his place,” and¹⁸, “Judge the whole person on the side of merit” – because, when we manage to behave in such a manner, refraining from judging others or going out of our way to find a meritorious way to view their actions and excuse their seemingly negative behaviour, we actually wind up benefitting ourselves most of all.

⁹ Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, Parshas Kedoshim (Vayikra 19:15, point 5)

¹⁰ Shmuel Beis Chapter 12

¹¹ See Shmuel Beis, chapter 12

¹² Shabbos 56a

¹³ See e.g., Sotah 26b; Kesuvos 9a-b

¹⁴ See Shmuel Beis 12:24

¹⁵ See Melachim Aleph 6:1

¹⁶ Shmuel Beis 12:13; Tehillim 51:6

¹⁷ Pirkei Avos 2:4

¹⁸ Pirkei Avos 1:6

Hashem knows our thoughts. He sees our actions. Even if we have a warped value system – even if it's based on utter falsehood and distortion, as was the case with Pharaoh and the impact his actions had on his heart according to his own beliefs – Hashem speaks to each of us in a way that we can understand, regardless of whatever attempts we make to hide from Him. As frightening as it may be to recognize, we very much determine our own destiny and create our own reality – and we have no one to blame but ourselves. Hashem has blessed each of us with a G-d-like power – and most incredible of all is that, when, after 120 years, we finally get up to *shamayim* and receive our own final judgment, we'll find our own signature at the bottom of it, having established not only the very parameters and guidelines by which we were judged, but even the sentence that we will receive.

The Lesson of the Exodus: Gratitude

There's a stunning episode that takes place after Moshe encounters Hashem by the burning bush and he is commanded to return at once to Egypt, appear before Pharaoh, and begin the long-awaited process of the redemption of the Jewish people from our seemingly endless servitude. Rather than do as he was commanded and race back to Egypt straightaway, the midrash relates Moshe's response to Hashem, "Master of the Universe, I am not able to do so because Yisro ... opened the door of his home to me [when I fled from Egypt] and I am ... obligated to him. How can I go without his permission?" Moshe knew as well as anyone that the Jewish people were suffering terribly in a situation where our very lives were at stake on a daily basis and, yet, despite the situation calling for his immediate departure, he instead took precious time to ask Yisro's permission before he departed because he felt indebted to Yisro for the kindnesses that Yisro had done for him.

But Yisro's and Moshe's kindnesses were a two-way street. Moshe had also done kindnesses with Yisro and the kindness that Yisro had shown to Moshe was not only "owed" to him, but, as we'll see, selfishly motivated. Yisro had¹ abandoned his role as a priest for idol worshipers and, as a result, had been excommunicated to the point that no one would have anything to do with him – not even work for him to tend his flocks, so he was forced to have his daughters do the job. His daughters were, likewise, despised and abused by the other local shepherds, who would drive them away from the town's well, where they would go to give water to their sheep. When Moshe fled to Midian, he encountered Yisro's daughters, who were being abused at the well by the other shepherds, saved them, and gave water to their sheep. When the girls later told their father what had happened, Yisro asked them why they had left Moshe behind and not invited him to their home for something to eat. The midrash explains that Yisro was really thinking that, perhaps, this man, who was not from Midian and unfamiliar with the status of Yisro's family, might marry one of his daughters. So, we find that Yisro did a kindness for Moshe because of how it might suit his own interests! And on top of this, Yisro was obligated to open the door of his home to Moshe because Moshe had saved his daughters and drawn water from the well for them. So, why then was Moshe obligated to Yisro, and why did he consider Yisro's honour more important than the hastening of the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt?

Despite the fact that Yisro was obligated to open the door of his home to Moshe, it does not diminish at all Moshe's obligation of *hakaras hatov* – which literally means "recognizing the good [that was done for a person]," but also implies "showing gratitude" or "appreciation" for that good – to Yisro for this act. This is because of an important principle: the good that we receive does not come from the hand of the person from whom we receive it, but from Hashem. And yet, nevertheless, there is an obligation of showing gratitude to the person through whose hands we actually received the good that came to us because, for whatever reason, our benefactor merited to be a part of things and serve as Hashem's agent for transmitting the good that we received. And, just as important, were it not for the benefactor's meriting to be a part of such a thing, perhaps, the good that we received would not have been transmitted to us at all! Therefore, the obligation of showing gratitude exists even in a case where one benefits accidentally – where the benefactor did not intend to do good for the recipient, because, regardless, it was through the benefactor's hands that the good came to be. And, when the benefactor intends to do good for the recipient, there is an additional reason to be grateful, even in a case where the giver was obligated to do good such as Yisro for Moshe, because the benefactor still had a choice whether or not to do good, and,

¹ Bereishis Rabah 1:32

nonetheless, he chose to do good, and therefore, one is obligated in return to show gratitude towards him.

