



YESHIVAT ERETZ HATZVI HAGGADAH

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שְׁבֶּכֶל דּוֹר וְדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם

“In each and every generation, they come upon us to destroy us, and HaShem saves us from their hands.” (From the Passover Haggadah)

We recite the VeHi SheAmda paragraph in the Haggadah annually, commemorating the attempt by others to destroy the Jewish people. Just like in the time of the Exodus from Egyptian bondage and Pharaoh’s evil outstretched arm, we trust that HaShem will save the Jewish people. This salvation is a national promise. On an individual level, we know some suffer, and their suffering is beyond our comprehension. But the Haggadah promises that as a collective, the Jewish people will survive.

This year many Jews in Israel and the Diaspora face, with the rest of humanity, a terror which lacks intent but is devastating none the less. Many are suffering, and the medical establishment expects more to become ill in the upcoming days and weeks. It’s hard to read these traditional words and not wonder how we should react. The comments of Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, the second Gerrer Rebbe, and author of the Sefas Emmes, relating to another passage, give me some solace.

The Haggadah suggests that “And if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would [all] be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.” This passage troubled the rebbe. In the Sefas Emmes, he asks, given the passage of time and change in historical circumstances, wouldn’t we have been freed at some point? He explains that the freedom mentioned is not only something external like breaking the shackles of slavery. The Haggadah is discussing internal slavery. HaShem freed us psychologically. He altered our minds from that of slaves to the spirit of free worshipers of God. Being that he lived in 19th century Poland under the rule of cruel gentiles, he suggested the same regarding his time. He says he can recite the Haggadah in the joy of being free because he knows God has freed the psyche of the Jewish people.

Perhaps, today under this mindless disease, we can also look towards the Almighty. The world will improve, and our people will continue. The Exodus experience changed us into believers in our ability to overcome difficulty. We are not stuck in the present situation. I’m not excusing suffering, and this is not a weak type of theodicy. I do believe we can take solace in the fact that we know God is with us at this time and that HaShem will eventually help the doctors, scientists, and medical practitioners lead us out of this terrible situation. He gives us the strength to help our neighbors, friends, and family survive this pandemic. For some that means staying apart for the seder and for others it means working in hospitals or food deliveries or any other way we can. For many of us in yeshiva it means learning the new skill of teaching Torah on-line to anyone who is prepared to learn.

We know God will give us the strength to overcome. We can know this truth because God has promised to always be with his people and to help save the world.

All of us at Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi wish you a safe, healthy, and quiet Pesach Sameach.

Begin at the Beginning
Arba Kosot and the Four Cups of Pharaoh
Rav Yehuda Susman, Rosh HaYeshiva

Talmud Yerushalmi Pesachim

What is the source for the 4 cups?

- a. **Rebbe Yochanan** said in the name of **Rebbe Bnaya**: each cup is representative of one of the four “redemptions”
- b. **Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Levi** said: [They are] representative of the four cups of Pharaoh...

In grade 8 I was introduced to an Aggada that would take decades before I appreciated it.

What do the *arba kosot* represent? Many are aware of the opinion (though not necessarily its source) of Rav Bnaya quoted in the above Yerushalmi that connects the *arba kosot* to the “*arba geulot*”, or, as they are usually referred to, the “*arba leshonot shel geula*”, the four expressions of redemption. This is the reason for the four cups that is often taught to middle school students. So when I was assigned the preparation of a dvar torah on the topic of the *arba kosot* I thought of examining the four expressions in the hope of coming to a deeper understanding of them and asked my *rebbe*, Rabbi Farber, for sources. Instead, he recommended that I begin earlier in time – and proceeded to quote to me the reasoning for *arba kosot* as presented by Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi – which connects the *arba kosot* to the four times Pharaoh’s cup of wine is mentioned by the *Sar HaMashkim* as he retells his dream to Yosef in the prison. “Begin at the beginning”, he said.

I remember being perplexed by Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi’s answer. His rationale has the advantage of quoting *psukim* that explicitly speak of *kosot*, but his reference point seems strained. The *Sar HaMashkim*’s dream was directly relevant to one man – the *Sar Hamashkim* himself – and perhaps tangentially to Yosef. *Yetziat Mitzraim* was, by all accounts, more than 200 years away. Here lay not a beginning, but a non sequitur.

Truth be told, I do not remember the dvar torah, nor if it was any good. But years later, when I looked at the source inside for the first time and saw the two answers juxtaposed, I realized Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Levi’s “beginning” followed Rav Bnaya’s seeming “end” and that by positioning their opinions in the reverse order we would have expected, the Yerushalmi had shed light on them both.

The opinion of Rebbe Bnaya is one of nuance. It focuses on the Exodus experience in of itself – and it is important to pay attention to the language employed. Rebbe Bnaya does not speak of the “*arba leshonot shel geula*” but rather the “*arba geulot*”, the four “redemptions” themselves. Each of the expressions – *v’hotzeti*, *v’hitzalti*, *v’ge’alti* and *v’lakachti* describes a separate facet of the *geula* process.

A nation of slaves set free (*v'hotzeti*) does not a redeemed (*v'ge'alti*) people make. It certainly does not describe the mission of being a holy nation (*v'lakachti*) that *Yetziat Mitzraim* set into motion. Our drinking of the four cups in his opinion should reflect the different facets and their progression. The cup of Kiddush at the beginning of the seder has a different symbolic meaning than the cup we drink at its conclusion with Hallel.

In contrast, Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Levi's answer lacks the gradation of the first approach; nothing distinguishes the first cup of Pharaoh from the second, third or the fourth. In fact, in the dream there is only one cup – it may be referenced four separate times but one cup it remains. However, what his answer lacks in nuance is balanced by its scope. Rebbe Yehoshua insists that the nuances brought to bear by the four *geulot* of Rebbe Bnaya be grounded in the beginning of the story. *Yitziat Mitzraim* is put into motion not with *v'hotzeti* but with a dream that even Yosef was granted the insight to interpret for the near term alone. G-d alone knew the true import of the dream. Only in hindsight can we understand the progression of the miracle that began with a dream and culminated with our being chosen as G-d's nation.

This year, we ready for ourselves for a Pesach like none that we can remember and feel as though the world has fundamentally changed. Perhaps now is the time to drink the *arba kosot* of Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Levi – focusing not on the endpoint but being cognizant of murky beginnings as well. Being sensitive to the story in its entirety.

Or as Rabbi Farber might say – begin at the beginning.

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמזריים. כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח.
השתא נכא, לשנה הבאה בארעא דישאל. השתא עברי, לשנה הבאה בני חורין.

Ha Lachma Anya – Leib Malina

Ha Lachma Anya marks the beginning of the Maggid segment of the Pesach Seder just before the storytelling begins, and invites the needy to join in on the festive meal while expressing hope for complete redemption and freedom within the land of Israel. But it's a puzzling passage. At first glance, Ha Lachma Anya is ill timed and poorly expressed. If we're making an invitation, why do it now? And if we're so charitable, then why do we offer "poor man's" bread to the poor? It would be much more prudent to invite them at the beginning, to a nice meal. Finally, what's the connection with the second half - where we look towards a future of freedom in the Land of Israel?

Traditional sources attempt to answer this by redefining Ha Lachma Anya, or offering some technical halakhic explanation for the order of the seder meal - I would like to accept it as it is and take a different approach. The original message of Ha Lachma Anya is powerful and provides clarity to the introduction's bizarre placement and content.

There is a very clear dynamic between the two types of Pesach Seders throughout history: those celebrated during the time of the Temple and the Seders we host today, in exile. Conceptually, we would celebrate our freedom and reenact slavery during the time of the Beit Hamikdash. By contrast, today we reenact freedom and accept the reality of spiritual slavery. The most obvious practical difference is the Pesach offering, only possible in the Temple, which necessitated a prior invitation and could only be eaten by the previously designated group of people. Ha Lachma Anya, in all of its awkwardness, is an introduction to this duality of the Seder and a powerful example of the suboptimal but still meaningful way we celebrate Passover in exile.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains that "sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings... one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith." He brings an excerpt from Primo Levi's *Is This A Man*, a book which recounts Levi's experiences in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. In it, Levi describes that after the death march following the liquidation of the camps, he was lighting a fire to provide some warmth for his fellow prisoners, many of them terminally ill. With few scraps of food remaining, the other prisoners decided to repay his kindness and each gave Levi and the other helpers a slice of bread. This giving of a small amount of bread was hardly a gift, but the ability to do so was completely inconceivable and absolutely impossible just days before while they were in captivity.

