

THE YESHIVAT OR CHAIM

Haggadah

COMPANION



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Introduction: Seeing Yad Hashem in Everything We Do

Rabbi Dr. Seth Grauer
Rosh Yeshiva & Head of School

“I couldn’t learn today because I had a headache...”

“I had planned to daven Mincha with a minyan, but the car wouldn’t start...”

“I had planned to help deliver food for Pesach, but there was an amazing sale at the mall...”

One might read these statements and think that I wanted to serve Hashem, but circumstances prevented me from doing so. However, there is another possible way to view these events.

Headaches, cars that don’t start, shopping and every other ‘obstacle’ (and stepping stone) in our lives come from Hashem, and are placed in our path to enable us to grow and come closer to Him.

The key is to strive to overcome our own particular challenges by using every activity throughout our day to come closer to Hashem. What seems perfectly natural is in fact another step in our Divinely-planned journey.

This is seeing the Yad Hashem in everything we do. As Rabbi Sacks so beautifully explains:

“A miracle is not necessarily something that suspends natural law. It is rather, an event for which there may be a natural explanation, but which – happening when, where and how it did,

evokes wonder, such that even the most hardened skeptic senses that God has intervened in history.”

It need not be water turning to blood, or frogs in your bed, but if we can develop a sensitivity to our aches and pains, our car troubles and anything else that torpedoes our well-laid plans – a reaction of fascination rather than frustration – we will refine our awareness of Yad Hashem in every aspect of our lives.

The problem is that if we do not have God present and constantly involved in our lives, we won’t be able to realize when He is performing a miracle on our behalf. And if we don’t see the miracles that God performs on our behalf, we will not be able to react.

Rabbi Soloveitchik said that:

“When a miracle does not find its proper answering echo in the form of concrete deeds, an exalted vision degenerates and dissipates and the divine attribute of justice begins to denounce the ungrateful beneficiary of the miracle.”

We know this, yet with the pace of modern life and the bombardment of news and social media telling us that President X decided this and Prime Minister Y decided that and this catastrophe and that pandemic, we can very easily forget that Yad Hashem is behind everything that happens to us and to the world.

And that's not all.

As religious Zionist Jews, we need to be ever on our guard to protect and stand up for that immutable truth, especially in the light of the ever-raging debate on the Divine nature of the Bible:

Numerous “scholarly” articles have appeared over the years quoting epidemiologists and other “experts” who found scientific and archeological “proofs” that the 10 plagues and the Exodus from Egypt never happened.

The denial of Yad Hashem is everywhere in the world around us.

Our task is to make God's presence in our lives a daily reality and realization and not just an annual lesson to be learned from Purim and Pesach.

Here are five practical suggestions:

1. Tefilla: For everything, all the time.
2. *Baruch Hashem, B'Ezrat Hashem* שגור בפינו: Use this language as often as you can.
3. Stop and think – frustration to fascination. It is what it is. How can I grow from this?
4. Contemplate Hashem's Oneness every time you say Shema Yisrael and other special prayers.
5. Be thankful and appreciative for what we have, especially in Modim – ועל ניסיון שבכל ערב ובוקר – וצהרים.

The Ramban at the end of Parashat Bo writes that the great miracles of Yetziat Mitzrayim teach us about the hidden, routine miracles that happen all the time, and that whatever happens to a person is not a matter of nature.

The Ramban does not mean there is no such thing as *teva*, but that a nes means that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is communicating with us.

Rav Moshe Twersky *hy”d* (murdered in the Har Nof terror attack) offers a mashal for understanding the difference between the supernatural, great-miracles

system of Yetziat Mitzrayim versus the messages Hashem sends us constantly within the context of nature. He says it's like the difference between Reuven walking through the door versus tapping lightly on the outside of it. When Reuven walks right through the door, you see him. There he is. When he's tapping lightly on the outside of the door, it takes a subtle, refined sensitivity to pick up on it. Many people could totally not notice the tapping at all. Others may notice it, but may not manage to identify precisely who it is that is doing the tapping. One needs to really pay attention and listen with a very resonant ear to know that it's Reuven and decipher the real implications of that tapping.

This is the Ramban's point. Even within *teva*, it's not random, and it's not merely statistics. Even within the strict confines and boundaries of Hashem's guiding the world with natural law, He is constantly sending us messages, in everything we do in our lives.

This yom tov, let's try to listen.

Chag Kasher VeSameach.





Do We Need a Newer Idea Than the Seder Plate?

Jordan Jesin
Grade 10

I heard this amazing Dvar Torah from my Gemara Rebbe, Rabbi Turtel. We all know that the Seder plate contains multiple foods that symbolize our suffering in Mitzrayim. Although this idea is a good one, I never really think about Bnei Yisrael's bondage when I have Zroah, for example. Instead, I say to myself, "Wow, this Zroah is really good, I did not realize how hungry I was until I saw this beautiful Seder plate". After practically fasting the whole day, having food is not the best way to experience the years of slavery that Bnei Yisrael went through, so why have we not come up with an alternative idea, such as a Pesach play at the Seder?

When Rabbi Yosef Yehudah Leib Bloch, the Rosh Yeshiva in Telz, was asked this question, he gave the following answer: If we had an alternative idea replacing eating the foods on the Seder plate, we would indeed have a very different and impactful experience. It would be a wild occurrence. The problem, however, is that once the play or idea ends, we forget what it was like. For example, let us say that you are at a movie theatre. Sound is coming right to your ears, your seat is vibrating, the screen is huge, you feel like you really did lose your arm from fighting Darth Vader, but then the movie ends. The lights come on, the seat stops vibrating, and you are left with this emptiness, and you will just continue with

your life. This should not be the way to remember our slavery, because then we would forget about it immediately after the fact.

In that case, what is the real way to remember our story? We can fulfill this Mitzvah by spending numerous days mentally and physically preparing, making delicious food, setting up a beautiful table, and learning about the holiday. Then, once everything is ready, have a stunning plate right in front of you, with foods that remind you of how you got to this moment.