Expect nothing, appreciate everything

Good character traits are the foundation for the Torah, and for being able to fulfil Hashem's mitzvos. The exodus from Egypt served to inculcate in us feelings of gratitude to Hashem for liberating us from slavery. To put it another way, the purpose of the exodus was for us to take notice of the many miracles and kindnesses that Hashem did for us, and, as a result, cause us to want to show our gratitude for all of those things. It's this gratitude that obligates us to fulfil the entire Torah. And this was why Moshe was so worried about causing a defect in this character trait in particular. He knew that the entire exodus rested on this character trait and if he himself was to have a defect in it, how could he possibly influence the rest of the Jewish people in a positive fashion regarding it. Feeling and expressing gratitude is not just one of many nice qualities for a person to possess, but it is an essential and fundamental character trait for every person – Jew and non-Jew – to have. If we look closely at the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt, we find this theme of gratitude running through it.

Going to the dogs (and donkeys)

Included among the many mitzvos related to Pesach and the exodus from Egypt is one that appears completely unrelated: the mitzvah of redeeming a firstborn male donkey. Our Sages ask²: what's the difference between firstborn male donkeys and the firstborn of other non-kosher animals, such as horses and camels, which could justify a mitzvah regarding the one but not the other? After noting that Hashem commanded it to be so, they strive to offer an idea that may have been behind the commandment, "[The donkeys] helped the children of Israel at the time of the exodus from Egypt – each and every one of the children of Israel had 90 Libyan donkeys loaded with silver and gold from the Egyptians." In other words, because the donkeys helped us in our exodus from Egypt, they were forever made into an object of mitzvah. We can learn much about the concept of gratitude from this mitzvah. Although it's obvious that we need to have gratitude towards a person who intended to do us a favour, from here we see that we need to show gratitude even towards animals, which lack thought and intention. So, too, if we need to express gratitude towards an animal who acts unintentionally, then how much more so do we need to show our appreciation towards a person who does good for us, albeit unintentionally – and even towards someone who was forced to perform a kindness for us. We also see from this mitzvah that the concept of gratitude applies not only toward the one who did the good himself, but can even apply toward an entire category, for example, in this case: all donkeys. And there's no time limit for the expression of gratitude as the mitzvah³ of redeeming a firstborn male donkey is an eternal obligation for all the generations that followed after.

We find a similar example by dogs. The Torah tells us⁴, "You shall not eat the flesh [of an animal] that was torn in the field (i.e., *treif*); to the dog you shall throw it." Rashi asks, "Why does it say 'to the dog'? ... [to] teach you that Hashem doesn't deprive reward due to any creature, as it says, 'And [against] all the children of Israel, no dog wagged its tongue [i.e., barked].' Hashem said, 'Give it its due reward.'" Why did dogs receive a reward? Unlike the donkeys, they didn't actually help us with anything when we were going out from Egypt. We learn from this that gratitude is not specifically for someone who helped us by doing a particular action, but even for dogs that allowed the children of

² See Brachos 5b

³ See Shemos 13:13

⁴ Id. 22:30

Israel to go out from Egypt in peace and with honour, not disturbing the great *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d's name) that was taking place. Even inaction can warrant us to show gratitude for it!

Gathering dust and not making waves

And there's even a level of recognizing goodness and showing gratitude above these. Hashem famously instructed⁵ Moshe to have Aharon carry out some of the plagues instead of Moshe himself doing the actions that were necessary – specifically, blood and frogs, which came about as a result of Aharon striking the Nile, and lice, which came about as result of Aharon striking the dust of the earth. Hashem did not allow Moshe to carry out these plagues because the Nile protected Moshe when, as a baby, he was thrown into it and the dust protected Moshe when he killed an Egyptian officer and hid the body in the sand. Despite the fact that the water and dust are inanimate objects, Hashem taught Moshe that he was obligated to show gratitude towards them for the benefit that he received from them.