The capacity to have empathy and give charity are a characteristic of freedom. In his commentary on the Haggadah, Rav Soloveitchik expresses that freedom is the ability to see in our prior state of servitude the seeds of our liberation. We are subverting the bread of affliction, a symbol of slavery, and using it to establish the freedom we're afforded. Hence, by democratizing the ideal of the Temple-centered rite of the Passover sacrifice into a family gathering with open invitations and matzah for the needy, we are reminded of the freedom granted to us and our ability and obligation to do Chessed as a result.

This message is especially relevant now, during the spread of COVID-19, where our Seders and the entire Pesach experience will be even more limited due to the virus which creates obstacles such as cancelled Pesach plans and forces elderly relatives to eat separately in order to minimize exposure. More than ever, we can learn from Ha Lachma Anya. The hallmark of Passover is not that we are free in the absolute sense, it's that despite the implicit circumstances of exile and other challenges inhibiting our celebration, we can still exercise and maximize our freedom while hoping for a better future.

מה נשׂתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה, הלילה הזה – כלו מצה.

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות – הלילה הזה (כלו) מרור.

שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת – הלילה הזה שתי פעמים.

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין ובין מטבין – הלילה הזה כלנו מטבין.

Ma Nishtana – Oliver Bass

The four questions originate from a Mishnah in Pesachim 10:4, beginning with

מזגו לו כוס שני, וכאן הבן שואל אביו

The Parma manuscript of the Mishna has three questions:

1. Matzah
2. Tzali — roasted meat (we do not eat roasted meat anymore since there is no korban pesach)
3. Dipping twice and once on other nights

Rashi explains that the pouring of the second cup is actually the impetus for the questions. The child's curiosity will be stimulated as he sees a second cup of wine poured before the meal, and therefore he will come to ask questions about the distinctive nature of the seder night. Rashbam further says that Rashi learned from R. Yaakov ben Yakar that כָּאן can instead be read as *ken*: the second cup is poured SO that the child will ask.

Rashi's question of "why is the second cup poured before the meal" is not one of the questions that is asked, either in the modern seder or in the Mishnah. Furthermore, there are differences between the Mishnah and what we have today that are quite apparent: absent from the Mishnah are both the questions of maror and leaning, and it has the additional question of tzali (as well as a slightly modified version of the dipping question). The Rambam, meanwhile, gives five questions, including both the questions of tzali and reclining.

It is clear from the variations of ma nishtana — as shown by the significant evolution between the Mishnah and our Haggadah, not to mention Rashi's implied question (listed nowhere) and Rambam's five questions — that the purpose of ma nishtana is not answering the specific questions that are listed. Rather, the point is to get people to ask questions — not merely the four questions that are in front of us, but those four and more. Children practice asking the questions weeks before the seder, and the same questions are asked year after year. In a way, ma nishtana isn't sincere: the questions and answers are rehearsed, practiced, and repeated the following seder. If the significance of ma nishtana was its answers, why would we bother with the questions?

It is pretty clear that a lot makes Pesach 5780 different from all sedarim we have experienced. Unfortunately, many people will be having sedarim by themselves. We learn from a braita in Mesechet Pesachim on daf 116 that even one who is alone asks the questions to himself, instead of just answering them. The value and purpose of questioning is a central theme of the seder, even when the questions are rehearsed, even when we are by ourselves, and even when it is clear what makes this night different from all other nights.

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיּוֹצִיאֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד תְּזַקָּה וּבְכֹזֶעַ נְטוּיָה.
וְאֵלֹו לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אַבּוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם,
הָרִי אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ מִשְׁעַבְדֵי הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם.
וְאֶפִּילוּ כָּלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים כָּלֵנוּ זְקֵנִים כָּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה
מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. וְכָל הַמְרַבָּה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח.

Avadim Hayinu - Raffi Burnstein

"וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח"

"And one who delves into the story of the Exodus from Egypt is praiseworthy."

Why is it that with this particular Mitzvah of relating the story of the Exodus, the rule is "the more the merrier"? Why IS it so praiseworthy to exceed the requirement? With other commandments, going beyond the specified requirement is evidently a sin, not praiseworthy, as the Torah commands us not to add anything to the specified requirements of a commandment (Deuteronomy 4:2). Consequently, it seems that for all the other commandments a Jew may not exceed the prescribed amount, but for telling over the story of the Exodus, this commandment not to exceed the prescribed amount may be violated and the "sky is the limit." Why?

Most Mitzvot have exact parameters that define what is considered going beyond the boundaries in performance of a Mitzvah. But, the Rabbis in the Mishna made certain noted exceptions that have absolutely no minimum and maximum amount in their (Torah) fulfillment of the commandment (the Rabbis later suggested recommended amounts). The Mishna (Peah 1:1) lists them: 1) Peah, the size of the corner of the field left for the poor has no minimum or maximum amount 2) Bikkurim-First fruits – There is no minimum or maximum number of fruit that is brought to the Kohen in Jerusalem 3) Korban Re-iyah – This is the pilgrimage sacrifice brought by each Jew when he came on the Three Festivals to Jerusalem. There is no minimum or maximum amount. 4) Chesed-Kindness – There is no defining minimum or maximum to fulfill this commandment of helping and being kind to others. But the greatest of all these Mitzvot, equal to all the rest put together, according to the end of that Mishna is 5) Torah learning. According to some Talmudic opinions, this Mitzvah can be fulfilled daily with the recitation of just one sentence, with no minimum amount "learned". But there also is no maximum to this Mitzvah of Torah study. Some scholars or Yeshiva students may learn more than 20 hours a day. Only five commandments, at least, appear to be the exceptions to the rule, where a person can add to them as much as they desire.

Discussing the Haggadah and the Exodus on Pesach night is the equivalent to learning Oral Torah. Therefore, like Torah learning, the Mitzvah to tell over the Exodus story, has no minimum or maximum. But that is exactly the point of this paragraph, i.e. to point out how different indeed is telling over the Exodus story from all other Mitzvot. In the next paragraph, this is additionally demonstrated by the Rabbis who continued to discuss and discuss, even all night. This explanation (of no maximum) also answers another general question posed by many Rabbis about the Seder. Since the telling over of the Exodus story is a Torah commandment, why is there no blessing in the completion of this commandment, similar to all other positive Torah commandments (Lulav, Matzah, etc.)? There are many answers written about this question. One answer is that the Rabbis never gave a blessing for any Mitzvah in which the amount is not fixed. This explains, according to some Rabbis, why we don't recite a

new blessing every time we sit down to learn Torah, also one of the positive commandments, since the amount is not fixed. Similarly, on Pesach night, since the telling of the story is so open-ended with no defined amount, there is no blessing.

The final word of this paragraph "משובח - praiseworthy", like the word "משעובדים - enslaved/beholden," has two different translations. The word in Hebrew also means "improved." Therefore, if we define this word as "improved" rather than "praiseworthy" in the passage, the meaning of the paragraph is somewhat changed. Anyone who discusses more about this story of the Exodus and delves more becomes improved. They become a better individual, a changed and enhanced person.

Bibliography: Rav Amsel's Haggadah

מְעֹשֶׂה בְּרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּנֵי עֲזַרְיָה וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא וְרַבִּי טַרְפוֹן שֶׁהָיוּ מְסַבִּין בְּבִגְיָבְרָק וְהָיוּ מְסַפְּרִים בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם כְּלֵאוֹתָהּ הַלַּיְלָה, עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ תַלְמִידֵיהֶם וְאָמְרוּ לָהֶם רַבּוֹתֵינוּ הִגִּיעַ זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שֶׁל שַׁחְרִית.
אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּנֵי עֲזַרְיָה הֲרִי אֲנִי כְּכֹן שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וְלֹא זָכִיתִי שֶׁתֵּאֲמַר יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם בְּלֵילוֹת עַד שֶׁדָּרָשָׁה בֶּן זֹמָא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ. יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ הַיְמִיּוֹם. כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ הַלַּיְלוֹת. וְחֻקֵּימִים אוֹמְרִים יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ הַעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ לְהִבְיֵא לִימּוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ:

Ma'aseh b'Rabbi Eliezer - Isaac Kauffman

What's the point of these stories? They don't seem to be part of the Seder - the first is an idle conversation: "Did you hear about the Rabbis' Seder? Their Seder was so long that it went on till Shacharit the following morning!" and the second is an idea that would make an excellent short Dvar Torah. Either way, neither of them is about the Exodus, they're both about **talking** about the Exodus from Egypt.