The Seder plate is not just about remembering the slavery of Bnei Yisrael, rather it is also about remembering the intense preparation we all went through to be at the table and showing the foods we made. Rabbi Turtel told me: Just like one cannot ride on an elevator without constructing the building that contains it, one cannot have a Seder plate without making the food and learning about the laws that come with it. Once you get there, you will have this creation that will make you say, "Wow, this Zroah is really good, I did not realize how hungry I was until I saw this beautiful Seder plate."

Have an amazing Pesach.





Yachatz

Avishai Tabeka
Grade 11

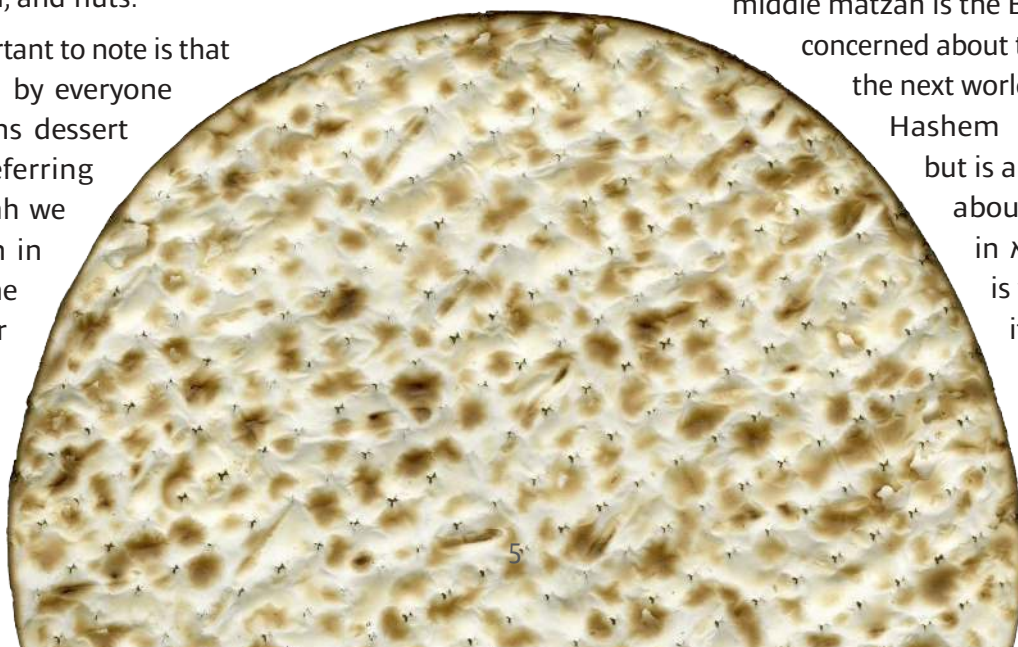
Every Pesach, every Jewish child looks forward to the Afikoman – it is one of the ways to keep them awake during the seder. We all do this mitzvah, however, what exactly is the source for it? Why do we hide it? Why do we split the matzah into two? Why is the larger piece set for the Afikoman instead of the smaller piece? For the source of this mitzvah, we need to look at the Gemara in Pesachim 119b. The gemara asks, what is the meaning of Afikoman? Rav says it refers to a person of a group that ate the Pesach offering together and they should not leave that group to join another one. According to this explanation, the Afikoman is explained through the phrase *afiku mani*, take out the vessels. The reason for this prohibition is because people might remove the Pesach offering to another area after they had begun to eat it elsewhere. This is prohibited by the Torah. According to Shmuel, along with Rav Chanina bar Sheila and Rabbi Yochanan, they mention that they are foods like mushrooms, chicks, or dates, roasted grain, and nuts.

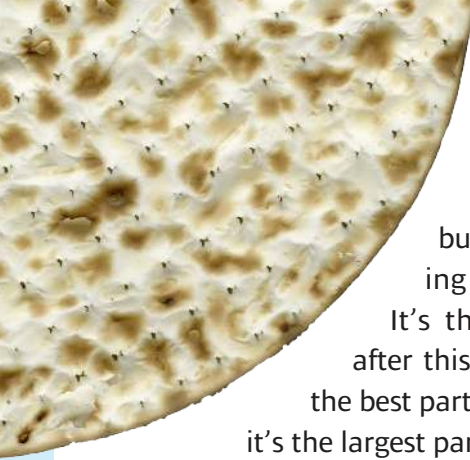
What's important to note is that it's accepted by everyone that it means dessert in Greek, referring to the matzah we hide later on in the seder. The Chatam Sofer answers why we set the

larger piece for the Afikoman and not the smaller piece. He says that the bigger piece represents the big redemption when Mashiach will come, while the smaller piece represents the small exile (the Egyptian one). That's why the Afikoman is at the end, resembling how the exile will be in the future when Mashiach comes, and we wrap it up so we don't see it, because we don't see the ultimate redemption. Even according to a halachic standpoint, we hide the Afikoman to stop us from eating it during the seder because we need it for later.

Why do we put the Afikoman between two pillows? The answer is based on Chassidut, which says that pillow in Hebrew is כר, which makes 220, two pillows are 440, which is equivalent to אמ, which means earnestness, wholeness. When one breaks the middle matzah, he breaks it with earnestness, and takes the larger piece for the Afikoman and puts it in the middle of the two pieces. The Afikoman starts with an aleph, and if you put an aleph in front of אמ, the words spell out אמא, meaning truth. Once you break the matzah with earnestness you have the truth. Furthermore, the Zohar says that the first matzah represents someone who is rich, the second is an average person, the third is a poor person. One who is rich is concerned about the world to come, the poor person represents a tzadik, meaning that he wants to bring Hashem into his world, he doesn't look into the future, rather he wants Hashem dwelling within everything he does. The

middle matzah is the Benoni, who is concerned about this world and the next world, so he wants Hashem in his world, but is also concerned about his reward in עולם הבא. This is why we break it into two; the smaller is for this world,





but the larger part is waiting for the world to come.

