

THE YESHIVAT OR CHAIM

Haggadah

COMPANION



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Lifelong Learners

Rabbi Seth Grauer
Rosh Yeshiva & Head of School

Rabbi Sacks zt”l explains that on the eve of the original Pesach, at the very moment when a new chapter in the life of the Jewish People began, we found out what it means to be a Jew: “About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators”.¹

Being a Jew means being both a student and an educator, and Seder night is our opportunity to focus on both these roles.

This volume perfectly captures this idea, as teachers, alumni and students pen divrei Torah to continue the glorious and eternal chain of Jewish generations.

Indeed, Judaism extols the virtues of learning from others (איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל אדם – Who is wise? One who learns from every person), and particularly teachers learning from students (דאמר ר’ חנינא: הרבה למדתי מרבתי ומחברי יותר מרבתי ומתלמידי יותר מכולן – As Rabbi Chanina said: I learned a lot from my Rabbis, and from my friends more than from my Rabbis, and more than them all from my students).^{2,3}

So much so that our greatest leaders, the people we respect the most, are called talmidei chachamim. Not wise teachers – but wise students, or students of wise people.

One of Amazon’s Leadership Principles is “Learn and be Curious.” Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves. In our rapidly changing world and society, only those who are constantly learning will develop the

understanding and the novel ideas to move the world forward in a positive way. That is certainly one of our guiding values here in the Bnei Akiva Schools.

When we are children, we have an insatiable and joyful curiosity about almost everything. That’s the learn-it-all (rather than the know-it-all) mindset we want to continue to cultivate as we grow older and become parents and teachers and leaders ourselves.

The opening pasuk of Parshat Chayei-Sarah tells us that Sarah lived for 127 years. It then adds a seemingly superfluous phrase: “שני חיי שרה” – these are the years of Sarah’s life. Rashi comments, “כולן שווין לטובה” – the years of Sarah’s life were all equal in goodness.

What does that mean?

Rav Soloveitchik zt”l suggests⁴ this comment must be seen as a continuation of Rashi’s previous comments. In recording Sarah’s age when she died, the pasuk says she lived “100 years and 20 years, and seven years.” Rashi notes the obvious difficulty in this formulation. Rather than stating simply that Sarah lived “127 years,” the verse instead describes three distinct periods – 100 years, 20 years, and seven years. Based on the Midrash, Rashi explains that the verse is comparing these three periods in Sarah’s life. She was as sinless at 100 as she was at 20, and she was as beautiful at 20 as she was at seven. With this in mind, we read the next comment: “they were all equal in goodness.” Rashi is describing here three phases of life: childhood, youth and adulthood.

Rav Soloveitchik explains:

“The child is endowed with a capacity of an all-absorbing faith and trustfulness; youth bursts with zealousness, idealism and optimism; the adult, mellowed with years, has the benefit of accumulated knowledge and dispassionate judgment. Each age is physically and psychologically attuned to particular emphases, but the superior individual can retain and harmonize the positive



strengths of all three periods during his entire lifetime.”

Rashi describes Sarah’s years as “equal” because she never fully left behind any stage of her life. As she progressed from one phase to the next, she retained the unique characteristics of the earlier stage and refined it as she continued growing. Even in adulthood, Sarah retained the “faith and trustfulness” of her childhood years, as well as the “zealousness, idealism and optimism” of her youth.

It is to these very characteristics of our children and youth that we are appealing on Seder night.

The aim of this magical night is to transmit the foundations of our faith to our children so that they know how our people were created, how G-d chose Israel to be an “Am Segula” and earmarked us for the responsibility of receiving the Torah and bringing about a reparation of the world (tikkun olam).

We parents will not live forever, and it is our children and students who will carry the torch of Torah and tradition forward to illuminate future generations. And they are already doing so in this wonderful YOC Haggadah Companion.

This idea is further strengthened by the fact that part of the very mitzva to learn Torah is derived

from the pasuk⁵ *ולמדתם אותם את בניכם לדבר בם*, from which Chazal understood that one who is obligated to teach his son, must himself also study.⁶ Because it is only through the parents’ personal example – of being serious and passionate about Torah study and keeping mitzvot – that they can pass on those values to their children.

We can also learn from this mitzva of education that the entire aim of Limmud Torah is not merely to uplift the Torah student him or herself but to impact the entire world by influencing future generations of Jewish children who themselves will become parents of Jewish children.

Therefore, I am truly excited and honoured to share this introduction to this YOC Haggadah Companion, a volume of divrei Torah that so perfectly encapsulates this core idea of parents-students-children continuing to perpetuate the glorious chain of Jewish education, from Yetziyat Mitzrayim 2448 through Toronto 5783 and beyond.