The origins of these stories present an enigma. The second story appears in Mishnayot Brachot. However, the first one doesn't seem to have a source. A similar story in the Tosefta involves Rabban Gamliel and some unnamed others in Lod. It's likely talking about a different occasion. The earliest easy-to-find source is the Rambam's Mishnah Torah, which mentions both stories almost word for word.

Given that the second story appears in the Mishnah, and that both are written in Hebrew (not Aramaic), the first story is likely Mishnaic as well, and the source was probably lost some time in the last millennium.

The early Mishnaic period occurred around a century after the destruction of the Second Temple when Judaism was being completely reformed to survive without a Temple. Hence, at that time, they were probably formulating the beginnings of something similar to the Haggadah. At that time, they would need to educate the people about their 'new' Seder, and they may have put these in to teach three things about the 'new' Seder. The first story illustrates that you can have the Seder (or at least discussion on the Exodus) last all night long. The second story shows that one should discuss the Exodus during the night of the Seder. The inclusion of these two stories also instructs us that one is obligated to **teach his or her children** about the Seder and to discuss the Exodus with them.

ברוך המקום, ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל, ברוך הוא. כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה: אחד חכם, ואחד רשע, ואחד תם, ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול.

חכם מה הוא אומר? מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלהינו אתכם. ואף אתה אמור לו כהלכות הפסח: אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן:

רשע מה הוא אומר? מה העבודה הזאת לכם. לכם – ולא לו. ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל כפר בעקר. ואף אתה הקהה את שניו ואמור לו: "בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים". לי ולא לו. אלו היה שם, לא היה נגאל:

תם מה הוא אומר? מה זאת? ואמרת אליו "בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים."

ושאינו יודע לשאול – את פתח לו, שנאמר, והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר, בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.

Arba Banim – Sam Brummer

Most of us will be familiar with the link that exists between the Pesach Seder and the number four; seen in the four cups of wine, the four questions, the four expressions of redemption and the four sons.

However, something less well known is the concept of 'the missing fifth,' in regard to the aforementioned. The Rambam notes that there is an optional fifth cup of wine that may be drunk. The Mishna also states that there is a fifth question asked by the youngest member of the Seder, regarding why we would only eat roasted meat at the time of the Temple. From here, one can extrapolate that there may indeed exist a fifth son, one who we do not speak of at the Seder.

This is the view of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who believes that unlike the other four, the fifth son has decided to not attend. When the Torah describes the exodus, it writes "Vachamushim alu Bnei Yisrael miMitzrayim" (Shemot 13:18) usually translated as "The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle". Interestingly, Rashi suggests that chamush may not mean armed, instead reading chamesh, 'five.' It could therefore be translated as 'Only a fifth of the Israelites left Egypt.' The rest of the Jews perished in the plague of darkness, and the loss of Jews to assimilation remains a pertinent problem today.

In a similar vein, the 4 sons could represent 4 generations. The wise child is the oldest, the one who listened and learned, discussed and debated. What followed him was the wicked child, who forgot the lessons of his father, embracing secularism wholeheartedly, with Judaism not being lived, rather compartmentalised.

The simple child, the third generation was stuck between vague memories of antique traditions and the pragmatism of his parents. Laws of Judaism were too restrictive, instead living for a purpose of instant gratification. The fourth generation could not even formulate a question. There was no fifth generation.

Throughout Judaism, education has been a key to survival highlighted by when Ezra summoned the Jews and taught them Torah upon their return to the temple.

At the Seder, we have the task of emulating the wise child, not rushing through the story to quench our appetite, but rather learning and listening and trying to understand. Whilst the numbers of assimilated Jews speak for themselves, there is no excuse for ignorance. We cannot blame the community for failing, when we are the community. We have a task of keeping the flame of Judaism alight in the modern world.

וְהִיא שְׁעֵמֶדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ. שְׁלֹא אֶחָד בְּלֶבֶד עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתָנוּ,
אֲלֵא שְׁבִכָל דּוֹר וְדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתָנוּ, וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילָנוּ מֵיָדָם

V'Hi She'amda – Eytan Labe

"And it is this [covenant] that has stood for our Forefathers and us. For not just one enemy has stood against us to wipe us out. But in every generation there have been those who have stood against us to wipe us out, and the Holy One Blessed Be He saves us from their hands."

This short passage from the Haggadah has given hope to Jews over the centuries, particularly in times of oppression. The values of the Torah are timeless and so every generation finds a new way of interpreting the Haggadah which has meaning in it for them.

Vehi -- "and it is this" -- refers to the promise God made to Abraham to take our forefathers out of Egypt. Many commentators offer possible interpretations. One explanation is that the Torah is alluded to in the word Vehi as each Hebrew letter refers to a different part of our written and oral law:

Vav = numerical value 6, refers to the six tractates of Mishna.

Hei = numerical value of 5, stands for the five books of Moses.

Yud = numerical value 10, stands for the Ten Commandments.

Aleph = numerical value 1, stands for One God.

This explanation implies that it is the Torah, and our connection with it, that has always saved us from our enemies. This Pesach is very strange because when I think of this beautiful passage- I'm thinking of a different type of physical enemy, Corona. How can we fight against this pandemic on Pesach?

Every Jew has an internal spark. Our enemies can try and extinguish this spark. They might enslave us as Pharaoh did, they might try and annihilate us physically as Hitler did, they might try and take away our Jewish identity as Stalin did but they can never take away our hope and the Jewish spark within us. During this time where we are fighting against Corona, we need to delve further into our individual Judaism: our Jewish identities, beliefs and keeping our Jewish spark. By keeping the Jewish traditions and learning about who we are, we keep this flame alight.

Just like a flame does not get extinguished when we light another spark, when our soul is a vibrant flame, we can light other sparks. Despite us missing this chapter of our Yeshiva experience, we must remember to keep this light of Torah and pass it on wherever we can. Although we are not physically close to each other, we need to reach out: show care, kindness and share Torah. Through doing these acts, we will remind ourselves that the unity that we've had due to these ideals is why Jews have been able to survive despite the countless enemies.

Remember to be a light ☆ Pesach Sameach!

והיא שעמדה

כולנו מכירים את השיר המפורסם "והיא שעמדה" המופיע בהגדה בין סיפורי הברית בין הבתרים ללבן הארמי. ב"והיא שעמדה" מדבר על משה (היא) שבזכותו עם ישראל נשאר בחיים ועל אויבנו שנסו להשמיד אותנו בכל דור והקב"ה הציל אותנו כל פעם. החלק השני נראה די ברור. אך השאלה הגדולה היא: מה ה"היא" הזאת שבזכותה עם ישראל נשאר בחיים? בזכות מה — חוץ מהקב"ה — עם ישראל עדיין בחיים?

יש כמה גישות לשאלה הזאת. הגישה הראשונה היא מאוד מכרת. היא משתמשת בגימטרייה של האותיות של המלה "והיא": ה"ו", שש, הוא סימן לששה סדרי משנה, התורה שבעל פה. ה"ה", חמש, הוא סימן לחמשה חומשי תורה, התורה שבכתב. ה"י", עשר, הוא עשרת הדברות, תרי"ג מצוות שיש לנו. וה"א" הוא הקב"ה האחד והיחיד שיש לנו, במילים אחרים: האמונה באלוקים. בגימטרייה הזאת יש ארבע עקרונות של היהדות: תורה שבעל פה, תורה שבכתב, מצוות ואמונה. רק בזכותם עם ישראל שרד עד היום!