It's the part after the meal, after this world. It is the dessert, the best part of the meal. That's why

it's the largest part, because it shows how much reward a person gets after his lifetime, which is great in quality and quantity.

Why can't we do yachatz right before eating the matzah? Why do we wait to eat the middle matzah? There are three words that everyone is obligated to say on Pesach: Pesach, matzah, and maror. If we don't say these three words, we do not fulfill our obligation of Pesach. Pesach refers to the Korban Pesach, which represents redemption. Maror represents slavery, in order to remind us of the bitter times that we experienced in slavery. Finally, Matzah symbolizes לחם עני, which is poor man's bread. On the other hand, Matzah represents redemption, because Hashem revealed himself to redeem us. Matzah has both aspects which are found in one "matzah" – therefore, before magid, we break the matzah into two and put away the larger piece for the end of the seder. We don't say the Haggadah on the bigger piece of matzah because the praise we say to Hashem in exile is insignificant to the praise that we say to Hashem when Mashiach comes. The coming of Mashiach is a much greater redemption, therefore we break the matzah into two, we put the larger piece which is the future redemption away, we cover it until the end, and then recite the Haggadah on the broken piece of the redemption out of Egypt. How can we have one matzah representing two polar opposites? The answer is because when a Jew finds himself in hard times and faces challenges, he needs to call out to Hashem. By doing that, Hashem brings him to a state of freedom. In that same matzah, in that challenge, we have the seeds of redemption. Only through the sickness, can we find the cure. Only through darkness, can light be shown.



Ha Lachma Anya

Yonah Rossman

Shaliach, Bnei Akiva of Toronto

At first glance the paragraph of Ha Lachma Anya seems odd and out of place. The invitations do not seem genuine, and the setting is not clear. I would like to suggest though, that upon reflection, these sentences are not only logical, but that they are actually meant to frame our entire Seder experience.

To begin let's take a look at the questions that arise when reading this curious paragraph.

First, why are we pretending to invite people into our homes for the Seder? If we really want to invite people, we call them days or weeks in advance, not just as we are about to begin.

Second, why are we inviting people to come give the Korban Pesach with us?

Of course, we do not offer the Korban Pesach in Galut. But even in Israel, with an established Beit Hamikdash, we would not be inviting people to join us last minute. Families will sign up in groups called "chaburot" well in advance of the Chag, certainly not as the sun is setting while we prepare for the Seder night.

Finally, the last lines seem patently false. We are not slaves, and many of us live in Israel. How can we say next year we will be in Israel and next year we will be free? Some of us already live in Israel and all of us are already free from slavery!

I would like to suggest a very simple explanation (whose source I do not recall). Ha Lachma Anya is a

paragraph that frames the rest of the Seder, in a way that can be described in one word: Reenactment.

Ha Lachma Anya is a reenactment.

Let me explain.

There was one time in Jewish history when the Jewish people really did invite everyone to join last minute, they really did rush to give the korban Pesach, and they really did think next year they would be free and in Israel. This was all true the year Am Yisrael left Egypt. The Jewish people were rushing to leave as quick as possible. They knew that next year they would be free. They also were unaware of the mistakes that they would make that would result in the forty year journey; they thought that next year they would for sure be in The Land of Israel.

This is what we are meant to have in mind when we say these words. We are meant to start off the Seder with a reenactment of the Jewish people leaving Egypt. We are meant to share their urgency and excitement for what is about to come.

When we say the words of Ha Lachma Anya, we are not speaking of the world we live in now. We are turning the clock back and traveling to a different time. We start the Seder as slaves in Egypt and together we make the journey to the land of Israel where we are free to serve our creator and make the world a better place.

This is the meaning of the famous Chazal that we say regarding Pesach:

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לְרַאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יֶצֶא
מִמִּצְרַיִם

In every generation, we must not just retell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Rather, we must actually relive the experience on Leil Haseder as if it is happening at this very moment.



Unanswered Questions

Chaim Straus

Grade 11

How does עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ answer the Four Questions? We have just been asked four questions based mostly on the procedural manner of this special night, and we answer it with a phrase that does not even begin to answer the questions!

Rabbi Eliyahu ben Harush points out that our opening statement consists of two different verses, Devarim 6:21 and Devarim 5:15. The first verse is to fulfill the commandment of telling the story of the Exodus. The second verse is not only praise of Hashem, but it is also our answer to the four questions posed by our children. In this phrase, there are four answers, one for each question. So, let's look at how each part of the phrase answers one of our questions:

1. וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה'

This statement answers why tonight, during the Seder, we dip twice. The two dippings are representing the two blessings that Hashem granted the nation of Israel in Egypt – that they were brought from slavery to freedom and that Hashem himself was the one who redeemed us. We allude to these two blessings in the words of וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ, And [He] took us out, ה', Hashem.

2. אֱלֹקֵינוּ מִשֵּׁם

This statement answers why tonight, during the Seder, we eat Matzah. Since Chametz is a symbol

of idolatry, and Matzah is a symbol of holiness, when the Jews would eat their Matzah, they were affirming that their God, Elokeinu, had never ceased to be their God. The reason we eat Matzah on Pesach is to show our acceptance of God and our total rejection of idolatry.

3. בִּיד חֲזָקָה

This statement answers why we eat the Maror, the bitter herbs. As a result of this plague, there was no house in which at least one person was not dead. We eat the Maror as a reminder of the pain we caused the Egyptians through the hand of Hashem.

4. וּבְזָרַע נְטוּיָה

This statement answers why we are reclining as we eat the Seder. Due to the fact that Hashem took us out of Egypt “בְּזָרַע נְטוּיָה”, “with an outstretched arm”, with no hint of fear or anxiety, we lean at our Seder as a symbol of our comfort and leisure.