1 *Radical Then, Radical Now*, p. 32.

2 *Avot* 4:1.

3 *Ta’anit* 7a.

4 See *Reflections of the Rav*, vol. 2, ch. 9.

5 *Devarim* 11:19.

6 *Kiddushin* 29b.



Kadesh: Why Now?

Jordan Jesin

Grade 12 Student and
Vice President, Student Council

Ah, Kadesh. The time of the Seder where it's just the beginning, so no one feels too hungry yet. The thing is, if the point of the Pesach Seder is to remember the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, why are we starting the Seder with Kadesh? Kadesh was made for, as it is written, "זכר ליציאת מצרים", but should we not start with reciting the actual story first?

Rav Eliezer Melamed points out in his book, *Peninei Halacha*, that on every Shabbos and Yom Tov, we always say Kiddush and recite the quote mentioned above. We do this so we can bring Kedusha to whatever holiday we are celebrating, and the first time Bnei Yisrael felt their Kedusha with Hashem was during Yetziat Mitzrayim. There is then no better time to bring in the Kedusha of Pesach into the Seder than by saying "זכר יציאת מצרים" during Kadesh itself. That is why we do

Kadesh first – to realize the holiness of the night and to mentally prepare for what is to come.

This made me think about a beautiful message given by Rav Eitiel Goldwicht. He said we should be preparing for the Seder in the same way that athletes prepare for a basketball game – by developing both physically and mentally. Just like athletes listen to music while they are doing drills or practicing their shots, we should be getting into the proper mindset of being at the seder, in addition to learning about the holiday itself. After all, we are getting closer to one of the most important nights of the year – so shouldn't we have the right mindset for it as well?

Pesach is not just about learning the halachot and kashering utensils, it is also about realizing where we are in life and recognizing the true freedom that we have today. We are usually so busy and focused on clearing the garbage and unnecessary items in the house, but it is just as important to clear our heads of the garbage and unnecessary thoughts before the Seder as well. That is what Kadesh is truly for. We are telling Hashem that it is time to bring the kedusha into our now- clear and clean minds, and we are ready to hear about the Pesach story that brought us to this very moment.

May we be zocheh to have that perfectly clear mindset and to be prepared both physically and mentally for such a joyous holiday.

Chag Sameach!





Yachatz

Rabbi Moshe Lexier
Judaic Studies Teacher

The ba'al haseder breaks the middle of the three matzos and puts the bigger piece away for the afikoman. What is the significance of breaking of the 'Levi' matzah; why not just save the whole matzah for eating later on at Tzafun? Additionally, what is the significance of its traditional round shape?

The Torah refers to matzos as 'ugot matzos'. Based on a pasuk in Tehillim (12:9) "saviv reshaim yishalachun," 'the wicked are in a perpetual state of circling,' the Chasam Sofer writes:

As people, we eat and drink to have strength to work to make a living in order to be able to eat and provide...this is the circle of life, eat to be able to work, work to be able to eat. It is a continuous cycle in all variations, repeating itself over and over again. Tzadikim, however, revel in the moment, using each act in the journey as the purpose itself to sanctify Hashem. *Seder – meaning order – is in fact a breakup of the cycle.*

An element of the torture Klal Yisrael endured in Egypt was futile labour, construction and building on quicksand. When Hashem redeemed us to become His nation and we accepted His Torah, we were able to finally appreciate the purpose of the enslavement and the journey up until that point.

Yachatz is the breaking of the matzah. We take a round matzah of lechem oni, symbolizing the bread and life that we had in Egypt, and break it, signaling that life is not an endless cycle. We must see the connection of the journey to the end point in order to live more meaningful lives.

Rav Kook in Oros HaTeshuvah speaks of the sin that occurred preceded the sin of Adam and Chava. Hashem commanded each tree to have the taste of its fruit "eitz pri," yet the trees disobeyed. The tree symbolizes a means towards an end – its fruits.

Rav Kook explains that this is the root of the misery that people feel in this world. We don't appreciate the journey of life, with all its seemingly mundane moments, because we fail to see the connection to its conclusion. Just like the tree and fruit are not connected in their taste, so too we don't have the clarity that we will see when Mashiach comes.

To understand this idea, think of a beautiful sightseeing trip. People all around are busy taking pictures or selfies. Rather than enjoying and appreciating the experience of the moment, they are too involved in trying to capture the moment to show others or to review later, thereby missing the beauty of the experience itself.

How does one break the circle and get off the merry-go-round of sleep–eat–work–eat–sleep...?