הגישה השנייה היא, שה"היא", היא התורה, עץ החיים. עם ישראל בלי תורה הוא לא עם ישראל. בזכות התורה שקיבלנו בהר סיני מהקב"ה עם ישראל שרד עד היום, ניסן תש"פ, ובזכותה עם ישראל ישרוד ב"ה לעולם ועד!

גישה אחרת היא ש"והיא שעמדה" הוא כאילו ההמשך של "ברוך שומר הבטחתו" שמופיע בדיוק לפני בהגדה. שם מדבר על ברית בין הבתרים שבו הקב"ה הבטיח לאברהם אבינו שהוא יגאל את זרע אברהם (עם ישראל) מגלות מצרים ומכל הגלויות. ההבטחה הזאת עמד לנו בכל דור ודור, בזכותה עם ישראל שרד! "והיא" היא ההבטחה של הקב"ה!

הגישה האחרונה, היא הגישה שאני הכי אוהב: יש לנו את המנהג להרים את הכוס באמירת "והיא שעמדה". זה אומר שבעצם אנחנו אומרים: הכוס עמדה לאבותינו ולנו וכו'. מה זאת אומרת? הרב גדליה סילברסטון אומר: אסור לנו יין מנוכרים כי אם שותים יין עם נוכרים יש יותר מדי קשר אתם ואז נרצה להתחתן אתם ולעבוד עבודה זרה. זה מההגדה מנסה להגיד פה. "והיא", הכוס, היא סימן שלא להתקרב לנוכרים מדי. הכוס הזאת עמד לנו בכל דור ודור, בזכותה עם ישראל עדיין בחיים! אני אוהב את הגישה הזאת כי היא היחידה שמדברת על הכוס. אם אנחנו מרימים את הכוס צריך לזה גם סבה.

אנחנו רואים שיש ארבע (שוב ארבע, המספר הזה מופיע הרבה בהגדה וגם פה: ארבע גישות, ארבע אותיות ב"והיא", ארבע עקרונות של יהדות וכו') אפשרויות איך להבין את "והיא". אבל בכל הגישות מדבר על דברים מאוד חשובים שכלנו צריכים לשמור עליהם כדי שעם ישראל ישרוד ב"ה לעולם ועד! נלמד תורה, נעשה כל המצוות, נזהר אם אנחנו בקשר עם נוכרים ו — אולי הכי חשוב — נתפלל להקב"ה ונאמין בו כדי שמלך המשיח יבוא במהרה בימינו, אמן.

שהקב"ה יקשיב לכל תפילתנו ושיהיה לנו פסח כשר ושמח!

אלו עֲשׂוּר מַכּוֹת שֶׁהֵבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל־הַמִּצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְאֵלוֹ הֵן :
 דָּם
 צַפְרָדִיעַ
 כְּנִים
 עֲרוּב
 דָּבָר
 שְׁחִין
 בָּרָד
 אֲרָבָה
 חֲשֵׁךְ
 מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

The Ten Plagues – Ayal Doctors

The ten plagues brought tremendous destruction to the land and people of Egypt: All bodies of water turned to blood, dust turned to swarms of lice, an inflammation of boils on man and animal, and total darkness. It is commonly thought that the plagues were carried out by God in order to achieve Israel's freedom. If this is the case, does God really need to produce such collapse, damage and disorder? Why does He not make one catastrophic plague, a decisive blow? Additionally, why does God psychologically control Pharaoh by hardening his heart if His true desire is to free Bnei Yisrael?

The text of the Torah implies that the ten plagues had an educational purpose.

וּלְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֵי וְבֵן־בְּנֵיךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלִיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־אֲתֹנִתִי אֲשֶׁר־שִׁמְתִי בָּם וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

This passuk states that it is so we can recount the power of God to future generations. Through observing the miraculous occurrences in Egypt, Bnei Yisrael understand that God can employ both natural and supernatural forces.

Ramban develops this idea further, revealing that someone who experiences a miracle transforms philosophical truths into living belief. This person would be highly convinced of God's existence, God's involvement in human activities and His power to reward and punish. It is important to realise that Bnei Yisrael are at a turning point in their advancement as a nation. Therefore, God wants them to be born in an atmosphere of faith with the existence of God in the forefront of their minds. If one miracle has the ability to provoke belief in God, then ten miracles of the magnitude of the plagues would have a tenfold effect on a person's faith. We attempt to preserve and perpetuate the feeling and memory of "Yetziat Mitzrayim" because they affirm the existence and providence of our God. We do this through various religious practices such as Kiddush, Pesach, Mezuzah and many more.

We read in the Haggada how Rabbi Yehuda would divide the plagues into three groupings (DeTZaCH ADaSH BeACHaV), classifying each of the plagues by initials. How and why did Rabbi Yehuda make this division? When closely examining the text of the Torah, we can discern a striking arrangement. It is a structure of three waves with a recurring pattern. In each wave, the first two plagues are foreshadowed by a divine warning while the third plague transpires suddenly, without a prior notice. One can also identify the cyclical rhythm in the language of the commands given to Moshe.

There are noticeably some distinguishing features of this structure from within the descriptions of the plagues.

- In the first group of three, each plague mentions the magicians, the religious authorities of Egypt. Initially, they are able to produce the plagues, however, in the third plague they fail to replicate the plague. They half-heartedly conclude that the plagues symbolise the “finger of God”.
- In the second wave, there is a further element that is emphasised repeatedly: that the plague will strike only Egyptians and not Israelis. Here God is creating a clear divide between two nations.
- In the third and final wave, each plague is unique and demonstrates unprecedented power. God rains down a very heavy hail that has never occurred in Egypt before, there is a swarm of locusts of a large magnitude, and darkness that you cannot move in.
- Another interesting point is that the third plague in each wave violates the human body – lice, boils and darkness all represent troublesome bodily afflictions, whereas the preceding plagues affect property – houses, livestock and crops. This conveys that God gives a few chances, but by the third plague a warning is not necessary.

For each of these three waves, there is a distinct aim which relates to its unifying theme. This objective is expressed in the introductory warning to each plague grouping, which concern theological understandings about God’s nature and power, that Pharaoh has to acquire in the process.

- The first wave of plagues is designed to illustrate God’s **existence** – “I am the Lord”. The magicians themselves acknowledge the existence of God in the third plague, as it is a phenomenon they cannot replicate. Consequently, Pharaoh’s denial of God’s existence must stem from only stubbornness – God has been given recognition.
- The second group demonstrates God’s **providence**, His involvement in human activities and His ability to manipulate events “in the midst of the land”. He can time his actions precisely and work within a limited time frame – since He informs Moshe that each of these plagues will be enacted “tomorrow”.
- The third wave validates God’s **omnipotence**.

These three lessons are necessary to Pharaoh’s education. When Moshe first approaches Pharaoh, Pharaoh discards Moshe’s request with a denial of God’s existence, a dismissal of the plea for the freedom of Bnei Yisrael and certainly rejects God’s ability to control him. Pharaoh strongly believes that the gods of Egypt are much more powerful than the God of Israel. The Israelite slavery proves his point because if Egypt can enslave Israel then the Egyptian god must overpower the Israelite God. However, the plagues prove Pharaoh wrong.

Earlier, we discussed the possibility of God generating a single plague that would guarantee the freedom of Bnei Yisrael. We understand now that God’s reason behind the plagues were educational more than punitive. However, it seems like the plague of the firstborn does not fit into this educational model, but rather it acts as the final blow and the last step towards freedom.

We ourselves should learn from the theological lessons taught to Pharaoh, and pass it down to future generations, and we should always remember: “Zecher li’yetziat Mitzrayim”.

The Ten Plagues – Hezki Strassman

When it comes to the 10 plagues we have to deal with the idea of miracles, because the modern, scientific mind can't comprehend someone waving a stick and crazy stuff then happening.

There are two sets of laws operating in this world. One is the "laws of nature," the other is the "laws of miracles."

If you would say to people that there is enough energy in a little bomb to blow up an entire city, they'd say you're crazy – how could there possibly be so much energy in that little thing? The fact is, the energy holding bonding elements and atoms together is immense, and when you release that bonding, nuclear fission produces tremendous energy. This law of physics always existed. It just was only in the 20th century that we understood how to unlock that energy. That's the law of nature.