Hopefully, we will merit to have more answers for our questions. In the times we live in, we certainly need some!

Chag Sameach, and next year in Jerusalem.



והיא שעמדה

Adir Strauchler

Grade 10

Every year we go through the same seder. We open up the same Haggadah, perform the same rituals and tell the same story. What do we accomplish during the seder? What is the point of telling the same story over and over? How is this relevant to me?

During והיא שעמדה we recognize that Hashem protects us just like he protected our ancestors as well. We also recognize that Hashem did not just save us from Egypt just once, rather, he saves us from our enemies in every generation. This passage comes immediately before אבי אונד אבי to teach us that the story we are about to tell is not just a story that was relevant once; it is relevant to all Jews in every generation throughout time.

The Haggadah asks, what is it that applies to all Jews throughout time? It is that in every generation there is a group of people who is עלינו לכלותינו and in every generation Hashem saves us. Anti-Semitism is apparent throughout the generations.



We will always be hated for being Jews, but it is important to always have faith that Hashem will save us.

In the Haggadah titled *Rav Schachter on the Haggadah* composed by Dr. Weissman, והיא שעמדה is used as an opportunity to explain the nature of anti-Semitism and Jewish survival despite anti-Semitism. This explanation says that Jews are למעלה מן הטבע for two reasons. One, unlike all other nations which rise and eventually fall, the Jews existed throughout time. Two, during difficult times, the Jews always rise to the challenge and come out stronger than they were before. Because the Jews are למעלה מן הטבע, other nations which are מן הטבע reject us and try to destroy us. The Jewish nation is beyond nature and can overcome any challenge it faces.

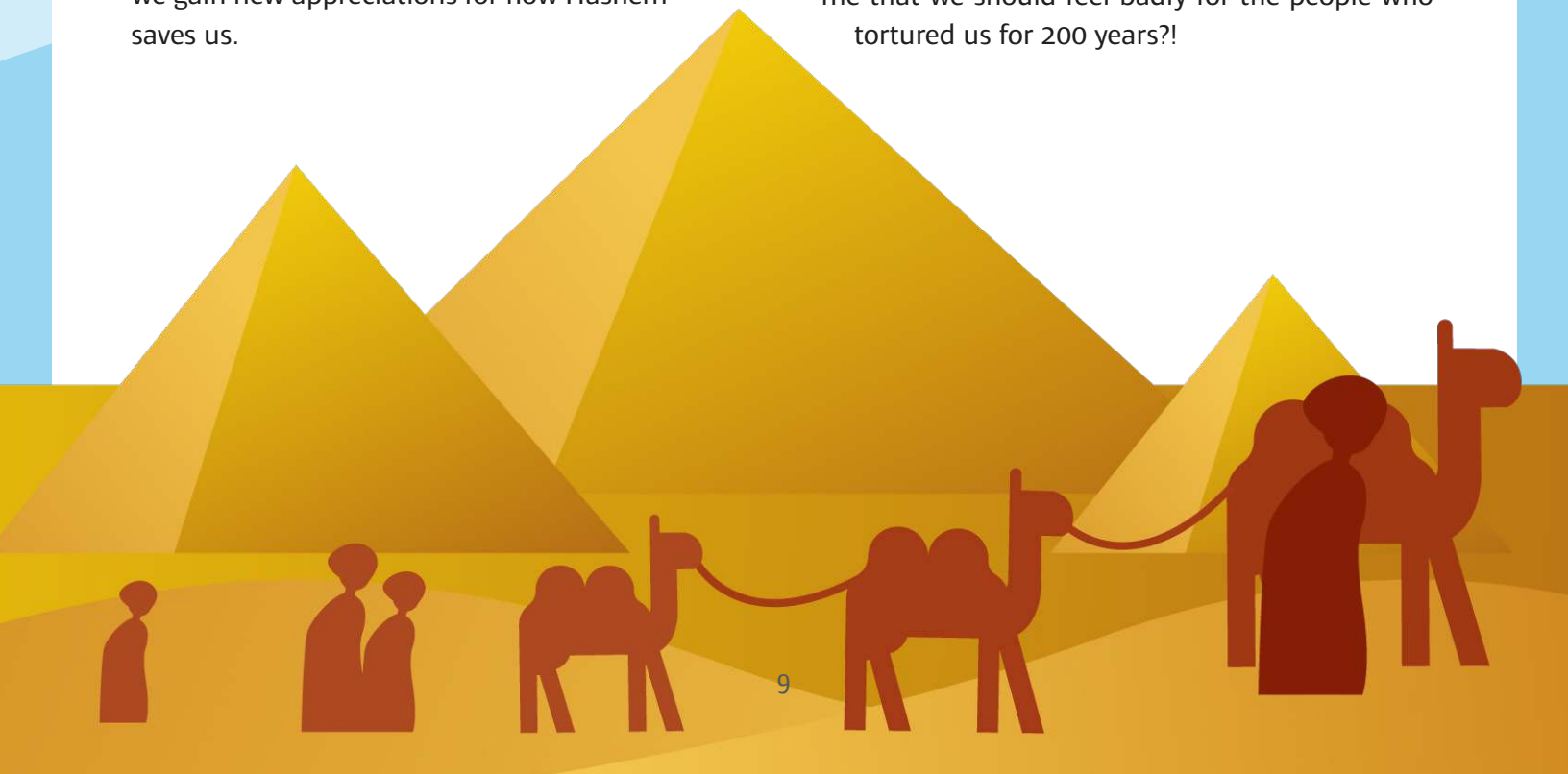
In life, there are always going to be challenges. Every year, when we sit down at the seder and recite והיא שעמדה, we accept these challenges. We recognize that Hashem will be there to help us, just as He helped the Jews in Egypt and throughout the generations. Although the words we say at the seder never change the different struggles that we face every year change the meaning of the seder as we gain new appreciations for how Hashem saves us.