Rav Gershon Henoch of Radzin says we eat marror to remember the enslavement. The worst thing ("ikar hara") is when one doesn't feel that he lacks anything. Salvation begins when one yearns for it and feels something is missing.

The Mechilta says that no slave ever managed to escape Egypt. Asks the Bais Yaakov of Ishbitz, how could this be? People even managed to escape concentration camps! He answers that every slave in Egypt was content with his situation, so no one ever tried to escape. As the Sfas Emes says "mitachas sivlos mitzrayim", Hashem took away Klal Yisroel being *sovel*. He removed their patience so that they felt an urgency to leave.

The pasuk refers to the work as "avodas perach". *Rach* means soft, gentle. We accepted the slavery in Egypt as our way of life. We weren't thinking about better. That was the bread of poverty.

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Living a Life of Freedom

Yedidya Helfenbaum

Grade 12 Student and Convenor, Student Council

One of my favorite aspects of the seder is that even though we read the same material every year, you always learn something new and begin to realize just how much more there is to learn. Right off the bat, at the beginning of Maggid we begin with the passage of Ha Lachma Anya. At first glance nothing looks out of the ordinary, we are merely offering for those who are hungry to join us for a meal. When we carefully examine the words however, something strange suddenly becomes apparent. If we are offering people bread (hopefully out of the kindness of our hearts) then why would we offer them the same bread that our ancestors ate in Egypt? Who wants to eat the bread of pain and suffering?

Rabbi Sacks offers a beautiful response, speaking of how it highlights the difference between slavery and freedom. As he says, matzah is both the food of slavery and a symbol of freedom. What causes the transformation of the matzah is the willingness to share it with others. He later elaborates on this point, saying: "Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. Someone who fears tomorrow does not offer their bread to others. But those who are willing to divide their food with others have already shown themselves capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born... By reaching out to others, by giving help to the

needy and companionship to those who are alone, we bring freedom into the world, and with freedom, God."

A few questions still remain, however. Why do we give the bread at the beginning of the seder when we are still slaves, and why did God tell Bnei Yisrael to make the matzah while in Egypt if they were still in the land of slavery?

Perhaps God told Bnei Yisrael to eat the matzah in Mitzrayim, the exact place that was associated with slavery, to give them the ability to change. Bnei Yisrael was given the choice whether they would stay in their slave mentality or whether they could ascend to becoming the free nation that they were destined to be. They could only truly become free if they themselves believed that they could. This would require them to act as a free people, meaning sharing their matzah with all. The truth is, in order to become what you want you have to start living your life as if it has already happened.

LEXIER, CONTINUED

In order to merit leaving mitzrayim, the end of the journey must be in sight. It is a means towards an end. For each one of us to acquire our own personal redemption, seder - order must be restored into our life which means breaking up the endless cycle.

The middle matzoh is broken. The endless cycle is interrupted because there is a connection between the journey and its end, a connection between the taste of the tree and its fruit. We must strive to get back to that ideal state.

When we eat the afikomen we have hopefully reached this point of realization, an understanding of what true Seder is.

B'ezrat Hashem, this year we will all break free of the golus that surrounds us and merit a true redemption.



Asking Questions: A Quick Look at the Quintessence of Query

Rabbi Noah Sonenberg
Director of Judaic Studies

Chazal structured the seder in a way that informs us how to effectively teach our children Jewish thought and values. We see that they intentionally organized the night in a manner which would seem strange to children who are used to regular Shabbat and Yom Tov meals. The goal of this structure is to get the children to notice these peculiar practices. When the children are overcome with curiosity they are expected to burst forth with their questions about this different routine. If the children didn't ask their own questions they were given a set of four questions to ask.

This focus on encouraging questions is essential before we get to Maggid, the central educational piece of the Seder. Once we have achieved the goal of sparking the outward curiosity of our children we must be careful to answer the questions in a way that helps us achieve the goal of education. When the children ask, "why do we dip karpas before the meal?" we should respond in a way that demonstrates to them how much we value their questions. We can say that Chazal wanted to encourage children to feel comfortable noticing practices and ideas that seem strange to them and then to ask for explanations. This feeling of safety will then foster in them an understanding that questions are expected and reasonable on any topic within Judaism. Chazal teach us in

actions of the Seder the principle of אין הביישן למד (a person easily embarrassed can not learn). We must be sure to foster an environment for our children which accomplishes this goal.