But nature can be superseded by miracles. "Miracle" means there is a spiritual level where nature can be overridden. The Kabbalah gives instructions for how to do that. It's very "scientific" because kabbalah also operates according to laws. That was the key to Moses' ability to lead the Jews through the plagues and the splitting of the sea.

Through the Ten Plagues, the Egyptians and the Jews were forced to realize that nature has another level to it – a spiritual level. Everyone came to understand that God runs everything and all of it can change. The plagues touched every aspect of the physical world, starting with the lowest forms and working higher.

Just like the Plagues caused the Egyptians and the Jews to realize the spiritual level in nature, Covid-19 gives us the opportunity to recognize another level to the lives we live. To recognize all the myriad of things that keep our world running so seamlessly. It also gives us the opportunity to get a little insight into how God can change things in an instant, just like he did with the Plagues and shows how he has a hand in everything.

כָּמָה מַעֲלוֹת טוֹבוֹת לְמָקוֹם עָלֵינוּ !

אֱלוֹ הוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא עָשָׂה בָּהֶם שְׁפָטִים, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ עָשָׂה בָּהֶם שְׁפָטִים, וְלֹא עָשָׂה בְּאֱלֹהֵיהֶם, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ עָשָׂה בְּאֱלֹהֵיהֶם, וְלֹא הָרַג אֶת־בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ הָרַג אֶת־בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־מְמוֹנָם, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־מְמוֹנָם וְלֹא קָרַע לָנוּ אֶת־הֵימָם, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ קָרַע לָנוּ אֶת־הֵימָם וְלֹא הֶעֱבִירָנוּ בְּתוֹכוֹ בְּחָרְבָהּ, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ הֶעֱבִירָנוּ בְּתוֹכוֹ בְּחָרְבָהּ וְלֹא שָׁקַע צָרְנוֹ בְּתוֹכוֹ דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ שָׁקַע צָרְנוֹ בְּתוֹכוֹ וְלֹא סָפַק צָרְכָנוּ בְּמִדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ סָפַק צָרְכָנוּ בְּמִדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה וְלֹא הֶאֱכִילָנוּ אֶת־הַמֶּן דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ הֶאֱכִילָנוּ אֶת־הַמֶּן וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַשֶּׁבֶת, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַשֶּׁבֶת, וְלֹא קָרְבָנוּ לְפָנֵי הַר סִינַי, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ קָרְבָנוּ לְפָנֵי הַר סִינַי, וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה. דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה וְלֹא הִכְנִיסָנוּ לְאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, דִּינּוּ .

אֱלוֹ הִכְנִיסָנוּ לְאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא בָּנָה לָנוּ אֶת־בַּיִת הַבְּחִירָה דִּינּוּ .

Dayenu – Joey Tropper

The passage of *Dayenu* reminds us how much God did for the Jewish people as they left Egypt. It is a great way of giving thanks to God as we reflect on the fact that everything He did was more than was actually needed. It's true, the Jews would have been fine if God had just taken them out of Egypt without performing the ten plagues as well. However, this *Dayenu* does not seem to always hold up. For instance, how would it have been enough to take the Jews out of Egypt but not split the sea or give them a land?

The Rashba and the Ritva explain that *Dayenu* is a recognition that we were not worthy of the next stage, but God gave it to us anyway. It would have been perfectly just for God to take the people out of Egypt and then send them on their own. In His infinite kindness, God kept helping at every stage. So it was *Dayenu* -enough- because it was what the people had earned. This answer does not seem to address, however, the development of the story. Had God brought the people out of Egypt but let them die in the desert, He does not seem kind but cruel in that scenario. In essence, God almost *had* to continue the process, regardless of how worthy the people were. So "*Dayenu*" still doesn't seem to be an appropriate response.

Malbim answers this question in a totally different way. He says that obviously we needed subsequent stages in order for the exodus to be complete. He understands that *Dayenu* means at which point was it enough for us to give thanks to God. At every stage, we can thank God for the goodness he did for us. Therefore, one can read *Dayenu* like this: If He had done X, but not Y, it is still enough for us to thank Him. This adds a whole new layer of gratitude to the Haggadah.

Rav Rimon questions this answer; what about the lines such as “אלו קרע לנו את־הים ולא העבירנו” In this line, what good does splitting the sea do if we did not cross through it? How was it enough to thank God? The fact that the sea split did not assure the people that they could safely cross inside, or that the Egyptians would not be able to catch them within the sea. For that, God had to lead the people through the sea and kill the Egyptian pursuers. He answers that the *Dayenu* comes to teach us that every stage in the Exodus is incredibly important and adds a layer of meaning to the whole process. The splitting of the sea teaches us of the power of God and his השגחה on the world. Therefore, we thank God for just the act of splitting the sea separately.

I think that this message of gratitude is especially important at a time of crisis such as ours today. Things do not look great, but we must realize that God is there planning the salvation. Even in dark times, or when we do not see the end, we must thank God for all He has done for us in the meantime. I could write a new line for *Dayenu* that says; if He gave us all kinds of gifts and blessings, but did not let us leave our homes, *Dayenu*. With this attitude, it becomes easier to see the kindness of God in our lives, even now.

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הִזִּה אוֹמֵר: כָּל שְׁלֵא אָמַר שְׁלֵשָׁה דְבָרִים אֱלוֹ בְּפֶסַח, לֹא יֵצֵא יְדֵי חוֹבָתוֹ, וְאֵלּוֹ הֵן: פֶּסַח, מַצָּה, וּמָרוֹר.

Rabban Gamliel Haya Omer – Joseph Edelheit

Directly after the high-energy, poetic structure of *Dayenu*, we reach an odd transitional period, that seems to solely exist to pad out time for the second cup, which is represented best by the seemingly extraneous statements of Raban Gamliel, in addition to the practice of pointing at, and explaining, Pesach, Matza, and Maror.

One could ask, and as this is the purpose of the seder, one should ask, why this is here. It is incredulous to think that almost half-way through the seder, already past an actual explanation of the history, Mah Nishtanah and *Dayenu*, that anyone would not already know the purpose of the seder and the history involved. So why is this here?

I believe I may have an answer, and as I am one to often look at random details, I focused on the exact wording of Raban Gamliel at the beginning of this piece. He says that anyone who does not mention the three things of Pesach, Matza, and Maror, has not fulfilled his or her requirement.

An interesting point to be made is that the word Raban Gamliel uses, "amar", is in the present tense, not the past or future. This is very different from most of the Haggadah, which retells the story of Pesach in the past tense. In those places where it uses the present, it is not the direct present as Raban Gamliel has, such as the description of the four children, as those are not explicitly occurring now, but they could be. This, in addition to the paragraphs explaining Pesach, Matza, and Maror, show that we are not simply remembering what occurred, but are more active in our commemoration, acting symbolically in order to have stand-ins for what actually did happen.

With the addition of B'chol Dor Vador, that comes directly afterwards, we see that the purpose of the seder is not simply to remember, which could have been implied by the Haggadah until this point,

but to transplant ourselves into the events that Pesach retells, and to experience them as though we ourselves were there. This allows us not only to have sympathy, but empathy as well, for the suffering of a people thousands of years ago, and feel a similar awestruck devotion as our hopes and dreams are fulfilled through miracles (the makot, etc...). This is something that we in the 21st century, as we do the seder every year, and have a breadth of thousands of years, take for granted that occurred.

This leads to two outcomes. One, it allows us to truly see how lucky we are to be who we are, when we are, without the threat of enslavement, and with the State of Israel. The second outcome, however, is perhaps far more powerful, and far more pertinent. This process shows us that, especially B'Chol Dor Vador, similar suffering and tribulations occur in every generation, and if we are capable of sympathizing, and eventually empathizing, with the pain and suffering of a people thousands of years ago, all the more so, can we, in trying times such as those we are in now, sympathize with those who are suffering now. This section shows us that we need to act, not through the symbolic actions undertaken in this piece of the seder, but through whatever practical ways we can. This is reinforced throughout this section and the rest of the Haggadah, as we see even the smallest acts, like eating unleavened bread, or bitter herbs, or giving a paschal sacrifice, can have great impact on history and on others around us.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים, והגיענו הלילה הזה לאכל'בו מצה ומרור. כן ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו יגיענו למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, שמחים בבנין עירך וששים בעבודתך. ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים אשר יגיע דמם על קיר מזבחך לרצון, ונודה לך שיר חדש על גאלתנו ועל פדות נפשונו. ברוך אתה ה', גאל ישראל.