Spilling the Wine

David Jesin ('15)
Student Support

At my family's seder, a debate wages on year after year. When we reach the part of the Haggadah that recounts the Ten Plagues, my father lifts his cup and pours a drop of wine out at the mention of each plague. My mother, on the other hand, prefers dipping her pinky finger into her cup and taking the droplets out one by one. Whether you consider yourself a pourer or a dipper though, you have to admit that the practice itself is a strange one. First off, it is younger than some of the other rituals we perform on the seder night – only about 1000 years old. Stranger yet, however, is one of the many reasons commonly attributed to it – that we are attempting to slightly diminish our joy because of the suffering that the Egyptians had to go through during these plagues. This is baffling. You're telling me that we should feel badly for the people who tortured us for 200 years?!



In Masechet Sanhedrin (39b), we are told that when the Jewish people were singing Shirat HaYam after the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, there were angels who wanted to join in and sing in front of Hashem. Hashem chastised the angels, saying, “My creations are drowning, and you’re singing?!”

We learn from this Gemara that it is not really the Egyptians who we are specifically supposed to decrease our joy for, rather we are generally not supposed to celebrate at the downfall of any of Hashem’s creations. What a profound lesson in empathy! When we realize that every single person we interact with is made b’Tzelem Elokim, it may become easier for us to feel pain when others feel pain, and to become motivated to achieve the best outcomes for everyone around us.

Wishing you a Pesach sameach, whether you’re a pourer or a dipper!



Dayenu

Mr. Jonathan Parker
Assistant Principal

While the *sedarim* at my parents’ and my in-laws’ homes are more or less the same, a significant difference that constantly frustrates my wife is that my parents insist on singing all of the “dayenu”s multiple times. For each line. I honestly think it takes us longer to sing Dayenu than it does to recite Hallel. But the marathon singing of Dayenu belies a deeper question – why are we thanking Hashem for all of these intermediary, individual acts? The Pesach story is pretty straightforward and miraculous, so why add this nigh-interminable list in the middle?

According to the Ritv”a, Dayenu demonstrates that at each historical point recalled in the song we were not worthy of advancing, but Hashem’s *middah of chessed* allowed us to move forward. It was not our own merit, but God’s devoted kindness, that allowed us to attain the many achievements in the song. The Malbim offers another related approach. He articulates that all of the blessings received are the basic necessities for living a Jewish life (e.g. Shabbat, the Torah, etc.) but we still need to be thankful for receiving them. According to this approach, Dayenu is meant to teach us *Hakarat HaTov* to Hashem for giving us even the necessities of Jewish life.

Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon, however, points out a concern. Certain parts of Dayenu are dependent on the preceding line, so how can we honestly thank God for His kindness when the blessing remains unfulfilled? For example, what is the value of splitting the sea if

God doesn't take us through it? What is the value of bringing us to Har Sinai if we don't get the Torah? How can we thank God for half-measures? This, says Rav Rimon, is exactly the point. When we're in the middle of our journeys – as I suppose we almost always are – we don't know what the exact end point will be, or how we'll get there, or how a million other variables will play out. All we do know is that, with faith in Hashem, things will work out as they should. According to Rav Rimon, this is the underlying message of Dayenu. Our paths are not plotted, we need to recognize the importance of each step of our journey, whether or not we can see it while it is happening.

Taken with the Ritv" a and the Malbim, Rav Rimon's reading of Dayenu is that, as we progress through the journeys of our lives, we need to recognize the goodness around us and thank Hashem for it at every opportunity. While this sentiment has always been true, it feels even more pertinent this year, when daily routines seem so interminable, that we seek out the good in every facet of our lives and give thanks to those responsible – HKB" H first and foremost.



Hallel

Mordechai Wolfson
Grade 12

The Rav (Rav Yosef B. Soloveitchik) on the Pesach Haggadah asks a very interesting and I think important question about why we say **בצאת ישראל** (Tehillim 114) in the first part of Hallel during the Seder instead of saying **אז ישיר**. He wonders why we say something written by Dovid Hamelech instead of a song from the Torah itself. **אז ישיר** seems to be more relevant to the Pesach story, considering that it happened right after the Jews left Egypt and is literally about the redemption that just happened to them.

The Rav answers by bringing a Pasuk from Shmuel II: **ואלה דברי דוד האחרנים נאם דוד בן־ישיׁ: ״ונאם הגבר הקם על משיח אלקי יעקב ונעים זמרות ישראל״** (23:1). Rashi comments on this Pasuk by saying **״אין ישראל משוררים במקדש, אלא שירו־״** – **״תיו וזמירותיו** – Yisroel doesn't sing any songs in the



Beit Hamikdash other than Dovid's songs" (ד"ה "ונעים זמירות ישראל). Rav Soloveitchik says that we read *בצאת ישראל* instead of *אז ישיר* because Dovid wrote it and the Jews are meant to sing the songs of Dovid during *tfillah* and *Hallel* (and in the *Beit Hamikdash*), as opposed to songs from other places. Dovid's eloquent words are the ones that the Jewish people sing because they have such a large emotional and spiritual impact on us.

I think this is a wonderful answer to the question of why we use one and not the other in *Hallel* on *Pesach*, but I want to go a little deeper into the meaning of *בצאת ישראל* and discuss some of the elements of the *perek* that make it so impactful.

The *perek* of *Tehillim* is a poetic and quite beautiful account *יצאת מצרים*. The *Ephod Bad* (Rabbi Benjamin David Rabinowitz, a leading Rabbi in Lithuania in the 19th century and later became the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem) says that the first words of the *perek*, *בצאת ישראל*, is an allusion to the idea that in order for Hashem to teach the Jews that *השגחה פרטית*, Divine intervention, was real and that Hashem actually played an active role in our lives, He needed to display large miracles that unquestionably point to Hashem's direct involvement in the world. He says that the 10 plagues in Egypt weren't enough, so Hashem split the sea to show the Jews that He really does play an active role in the world and constantly looks after the Jews. I think the *Ephod Bad* is hinting to the idea that Hashem originally needed to prove to us that he actively involves himself in our daily lives, but once that has been established, it is our responsibility and I think obligation to recognize that. Even though we may not see a *סוף ים קריעת* every day, Hashem is always involved in our lives and always takes care of us.