The gemara teaches⁶ that one who finds food (i.e., on the ground) must not pass it by and leave it there. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, zt"l, explains that we must have gratitude for the food that we eat. Despite the fact that the food was thrown on the ground by someone else, it's a disgrace for the food to be left there. Why must we be so concerned about how we treat inanimate objects that obviously don't have any feelings? It's not like those objects care how we treat them. It's because of how it affects us! Recognizing and appreciating the good that has been done for us helps to implant within us feelings of gratitude, and, failing to do so, *chas v'shalom* (G-d forbid), causes profound damage to our character.

Black sheep of the family

The Torah teaches⁷ us that two nations, Amon and Moav, are not permitted to ever become a part of the Jewish people (i.e., convert). What makes this even more stunning is that both of these nations came from Avraham's own brother-in-law (i.e., Sarah's brother), Lot. And therein lies the problem. Both of these nations, who came from the children of Lot, were indebted to us, the children of Avraham, for all that our forefather had done for theirs, including saving his life on more than one occasion. Despite the fact these things took place hundreds of years in the past and Lot's descendants likely had little, if any, connection to these events and may have even felt that whatever favour was done was not even done for them, we see that there is no statute of limitations on the gratitude that is owed for a kind deed.

But the things these two nations did to warrant such a punishment could not have been more different. While Moav famously hired the prophet Bilam to curse us, Amon failed to greet us with bread and water when we passed by their border. Surely, Moav's crime of trying to curse us was far worse than Amon's lack of basic good manners, so how can the Torah punish the children of Amon with a punishment equal to that of Moav? We see from the fact that the Torah equates the two that something more is at stake here – and that failing to show gratitude is far more serious an issue than we might suspect.

What makes this episode particularly noteworthy is that the bread and water that Amon failed to provide for us were actually not even needed by us at all! The midrash teaches that the entire 40

⁵ See id. 7:19 and 8:12 and Rashi on those verses

⁶ Eruvin 64b

⁷ Devarim 23:4-7

years that we were traveling in the wilderness, manna fell from heaven, water came from the well that travelled with us, and quail was common for us – so what sin was there in Amon’s not bringing us bread and water? This was a matter of *derech erez* (basic good manners) of greeting a traveller with food and drink. But more than this, we also see from here that the obligation of showing gratitude exists even toward someone who does not need the good that we have to offer. As we saw with inanimate objects, showing gratitude is not about the recipient of the gratitude and his needs, so much as it is about how such behaviour affects the person who is obligated to show it. Despite the fact that Israel did not need anything, Amon was still obligated to show their gratitude by greeting Israel with bread and water. Amon’s failing resulted in a profound and eternal blemish in their character to the point that they would never be fit to join the Jewish people.

In the land of the Pharaohs

Surely, we would think that if Amon can’t join the Jewish people because of a lack of gratitude and Moav can’t join the Jewish people because they tried to have Bilam curse us, then Egypt who brutally enslaved us for over a hundred years – something we recall each year at our Seder tables without fail – shouldn’t be able to either? Think again. The Torah teaches⁸, “Do not despise the Egyptian because you were a stranger in his land.” Rashi explains, “Do not despise the Egyptian **entirely**, even though the Egyptians threw your male children into the Nile. What’s the reason? Because they gave you lodging during a difficult time (i.e., the famine that was taking place and resulted in Yaakov and his family going down to Egypt).” Despite the Egyptians enslaving us with incredibly harsh bondage for 116 years, we are still obligated to show them gratitude for the hospitality that they showed to us for the 94 years that they hosted us before the slavery started. It’s an important lesson: just because someone does something bad, it doesn’t erase the good that he did.