Brocha of Ga'al Yisrael – Gav Labe

How is this Seder different from all other Seders is something that we should all be asking ourselves this year. A possible answer is that this year (5780/2020), our Seders are much smaller than on a normal year. Perhaps the food is less grand. Perhaps we now have more time to think about what this night really means and to appreciate that meaning more. In order to do this, I have dissected parts of the Blessing of the Redemption of Israel and asked questions relating to each part.

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ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים, והגיענו הלילה הזה לאכל'בו מצה ומרור. כן ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו יגיענו למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, שמחים בבנין עירך וששים בעבודתך. ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים אשר יגיע דמם על קיר מזבחך לרצון, ונודה לך שיר חדש על גאלתנו ועל פדות נפשונו. ברוך אתה ה', גאל ישראל.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, and brought us on this night to eat *matsa* and *marror*; so too, Lord our God, and God of our ancestors, bring us to other appointed times and holidays that will come to greet us in peace, joyful in the building of Your city and happy in Your worship; that we shall eat there from the offerings

and from the Pesach sacrifices, the blood of which shall reach the wall of Your altar for favor, and we shall thank You with a new song upon our redemption and upon the restoration of our souls. Blessed are you, Lord, who redeemed Israel.

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אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלְנוּ וְגָאֵל אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם

Why does it say that we were redeemed before even mentioning our forefathers? Our ancestors were the ones redeemed, so why even include us?

There is a clear distinction in the opening part of this Brocha. It is written אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלְנוּ | וְגָאֵל אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם. It talks about our redemption and then also the redemption of our ancestors as separate things. We know that we are meant to view ourselves, on Pesach, as though we too were brought out of Egypt, but I think that we can also look for another message in this time: the first part of the sentence seems separate from the phrase “וְגָאֵל אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם”. Therefore, if Hashem has redeemed us, it was not only along with our ancestors in Egypt but also individually in our lives. **Take some time to think or share with the table some moments that you felt Hashem’s hand in redeeming you, whether through Teshuva or any other act you can think of.**

וְהִגִּיעַנוּ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה לֵאכֹל־בֶּן מִצָּה וּמְרוֹר

We were redeemed so that we could arrive to this night to eat Matza and Maror. If we were redeemed and brought specifically to this moment, why Matza and Maror specifically? What do they symbolise? And how could the purpose of the geula be to eat poor man's bread and bitter herbs? Did we leave the suffering of Egypt only to exchange it with the suffering of matza and maror?

Rabbi Irving Greenberg says that:

Although Matza is classically referred to as the bread of our affliction, it must also be noted that Matza is the food of our redemption, it is the bread that our ancestors took with them when they were rushing to get out of Egypt. So how can it be both? The Jewish slaves ate Matza in Egypt too, which is why we know it as the bread of our suffering, but it was also the food that they brought with them during the Exodus from Egypt.

Maror too is a reminder of the bitterness of our suffering and the hard labour we were forced to endure, serving Pharaoh and not Hashem.

We thank Hashem for bringing us to this night and allowing us this perspective. We eat Maror and Matza to remember the pain of slavery, but through this pain, hope and redemption follow. **Think of other times when a reminder of pain served as a symbol of hope.**

The Ibn Ezra offers another approach: We were brought out of slavery to this night to eat Matza and Maror, representing the mitzvot. We are thanking Hashem for freeing us to perform not only the mitzvot of Matza and Maror, but all of the Mitzvot. **Which mitzvot make you the happiest to perform?**

Although now we are celebrating Pesach so differently than we are used to, if we change the way that we look at it, the same way that Matza and Maror--symbols of restriction and confinement--have become representative of hope, may this confinement lead to Hashem’s final Ge’ulah (redemption).

Afikoman – Jared Levy

When the meal is finished and before we Bench, the Afikoman is taken from the place where it was hidden at the beginning recital of the Haggadah and we eat a piece while reclining on our left side. The piece should be at least the size of an olive's bulk - a k'zayis; some have the opinion of eating double this quantity. The Afikoman is given to all those at the Seder, but if the original Matzah is not large enough to provide a piece to all present, then the Seder leader should eat the Matzah hidden for the Afikoman while others may use regular shemurah Matzah.

Similarly, if the Afikoman could not be found, or if it was eaten by mistake, the Seder leader may take regular Shemurah Matzah. The hiding of the Matzah at the beginning of the Seder is not intended to reserve particular Matzah for the use of Afikoman, but only to arouse the curiosity of the children so that they ask questions. In the answers to those questions the story of Exodus is told.

One should be careful to eat the Afikoman before the middle of the night, for the Afikoman commemorates the Pesach Sacrifice which could be eaten only until the middle of the night. The term chatzos - "the middle of the night" - should not be confused with midnight. The specific time is one half of the period between sunset and sunrise and thus depends on the time of year.

It is preferable to eat the Afikoman early enough so that Hallel too is recited before the middle of the night.

After eating the Afikoman, the third cup is poured, and Benching is recited. One may not eat or drink (except for water and the last two cups of wine) after the Afikoman, so that its taste remains in one's mouth. The Afikoman, as noted, commemorates the eating of the Pesach Sacrifice, which was eaten when people were satisfied, after they had finished the meat of the Festival Offering. The reason that they wait until they were sated was to make sure that in their hunger, they did not break the bones of the Pesach sacrifice - a practice that the Torah forbids.

This was also eaten with great joy and with songs of praise. The Talmud (Pesachim 85a) notes: They ate only a k'zayis of the Pesach offering but their songs of praise which accompanied it penetrated the roof and reached up to Heaven.

The Maharil writes that the basis for eating two k'zayis of the Afikoman is to demonstrate how beloved this mitzvah is to us - for the other Mitzvot involving eating require a single k'zayis, but we double this to show our love for this Mitzvah.

Afikoman Customs

In the order of the Seder as it appears in the ceremonial symbols, the Afikoman is referred to by the word Tzafun - "hidden", because it has been hidden away, from the beginning of the meal to the time to eat it. Some people hide it in a pillow or cushion. The Roke'ach mentions that the custom of hiding it inside the cushion used for reclining may have a basis in the verse (Tehillim 31:20):

מָה רַב טוֹבְךָ אֲשֶׁר־צִפְנִית לִירְאֶיךָ פְּעִלְתָּ לַחֹסִים כִּי נִגְדַּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:

How great is the goodness that You have hidden for those who fear You. We read in Minhagei Yeshurun that we hide it in cushions to symbolically guard it, in fulfillment of the verse (Shemos 12:17)

שְׂמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַמַּצּוֹת, And you shall guard the Matzos.

In Sephardic communities, when they get to the point in the Seder for Yachatz, instead of hiding the Afikoman, it is tied on the shoulder of a child, who leaves the room and then knocks on the door. He is asked:

"who are you?" to which he responds: "Israel." "Where have you come from?" "from Egypt." "Where are you going?" "to Jerusalem." "what are you carrying?" "Matzah." The child enters the room, looks at the festive table, and begins to ask the four questions: "why is this night different from other nights" and so forth. The Afikoman remains on his shoulder until it is time to be eaten.

The Talmud (Pesachim 109a) records: " we learn in a Braysa: Rav Eliezer said we snatch Matzos on the night of Pesach so that the little children will not fall asleep"

This statement is the basis for the widespread custom of snatching the Afikoman and surrendering it only for a ransom - although the real meaning of the statement is that we hurry to eat the Matzos so that the children can also fulfil this Mitzvah before falling asleep. Nevertheless, this custom has become very widespread and therefore has importance.

Some people have a custom of saving a piece of the Afikoman throughout the year. Although the Mitzvah of the Matzos is only incumbent seven days a year or eight outside the land of Israel, it is surely important that we keep our souls free of the chametz of pride and of the evil inclination throughout the year.