The *Ma'aseh Nissim* (Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum, a 19th century Rabbi and *Posek* in Ukraine) explains on the *pasuk* "היתה יהודה לקדשו ישראל ממשלותיו" that because of the selfless actions of *Nachshon ben Aminidav's*, the *נשיא* of יהודה, of walking, without hesitation, into the *ים סוף* until his nose, was a display of pure *בטחון* and *אמונה*. He says that the *Kiddush Hashem* *Nachshon* made and the complete trust and devotion to Hashem from the leader of יהודה was one of the reasons why the Jews merited to become Hashem's *ממשלותיו*, His dominion, under Hashem's rule. I think the *Ma'aseh Nissim* is trying to tell us that our *אמונה* and the *קדושי ה'* we make literally give us the opportunity to serve Hashem more maintain our relationship. When we have *אמונה*, we strengthen our connection to Hashem, and by that act, Hashem gives us the privilege to serve Him more.

The *Ephod Bad* and the *Ma'aseh Nissim* think that there is incredible depth and beauty in *בצאת ישראל*. I think both commentaries on the *Haggadah* think that the ideas that lay beneath the poetry of the *perek* of *Tehillim* bring insight into our lives as Jews and our belief in Hashem. There are more commentaries that go deeper into these ideas, talking about what's so special about the *perek*, but I think the ideas that Hashem is always there supporting us and that by having *אמונה* allows Hashem to give us more opportunities to love and connect to Him are some of the reasons why *בצאת ישראל* is so important to *Hallel* and to us as Jews. I hope that we can go through the *Seder* this year and recognize the small, and the big, areas where Hashem is there taking care of us and helping us succeed. I hope that we can take the messages of *בצאת ישראל* to always see the *השגחה פרטית* and strengthen our *אמונה* to create a closer connection to Hashem.



Maror

Dov Weitzner
Grade 9

Everything we do during the Pesach seder symbolizes something. Everything is meaningful and connected. Some are obvious and some require some thinking. One of the obvious connections is Maror...or at least you may think. You may have always been taught that we eat Maror because it symbolizes bitterness, but this isn't incorrect, rather it goes much deeper than that.

The true meaning of the Maror is to remember that misery is not meaningless, as the pain that the Jews suffered as slaves was not for nothing. It led to their cries for freedom and ultimately redemption. Therefore, when you are eating the maror, do not only focus on the bitterness and the terribleness about Pesach, but rather focus on the aspect of how Hashem freed us and how he brought us to where we are today.

According to the Torah, Nissan is the first month of the year, and looking back at this point, we can say that this year didn't go as planned. However, if you understand the lesson of the maror, we can move past this and focus on the good during the past year, which is what maror represents. To conclude, this Pesach, when you are sitting with your family, don't focus on the negative, but rather on the positive, and remember what Hashem has done for you.

Chag Sameach!



מצה, מרור, וכוּר Physical Food of Spiritual Sustainment

Dovid Kark
Grade 10

Throughout the Seder, as well as Pesach in general, there is a strong emphasis on מצה. This seems especially fitting, since מצה is the king that reigns supreme amongst all of the symbolizations at the Seder. מצה represents both the slavery and the freedom of Yetzias Mitzrayim. מצה is called "Lechem Oni", since the Jews were forced to eat it in slavery (אבודהרם, פירוש ההגדה, ד'). At the same time, it is the bread of the Ge'ulah, since Bnei Yisrael ate it when they left Mitzrayim, as they did not have time for the bread to rise. מרור, on the other hand, represents only the slavery aspect, the bitterness of the exile. Why have מרור at all then if it seemingly represents a negative facet of the story that מצה already is symbolizing?

In truth, מצה and מרור represent two drastically different ideas. מצה symbolizes the fusion of the Jewish people into one entity, the metamorphosis and the envelopment of the individual into one collective nation. As Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l writes in *Horeb*, "You sacrifice your whole self for the name of Israel, and do so gladly... and this indeed you show by [the] partaking of matza" (p. 115). Throughout the Haggadah, we see a common theme focused on a joint union of all Jews, such as our collective redemption from Mitzrayim and our united, national

desire for Mashiach. Yet, within this, we might lose sight of our own, individual self, and thus forget about our uniquely personal connection to Hashem. מרור comes along and shows us that each and every one of us are unique individuals, and can be special within the nation. As Rav Hirsch writes in *Judaism Eternal*, “It is only מרור, only the bitter hours of trial in your own life, that bring you near to God as your Guardian and Shepherd and Judge, that teach you to recognize and feel God as your Guardian and Shepherd and Judge, and to make an eternal covenant with Him” (p. 77). Although מצה shows us the grander national identity, it is only מרור that teaches us our own self-identity through our personal connection to Hashem. Our challenges, represented by the מרור, are each curated specifically for us by Hashem, Who knows of our distinct potential to overcome them. We see this individuality theme in the Seder through elements such as ובהגדת לבנוך and בכל דור ודור. At these parts of the Seder, when we are obliged to individually see ourselves as being taken out from Mitzrayim by Hashem. We also each have an obligation to teach our children about the Ge’ulah, which emphasizes how the continuation of our nation relies on the Mesorah and effort of individual people.

Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz zt”l echoes this in his book *The Long Shorter Way*, saying, “It has been said that the Exodus represents the emergence of

self from the narrow place of restriction, the breaking out from the gloomy darkness into joy” (p. 212). As we can see from Rav Hirsch combined with Rabbi Steinsaltz, it is very important to see Pesach as a time for us to join together with the nation of Klal Yisrael. However, at the same time, we must still recognize our own self, our own connection to Hashem, and our own individual challenges and triumphs. Only through overcoming the unique challenges in our lives can we fully contribute to the greater good.

It is כורך which truly fuses these seemingly conflicting elements of Pesach, together, an action dictated to us by Hillel. When we eat the מצה together with the מרור, we show how we are members of the Jewish nation as well as spiritual and special servants of Hashem. Interestingly, it is in fact Hillel who says in Pirkei Avos, “אם אין אני לי, מי לי. וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני, “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?” Hillel explains how one must be both “for themselves” and also for others, which he further demonstrates through the physical fusion of the מצה and the מרור. These two elements, the self and the nation, are not competing, but complimenting each other. May each of us merit, with the help of Hashem, individual redemptions in our own life, and our collective Final Redemption of Mashiach, Bimheirah Biyamainu V’Nomar Amein!





Shulchan Orech

Shalom Feuer
Grade 11

Congratulations, you've made it through the main parts of the seder! You've eaten your matza, maror, and you've told the story of the Haggadah. Shulchan Orech is a very interesting part of the Seder. Most people usually see Shulchan Orech as the part of the seder to look forward to (I mean, who doesn't like a Pesach brisket?), though in reality, Shulchan Orech is an important part of the seder which has much more importance than it would seem.

The term "Shulchan Orech", which means "Setting of the Table", is a weird term to use for this part of the Seder. A more appropriate term for this section of the Pesach Seder would be "Seuda", which means feast or any other term to represent a meal! Every part of the Pesach Seder was named to specify the purpose of that specific section. Yachatz represents splitting, Kadeish represents kiddush, Bareich represents birkat hamazon etc. According to the simple meaning, this part of the seder is called Shulchan Orech because we are setting the table with food and feasting, though when one looks deeper, the very nature of this part of the seder is revealed in the name. In the first passuk of Parshat Mishpatim, Rashi comments and brings down a midrash

(Shemot 21:1 s.v. Asher Tasim Lifneihem): God said to Moses: It should not enter your mind to say, "I shall teach them a section of the Torah or a single Halacha twice or three times until it will become current in their mouths...but I shall not take the trouble to make them understand the reason of each thing and its significance"; therefore Scripture says, אשר תשים לפניהם, "which thou shalt set before them" (cf. Genesis 34:23) — *like a table fully laid before a person with everything ready for eating.*

The Hebrew words Rashi uses is קְשֵׁלְחָן הָעֵרוּךְ וּמוֹכֵן לְאָכֹל לְפָנָי הָאֵדָם. Sound familiar? The words he uses are the same words (in a different form) as our Shulchan Orech! This Rashi states that Hashem told Moshe that he would lay out all the commands to the Jews like a set table; a buffet in a way.

In my humble opinion, this Midrash that Rashi quotes gives light as to what we are meant to do at this part of the seder. Throughout the seder, we have eaten matza, maror and told the story of Pesach with much more. In a way, we have laid before ourselves all the laws and intricacies of Pesach. Now that we have an understanding of what the holiday is about, we see the laid table before us with all the details of Pesach and the Exodus of Egypt and we eat from this table by contemplating everything we learnt previously through discussion, meditation and enjoyment! Take Shulchan Orech this year to glance at the table that you set before you with all its beautiful details and discuss everything you read and all the mitzvahs you did in the Seder. In that merit, a person can fulfill the beautiful words of the Ben Ish Chai (Parshat Tzav, Year 1, Halacha 35): One should end their meal with happiness and a good heart!





Nirtza: The True Meaning of “L’shana Habaah B’Yerushalayim”

Coby Cohen
Grade 12

Every year towards the end of the Pesach seder, we say “L’shana Habaah B’Yerushalayim,” “Next year in Jerusalem.” However, what do you say if you are already living in Jerusalem? Do you say “This year in Jerusalem” or do you just leave it out? What are we actually referring to when we recite this verse?

The truth is, whether or not you are living in Jerusalem does not depend on where you are geographically. Jerusalem is much more than a city, rather it is an idea and a set of values which we as the Jewish people are trying to reach. The story of Yetziat Mitzrayim was the journey from Egypt to Jerusalem. However, these cities do not just represent places, rather they symbolize opposing spiritual states. The true meaning of the story is leaving the state we were in while we were slaves in Egypt and striving for the state we will be in when we reach Jerusalem. It is extremely significant to recognize that we are still on this journey today.

The word “Mitzrayim” means restrictions and obstacles. It represents the state where our souls are trapped in our bodies, enslaved to our desires and restricted with limitations. This is a world without holiness and righteousness, rather with

selfishness and corruption. Jerusalem means “the city of peace.” This is the state we are in when our souls are not trapped and we are free to express our inner selves. We do what we believe is right, and do not just follow our desires, as this is a world filled with generosity and peace. We can see this in an everyday life example: Imagine you have a math test coming up, and you feel very confident and prepared for it, so you decide to spend your evening relaxing and watching TV, rather than stressing for the test. Later that evening, you get a call from your friend, who has been working extremely hard, but is still struggling with the material. If you choose not to help him, as you are not in the mood to start stressing about the test again, then you are still in Egypt, as the selfishness within you has overtaken the generosity. If you overcome your concern and end up helping your friend, you have left Egypt, however, you are not yet in Jerusalem. If you decide to help your friend right away, without a doubt, then you have entered Jerusalem! The stress you may endure becomes completely irrelevant when juxtaposed to the opportunity to assist your friend. You would not have to overcome your selfish nature, as your nature would automatically be selfless. When we are in the state of Jerusalem, inner peace and generosity come naturally.