A slippery slope

So, what’s so bad about being ungrateful? Our Sages teach⁹ that it’s like denying the existence of Hashem. “A man who is ungrateful towards his fellow, tomorrow he will be ungrateful towards his Creator.” Gratitude – whether it be to another person or to Hashem – has a single root in the soul, and if there’s a blemish in the character trait of recognizing the good that was done by someone else, then such a person will also fail to recognize the kindnesses of Hashem that were done for him. A person who is ungrateful lacks concern for the good deeds that have been done for him and also tries to diminish the value of any favour that he received until the point that he can completely deny that anything good was even done for him at all. He may, for example, claim that he never received a particular thing, but instead took it without any protest from its owner, or he may claim that the giver was obligated for whatever reason, perhaps, by virtue of his position (like a salesman in a shop or a repairman who receives payment for his work) to do that good for him, and therefore, there is no need to be grateful. In truth, the obligation of showing gratitude is not diminished even if the giving was by virtue of a person’s position because, nevertheless, the recipient received something and, therefore, he needs to give thanks.

It’s just a small hop, skip, and a jump from denying the good done by others to denying the tremendous good that Hashem constantly does with His entire creation to denying that there is even a Creator at all who brings about that good. Our Sages use Pharaoh to illustrate this point. The Torah first tells us¹⁰ that a “new king arose who did not know Yoseph.” Surely, all of Egypt knew of the

⁸ Id. 23:8 (emphasis added to the Rashi)

⁹ Mishnas Rabbi Eliezer

¹⁰ Shemos 1:8

deeds of Yoseph, who served as viceroy, second only to Pharaoh himself, for decades (having been appointed in the year 2229 and having died 80 years later in 2309¹¹) and who was instrumental in protecting the Egyptians from the devastating effects of the many years of famine that took place. Rather, Pharaoh chose to be oblivious to what Yoseph had done and to be ungrateful towards Yoseph's family, the Jewish people, enslaving them and treating them despicably. After years of keeping the Jews in bondage, Pharaoh said¹² to Moshe and Aharon, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to him ... I don't know Hashem." Pharaoh began by denying the good that Yoseph had done and, ultimately, wound up denying Hashem's existence.

Denial ... it's not just a river in Egypt

The reason why a man does not want to recognize a favour that was done for him, and chooses to deny it, is because showing gratitude creates a sort of servitude – the receiver feels indebted to return the favour to the giver. So long as he has not returned the favour, the recipient remains indebted. A person denies that something good was done for him in order to liberate himself from the obligation to return the favour, be it to another person or to Hashem. Someone who is ungrateful chooses not to recognize the kindnesses done for him by Hashem in order that he should not feel obligated to Hashem in any way and, therefore, free to do as his own heart desires. And from this we can gain an insight into why we were not commanded¹³ to just believe that Hashem exists, but to believe that "Hashem, who brought [us] out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage" exists. Included along with the obligation to believe in Hashem is a reminder of the great kindnesses that Hashem did for us – without which, as we say in the Haggadah each year, we would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

It's a person's ability to recognize the kindnesses that he has received from Hashem, which, in turn, causes him to feel indebted to Hashem, which results in a willingness to serve Hashem – to pay Him back so to speak. So, we see that recognizing good and showing our gratitude for it is a necessary condition for serving Hashem. The entire exodus from Egypt and all the many miracles connected with it were in order to strengthen our faith in Hashem while, at the same time, enabling us to serve Him as a result of our feelings of indebtedness to Him for all that He did for us. Much of the Haggadah serves to detail the many miracles, wonders, and kindnesses that Hashem did for us, and this is why it's important for us to see ourselves, as the Haggadah emphasizes, as having personally gone out from Egypt, as having personally benefited from all these things. The more we are able to see and appreciate these things, the more indebted we will feel, and the greater our service and devotion to Hashem will be.

Adapted from sichos by the Sifsei Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, zt"l.

¹¹ See *The Jewish Timeline Encyclopedia* by Rabbi Mattis Kantor, Jason Aronson Press (1992)

¹² Shemos 5:2

¹³ Id. 20:2



Putting things in **PERSPECTIVE**

A closer look at how we count the 400 years that we were “strangers in a land that was not [our] own” and the timeline of events surrounding the Exodus from Egypt | BY ROBERT SUSSMAN

2018

15 NISAN – Bris Bein HaBesarim (the covenant between the parts) – Hashem told Avraham that for 400 years his children would be strangers in a land that was not their own.