Hallel and Hallel HaGadol – Gadi Sachs

Questions we ask our friends the next day at shul are often related to their Pesach Seder the previous night, Like how bitter was your Marror? Where did your father hide the Afikoman? Were all your four cups filled with wine or did they have grape juice in it?

The Gemara in Pesachim (118a) tells us why it is called Hallel HaGadol:

“And why is it called the Great Hallel? — Said R. Yohanan: Because the Holy One, blessed be He, sits in the heights of the universe and distributes food to all creatures.”

The Rashbam explains that there is a great praise being offered here, noted in the second to last verse of *Hallel HaGadol* – “*He gives bread to all creatures*”.

Further along, the Gemara questions why we recite the “regular” *hallel* if we are reciting *Hallel HaGadol*? The Rashbam deduces from the question that *Hallel HaGadol* is in fact a greater praise than the standard *hallel* we recite. If indeed this is true, then why recite the “regular” *hallel* at all? The Gemara answers that there are five themes discussed in the more familiar *hallel*, including the exodus and the splitting of the sea. The Gemara discusses the origins of the prayer of *hallel* in a different place (ibid 117a).

There are two important concepts we can discern from the above statements. The first is the connection between the song recited by the Jews upon their exit from the Red Sea (commonly known as “*az yashir*”) and *hallel*. The second is the decree for all Jews to recite *hallel* after experiencing a redemption.

When we reflect on our meal of freedom, we see the most complete view of Divine Providence. God is not “just” the God of miracles; rather, His control of the world is absolute, from the fantastic breaches in natural law to the very creation of the natural laws themselves. As well, He acts in a manner of complete knowledge, apportioning sustenance to each person based on merit. This is as complete a description of Divine Providence one can have, and the verses in *Hallel HaGadol* bear this out.

R. Yochanan said: Because the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits on the heights of the world and distributes sustenance to every creature.

Hallel HaGadol is a chapter in Psalms. However, the system of numbering Psalms did not exist before the advent of the printing press, and the sages never refer to a chapter by its number. On the other hand, they knew Psalms by heart, so simply hinting at the boundaries with a few words suffices. "R. Yehuda says: From Hodu until Naharot Bavel." Chapter 136 of Psalms begins "Hodu laShem ki tov." Chapter 137 begins "Al naharot Bavel." R. Yehuda is therefore identifying "*Hallel HaGadol*" with chapter 136. The psalm consists of 26 verses, each of which lists a short description of an action of God, followed by the words, "ki l'olam chasdo" ("for His grace is forever"). (This psalm is familiar as one of the additional psalms recited before the prayers on Shabbat morning).

"R. Yochanan says: From Shir Hama'alot until Naharot Bavel." There are many psalms beginning with the words "Shir hama'alot" (120-134); R. Yochanan is apparently referring to the last one, the closest to "Al naharot Bavel," which is Psalm 134. Therefore, *Hallel Hagadol* according to R. Yochanan is three chapters, Psalms 134-136. Why does R. Yochanan see these three chapters as one unit, one "hallel?" For this you will have to quickly review the three chapters and see the connection between them. "Rav Acha bar Yaacov says: From Ki Yaacov bachar lo Kah until Naharot Bavel." This is a little harder to identify - it really does help to know Psalms by heart. "Ki Yaacov bachar lo Kah" is verse 4 of chapter 135. In all likelihood, Rav Acha is referring to the entire chapter 135, and is simply mentioning a prominent and easily identifiable verse. The three opinions in the Gemara then are either Psalm 136, 135-6, or 134-6. In any event, it is clear that the heart of the *Hallel HaGadol* is Psalm 136. This is supported by the explanation of the Gemara why it is called the GREAT Hallel. "R. Yochanan said: Because the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits on the heights of the world and distributes sustenance to every creature." The Rashbam explains:

This author is certain that a topic not discussed during the post-*seder* recap is the recitation of *Hallel HaGadol* (let alone Hallel itself). Hallel is sandwiched in between the blessings over the meal and the songs at the tail end of the *seder*. There aren't quantities of commentary in *haggadot* concerning *Hallel HaGadol*. It is quite possible to read that small section and not be aware of its tremendous importance.

This section is so important, that several Rishonim have an alternate girsa (version) of the Gemara in which *Hallel HaGadol* is recited over its own cup of wine - the infamous fifth cup! The Gemara records the position of Rabbi Tarfon as being "IF one wants to drink a fifth cup, it is permissible; however, he must also add a reading for it so that it will be a "kos shel beracha." This reading is the *Hallel Hagadol*." Whereas Rishonim such as the Rif and the Rosh record his position as being (in the words of the Rosh):

"Our rabbis learned, "We say the *Great Hallel* over a fifth cup - these are the words of Rabbi Tarfon, and there are those that say, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack' (Psalms 23)."

And Rashbam [follows] this textual variant, "We say the *Great Hallel* on the fourth cup."

The festive meal of the *seder* night has a different quality to it. It is the meal of freedom, infused with the wondrous ideas spoken of prior to this moment. An expression of this autonomy is the ability to choose to eat what we want, rather than be dependent on a master for food, as in the time of slavery.

This could be the opening to understanding the recitation of *Hallel HaGadol* on the night of the *seder*. The meal is an experience of freedom, another expression of contrast to the state of slavery. When we partake of the meal, followed by the feeling of satiation, we are now in a state of mind to offer a new type of responsive praise. The *hallel* directed towards the miracles of the night focuses on one aspect of the Divine relationship with man. We see God solely through the prism of overt examples of breaches of natural law. This is critical to understanding the scope of the story of the exodus, and certainly is a vehicle to a greater understanding of God. However, this is an incomplete awareness of the concept of Divine Providence.

Hallel HaGadol refers to the twenty-six verses that are recited after the "regular" Hallel on the *seder* night, immediately prior to the paragraph of "nishmat kol chai". We are familiar with its responsive format, where a praise or thanks is offered, followed by the rejoinder of "ki le'olam chasdo".

When we turn to the source for this specific Hallel, we find two applications. The first is during a time of drought. If the Jewish people fast, and it then rains, there is an obligation to recite *Hallel HaGadol*. It is critical to note that ideally, one recites this *Hallel* after being in a state of satiation – "only when the appetite is satisfied, and the stomach is full" (Ta'anit 26a). The other time *Hallel hagadol* is recited is during the *seder*.

Why are these the only two instances we recite this *Hallel*? What do they share in common?

When one partakes in this unique meal, he can appreciate to a greater degree the nature of this relationship. The first *Hallel* responds to the miracles of the night. The second *Hallel* responds to the meal of freedom, broadening the person's perspective of God's relationship to man. It is the pinnacle of praise and thanks of the entire *seder* experience.

Yes, there will be *maror* and "*ma nishtana*", eating and singing. But there is also *Hallel HaGadol*, a unique responsive prayer that elucidates deep concepts regarding the totality of the Divine Providence. When we all recap our *seder* experience to friends and family, let's bring this prayer to the forefront of the conversation, and reflect on the tremendous kindness afforded to us by God. The mission today is to bring *Hallel HaGadol* out of the shadows into its proper place as a critical part of the *seder* experience.

Nirtza, End of the Beginning, and the Beginning of the End – Sam Kasziner

When people think of the Pesach Seder, first things that comes to mind are the matzos, the 4 cups of wine, telling over the story of our ancestors, and a meal with family and friends - though that last one may not be possible for some of us this year. What usually goes unnoticed, be it because we're tired or we think, "We're done", is Nirtza. And yet, what if we have it wrong? What if we've been disregarding the whole point? It's true that we are supposed to tell the story of going out of Egypt and going through all those customs and Halacha, but it's just a routine if you think nothing more than that! And that's where Nirtza fits in. Nirtza was put into the Haggadah because we aren't supposed to just look at the past but look towards the future. How ironic then the composition of this section takes on in light of its purpose. When looking towards the future we seek a future of redemption and freedom, personified by the piyutim, or liturgical poems, making up this section. To quote Norman O. Brown, "Freedom is poetry, taking liberties with words, breaking the rules of normal speech, violating common sense. Freedom is violence." How appropriate to use a form of expression that literally personifies the freedom we so crave!