The Jewish people began in Egypt, where they were slaves and forced into a selfish state. When they finally left Egypt, they began a very long Journey to Jerusalem, which still continues today with us. We push further and further along every year, but are still not there yet. Even if you are physically living in the city of Jerusalem, as long as there is unholiness and suffering in the world, we have not reached the Promised Land. As long as we are still slaves to our inner desires, we have not truly left Egypt. When we say “L’shana Habaah B’Yerushalayim” at the seder table, we note that another year has gone by and we have still not reached Jerusalem. However, we get closer and closer every year, and hopefully next year we will finally get there!



Chad Gadya: The Goat That Lived On

Chaim Sitnik
Grade 12

It is interesting that we end our Seders with the odd song that is *Chad Gadya*. It tells the strange chain of events that starts with a goat and progresses to involve a cat, a dog, a stick, a fire, an ox, a slaughterer, an angel, and even G-d Himself. But what does this chain of power come to teach us and why is it the last thing we sing on Seder night?

There have been many interpretations of the old song, but they all surround the core theme of the song: redemption. Each commentary tries to elaborate on the metaphorical meaning of each piece in the *Chad Gadya* puzzle and how the completed product connects with our understanding of Judaism.

The *Ephod Bad*, Rabbi Benjamin David Rabinowitz, proposes that after everything in the entire *Haggadah*, after all the promises of freedom, repetition of great wonders G-d performed to free His chosen people, and prayers to be granted a return to our freedom like the days of old, it may still be possible for us to have a doubt about our fate as Jews, so the *Haggadah* presents us with the fable of *Chad Gadyah*. The *Ephod Bad* compares the goat to the creation of free will, the right to choose between good and evil. This was present in all of the Jewish people when they chose to worship God after the miracles in Egypt. The cat represents the doubt of

the Jewish people, the evil inclination, which was infused by the enemies of the Jews, especially the tribe of Amalek, as the Talmud states “A cat does not recognize its master.” The dog represents those enemies as the Amalekites were sent to punish the doubt of Israel, but were then chased away by the stick which represents Moses’ staff which he used to “smite the dog which bit the cat.” The fire is the one used to make the golden calf, which burned the efforts made by Moses with his staff. The water equates to Moses who puts out the fire of idolatry in the Israelites. The ox refers to the reintroduction of the golden calf through Rehoboam in the times of Ezra and the greater idea of the return of idolatry, which was slaughtered after Ezra prayed for the pull of idolatry to be removed from this world. The angel of death is where we are today. It is the mistake made in the times of Ezra that Jews still pay for in our times. The Jews back then were told to return to the holy land of Zion but they all sinned with the calves and thus did not follow the orders, causing the Jews to remain in exile for thousands of years to come and confront the angel of death in all his many forms. Lastly, G-d is the future. He is the one who will rid the world of the evil inclination that has caused us to sin for so long, the *Yetzer Harah*, and make us whole again.

The *Aruch la-Ner*, Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger, gave a different explanation from the *Minchat Ani*. He compares the goat to the human body and *Chad Gadya* as its redemption. The goat originated from Esau and Jacob, who were compared to a goat and a lamb respectively. The goat is also seen as our *Yetzer Harah* as that was one of Esau’s main character traits, his evil inclination. The two coins, two *zuzim*, are G-d’s way of controlling the *Yetzer Harah* through two tablets, the Ten Commandments but the threats to the goat overpower these two coins and compete for control of the body and its evil inclination, each a representation of an evil trait that takes of the last. The cat is cunning, the dog is

greed, the stick is jealousy, the fire is anger, and the water is indifference. The ox is a symbol of control and strength, which is good for the body, until it is slaughtered by ambition (the slaughterer), which feeds on the strength of the ox. The slaughterer is then killed by the angel of death as the result of all things is death, which rules all matters of the body. Thus, life remains in this cycle, until G-d comes to rid the world of death and evil and saves us from this cycle as He rules over us in the times of redemption. The Vilna Gaon also gives his interpretation of the song, telling over a surprisingly mystical lesson. He believes that the goat bought with two coins is Jacob's birthright which he received from his father, Isaac, after a meal of two goats. This birthright was passed down to Jacob's son Joseph as he was his favourite. The cat represents the jealous brothers of Joseph, from which came the tribes of Israel, who sold him to slavery and who also eventually ended up living in Egypt. The dog is the Egyptians who "bit the cat" by enslaving the Israelite tribes. The stick is once again compared to Moses' staff, which was used to punish the Egyptians and was passed down by Jewish leaders. The fire is the sin of idolatry that grew and caused the First Temple, the symbol of Jewish leadership, to burn. The *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* (the Men of Great Assembly) was the water that put out the fire of idolatry and restored Jewish leadership by building the Second Temple. The strength of the Romans, our enemies as Jews in exile, is compared to that of the ox as they plowed through the Jewish people, destroying Jewish life. The slaughterer is *Moshiach*, the Messiah son of Joseph, who will slaughter our enemies in the first state of redemption. His death is the one committed by the angel of death that "slaughtered the slaughterer." Then comes G-d, who will enact the final stage of redemption and reward us with the birthright our forefather received so long ago, as we return to our holy land of Eretz Yisroel.

Chad Gadya tells the story of the Jewish people. Like the rest of the Seder, it is a reminder of what our hardships were, what our situation as Jews in exile is now, and what our future will be like when G-d redeems us as He did so long ago to our ancestors in Egypt. Whether it is the evils of the world, the corruption of our inner emotions, or the fight to be a free nation in Eretz Yisroel, the story of *Chad Gadya* symbolizes that we can overcome these struggles and strive to make redemption a reality if we have faith in the Almighty.

We sing this song at the end of the night as it is a continuation of *Nirtza*, the closing of the Seder, which symbolizes our hopes for the future of the Jewish people. *Chad Gadya* comes and shows us that we have been bitten before and that there is always a bigger threat, but we do not need to worry, because the biggest threat will come and wipe out all the others, placing us where we will need to be. So for now, come and sit as we sing a song about "one little goat."