2238

At the age of 130 years old, Yaakov and his family went down to Egypt; Yocheved, the 70th member of the family, was born to Levi in transit, and the children of Israel began their time in Egypt

2047

15 NISAN – Just three days after his bris milah (circumcision), Avraham entertained three guests, one of whom informed him that the next year his wife, Sarah, would give birth

2048

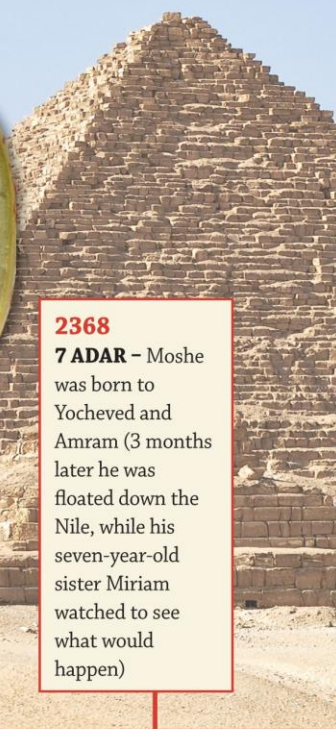
15 NISAN – Yitzchak was born to Avraham and Sarah, and the 400-year exile began

2332

Levi, the last of Yaakov’s twelve sons, died and the Egyptian enslavement began

2368

7 ADAR – Moshe was born to Yocheved and Amram (3 months later he was floated down the Nile, while his seven-year-old sister Miriam watched to see what would happen)



2018

2047

2048

2238

2332

2368

The Hebrew months of the year: 1. Nisan 2. Iyar 3. Sivan 4. Tammuz 5. Av 6. Elul 7. Tishrei 8. Cheshvan 9. Kislev 10. Tevet 11. Shevat 12. Adar



2448

- 1 TISHREI** – 3rd plague (Lice)
- 1 CHESHVAN** – 4th plague (Wild animals)
- 1 KISLEV** – 5th plague (Sickness of the animals)
- 1 TEVET** – 6th plague (Boils)
- 1 SHEVAT** – 7th plague (Hail)
- 1 ADAR** – 8th plague (Locusts)
- 1 NISAN** – 9th plague (Darkness)
- 10 NISAN** – Shabbos HaGadol (aka the Great Shabbos) – Hashem commanded that we take lambs (sheep or goat) on this day, which we would later use for the Korban Pesach (the Passover offering), and tie them to our bedposts
- 15 NISAN** – 10th plague (death of the first born) took place at the stroke of midnight – by night, the first Pesach seder; by day, Hashem redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt and the exodus took place
- 18 NISAN** – Pharaoh was informed that the children of Israel were not returning to Egypt. Pharaoh changed his mind and decided to chase after them to bring them back.
- 19–20 NISAN** – Pharaoh and his army chased after the children of Israel
- 21 NISAN** – Pharaoh and his army caught up to the children of Israel at the Sea of Reeds. Towards the end of the night (ie. close to morning), the miracle of the sea splitting took place with the children of Israel walking safely through on dry land – and the Egyptians following after and drowning.

2447

- 15 NISAN** – While living in Midian, Moshe sees the burning bush and has his first encounter with Hashem.
- 1 AV¹** – 1st plague (Blood) – With certain notable exceptions (eg. darkness and the death of the first born) each plague lasted one week and was preceded by three weeks of warnings
- 1 ELUL** – 2nd plague (Frogs) **III**

2408

At the age of 40 (some say he was 20 years old), Moshe fled to Midian after killing an Egyptian officer who was striking a Jew

400 YEARS IN EXILE – FROM THE BIRTH OF YITZCHAK UNTIL THE REDEMPTION FROM EGYPT

210 YEARS IN EGYPT – FROM THE ARRIVAL OF YAAKOV IN EGYPT UNTIL THE REDEMPTION FROM EGYPT

116 YEARS OF BONDAGE – FROM THE DEATH OF LEVI UNTIL THE REDEMPTION FROM EGYPT

2408

2447

2448

¹Based upon Yalkut Shimoni and Rabbeinu Bachya (other authorities disagree regarding the precise dates of these events)

Based primarily upon *The Jewish Timeline Encyclopedia* by Rabbi Mattis Kantor, *Chumash with Rashi*, and *Midrash Rabbah*