To spell out my point, one of the songs sung in Nirtza is Adir Hu. Adir Hu is a not so sudden poetic plea for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash. Literally the chorus of each stanza means, "God build, God Build, build your house soon," while the rest is praise. Another example would be the paragraph that begins this section, Chasal Siddur Pesach. While this passage may have been taken slightly out of context of its original intent, which was to be the last section, to a piyut meant to teach the Halachot of the Seder, this last paragraph caught the eyes of many and became the beginning of our section. Why? It is because it has such an amazing request for redemption that it couldn't be ignored. This paragraph says that just as we have merited to complete the Pesach Seder, so may we merit bringing the korban Pesach. And to emphasize the point, we end with "Lishana Haba Birushalayim Habnuyah," next year in a rebuilt Jerusalem. And so we see that there are many requests for redemption throughout Nirtza that we should sing with overflowing heart and soul. May next year be celebrated with everyone in Jerusalem!

מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ, מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא שׁוֹנְגָרָא וְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא כְּלָבָא וְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא, דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא חוּטְרָא וְהִפָּה לְכַלְבָּא, דְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא, דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא נֹרָא וְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְהִפָּה לְכַלְבָּא, דְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא,
דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
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וְאַתָּא תוֹרָא וְשִׁתָּה לְמִיָּא, דְכִבְה לְנֹרָא, דְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְהִפָּה לְכַלְבָּא, דְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא,
דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא הַשְׁחַט וְשַׁחַט לְתוֹרָא, דְשִׁתָּה לְמִיָּא, דְכִבְה לְנֹרָא, דְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְהִפָּה לְכַלְבָּא,
דְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא, דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא מְלָאָה הַמְנוֹת וְשַׁחַט לְשׁוֹחַט, דְשַׁחַט לְתוֹרָא, דְשִׁתָּה לְמִיָּא, דְכִבְה לְנֹרָא, דְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא,
דְהִפָּה לְכַלְבָּא, דְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא, דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.
וְאַתָּא הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְשַׁחַט לְמְלָאָה הַמְנוֹת, דְשַׁחַט לְשׁוֹחַט, דְשַׁחַט לְתוֹרָא, דְשִׁתָּה לְמִיָּא, דְכִבְה לְנֹרָא, דְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא,
דְהִפָּה לְכַלְבָּא, דְנִשְׁף לְשׁוֹנְגָרָא, דְאַכְלָה לְגִדְיָא, דְזַבִּין אַבָּא בְתַרֵי זַוְיָ. מד גִּדְיָא, מד גִּדְיָא.

Chad Gadya – Jonah Weiniger

As the most recent addition to the Pesach Seder, first appearing in a 1590 haggadah found in Prague, Chad Gadya's placement as the final song of the night undoubtedly highlights the key role it plays. However, at first glance the importance of this folk song is far from clear.

In order to understand Chad Gadya, we must first look into the passukim surrounding the korban pesach, the practice that is meant to be the centrepiece of this holiday. Exodus 12:5 details the choosing of this animal:

שֶׁהָתַמִּים זָכָר בְּוֶשֶׁבֶה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם מִן־הַבְּשִׂים וּמִן־הָעִזִּים תִּקַּח:

Whilst the pascal sacrifice is generally thought to be a lamb, it is clear from this passuk that both the lamb and the kid are deemed worthy for this ritual. When seeing the goat placed here, it becomes a symbol of pesach, the exodus and the Jewish people fighting their way out of oppression. Using this metaphor we can begin to untie the tangled thread of the symbolism of Chad Gadya.

Once accepting the symbolism of the goat representing the Jewish people, bought by the father (Hashem?) for two zuzim (perhaps representing the two luchot at Sinai or even the twin declaration of na'aseh v'nishma) the rest of the song falls into place as a beautiful allegory of Jewish history. Each stanza symbolises a different oppressor of the Jewish people, guiding us chronologically through the history of our nation.

First comes the cat which, rather counterintuitively, eats the goat. The cat is a clear symbol of the enslavement in Egypt. Considered a sacred animal in ancient Egyptian society as shown by its deification in the form of the goddess of the home Bastet, and the fact that they were often mummified with their owners, Chad Gadya employs a cat to symbolise the first of a long list of oppressive rulers of the Jews throughout history.

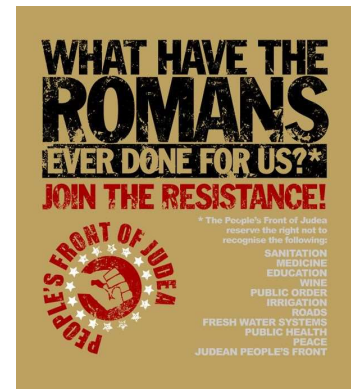
Next comes the dog, the animal most commonly used in hunting and military exercises in both the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. The relief pictured was found in an ancient Mesopotamian palace and dates to approximately 645 BCE. With the Northern Kingdom of Israel destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BCE and the Southern by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and both of them having confronted the Egyptian empire (the cat), the songs progression into this metaphor is clear. The Jews (the kid), were beaten by the Egyptians (the cat), who were beaten by the Babylonians and the Assyrians (the dog). This perfect recount of Jewish history continues through the narrative...



The stick that hits the dog is the Persian empire which took over from the Assyrians and Babylonians as the obvious regional power. But again, as Megillat Esther alludes to, they did not treat their Jews with any particular fondness. Esther 8:4 tells of Achashverosh's golden sceptre, a tool of his great judgement that held the fate of our people in the balance at that moment. This sceptre is a symbol of his power and by extension the power of his entire empire - reduced however, to being just any old stick by the author of Chad Gadya.

Chronologically, next comes the Chanukah story and the Greeks who take over from the Persians (as beautifully dramatized by Michael Fassbender and co. in “300”). The symbol chosen for the Greeks, fire, is the obvious choice considering their cultural obsession with it, from Prometheus to the Olympic Torch. It is also notable how we also choose fire as the symbol of our liberty from them.

The water that comes to put out the fire, as we follow the timeline of the oppressors of the Jews, must represent the Roman empire. Centred on a city that sprung up on the banks of the River Tiber, a river that is employed with the same motif in the Roman origin myth of Romulus and Remus as the River Nile plays in the story of Moshe’s early life, water is seen as pivotal to the Roman empire. This symbolism is even carried into the Gemara, with masechet shabbat (33a) answering the now legendary question of “what have the Romans ever done for us?” with the answer of bathhouses. (It is interesting to note that Monty Python sticks to the theme of water with their answer of “the aqueducts”).



The downfall of the Roman empire saw the rapid rise of the Islamic caliphate, which stretched from China to Europe by the end of the 7th Century CE. Having lived in a land for most of this year that has had a large and continuous Arab-Muslim presence throughout its recent history, it would be remiss not to note that the second (and longest) chapter (or “surah”) of the Qur’an is called “The Cow”. Our next conquerors are represented here lapping up the watery remains of the Roman empire.

To a Jew living in Eastern Europe in the early or mid 1500s, the memory of the crusaders only a few hundred years prior, sweeping through the land and decimating Jewish communities on their way to the Middle East, the imagery of the slaughterer is a tragically obvious one. But even more tragically, as the Ottoman Empire grew out from Turkey, conquering the Middle East and gradually moving towards central Europe (conquering Buda in 1541), these new oppressors could only have seemed like the “angel of death that slew the slaughterer” to the author of Chad Gadya, living at that time.

Of course, this idea of the Angel of Death being what lay in store for the Jewish people has only become more apt after the composition of Chad Gadya. We subsequently suffered more expulsions, pogroms and ultimately the holocaust. However, this is not the end of the poem. The author ends with a message of hope - a reminder to Jews throughout the ages that they are always being watched over. With the deus ex machina of the ultimate verse, we are reminded of the power of Hashem and Their presence as guardian of the Jewish people. Echoing the sentiments of Vehi She’amda earlier in the seder, Chad Gadya serves as a reminder of Hashem’s role in the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people. This has perhaps begun already, with the establishment of the State in 1948, we could soon be reaching the end of the historical narrative of continued oppression as told by Chad Gadya.