As people get older it is not only embarrassment that stops them from asking questions but also a sense that they already know the answer or perhaps even a feeling that there really is no acceptable answer. As a result of this, the four questions must be asked even if the only people attending are already mature and wise. Chazal encourage us to ask so that we will hear other perspectives on issues that we already have thought about. The principle of איזהו חכם, הלומד מכל אדם (who is wise? he who learns from everyone) is being taught in the Seder in a practical and meaningful way. In order to broaden our understanding, we are encouraged to ask others even when we think that we already know the answer.

As we approach the Seder night perhaps we should add to our focus of sharing profound Divrei Torah and include an awareness of the value of questions. We should look to create an environment where all our children's questions are valued and where they feel safe and secure exploring difficult thoughts. Only by allowing our children to ask questions can we hope to have them search for answers from us and from all the Torah personalities and resources that are available in our community.



What's the Chacham Really Asking?

Rabbi Ezer Dena

Judaic and General Studies Teacher

The wise one – what does he say? “What are the testimonies, the rituals, and the laws that God, to us The Omnipotent, commanded you?” (Devarim 6:20) Thus, you should tell him as the laws of the Passover [offering]: “We do not conclude after the Passover [offering] with any dessert.” (Mishna Pesachim 10:8)

The Four Sons¹

In reading the section of the four children, the Chacham's section has always interested me. Not only because, as kids, we always wanted to read it to show that we were the wisest kid at the table, but also because of the number of significant questions raised by the commentaries. In this article, I'd like to discuss our answer to this child. The question posed is a very general “what are the laws of Pesach,” but we respond by letting them know that “we don't have dessert after the Korban Pesach.” What motivates this specific response?

Answer #1 – A Specific Question

Various commentaries ascribe a specific, technical question to the wise child. Rabbi Yeshayah of Trani, among others, posits that the child asked why we eat the Chagigah offering before the Korban Pesach, if the Korban Pesach is so much more important. We answer that “acharon acharon chaviv” – nothing may be eaten after the Korban Pesach, so it comes last.

More amusingly, the Kol Bo references a custom to pass out candy and nuts to children near the start of the Seder. The Chacham notices this, and asks about the change from our regular behaviour, when we only eat these items after the meal. We respond that unfortunately, we can't have dessert tonight, so we have to eat it first...

Approach #2 – Great Depth and Breadth

Ritv" a suggests that the question asked by the Chacham was indeed a very broad one, and as a result, we must teach them a very broad range of information. This includes all of the laws of Pesach, and not just those derived from the verses of the Torah, such as the laws of Chametz, Matzah and otherwise, but even the Rabbinic rulings associated with Pesach which go beyond the Torah text. Thus, we choose this halacha to represent the deepest detail associated with Pesach.

Approach #3 – Maintain Focus

The Netziv suggests a more symbolic answer to our question. He writes that the reason why the Sages instituted the laws that nothing may be eaten after the final piece of Korban Pesach is so that those at the Seder don't get completely sidetracked after they finish the Pesach – so long as they know that they still have another piece to finish, they can't get carried away. He says that this should be an important message to our children – so long as we still have Torah and Mitzvot on our agenda and as our focus, we won't get carried away with Aveirot; the Yetzer Hara won't be able to trip us up.

May we all merit to be like the Chacham, and maintain our focus on Torah and Mitzvot year-round, and celebrate with the eating of the Pesach sacrifice in the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash, speedily in our days!

1 AlHaTorah Haggadah Gedolah translation; all commentaries below taken from this version



Lessons Learned from the Five Famous Rabbis in the Haggadah

Yosef Grauer

Grade 12 Student and President, Student Council

At the beginning of Maggid right after עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ and מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה, we tell a story of five rabbis who were eating together in Bnei Brak:

מַעֲשֵׂה בְרַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְרַבֵּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְרַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַעְזוּרְיָה וְרַבֵּי עֲקִיבָא וְרַבֵּי טַרְפוֹן שֶׁהָיוּ מְסֻבִּין בְּבֵנֵי-בְרַק וְהָיוּ מְסַפְּרִים בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם כָּל-אוֹתוֹ הַלַּיְלָה, עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ תַלְמִידֵיהֶם וְאָמְרוּ לָהֶם רַבּוֹתֵינוּ הִגִּיעַ זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שֶׁל שַׁחֲרִית.

It happened once [on Pesach] that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon were reclining in Bnei Brak and were telling the story of the exodus from Egypt that whole night, until their students came and said to them, “The time of [reciting] the morning Shema has arrived.”

Five rabbis were meeting in Bnei Brak and telling over the story of יציאת מצרים. Why is this important? What does this story add to our seder? And why do we start this section of Maggid with this story?

The Vilna Gaon says that this story is actually connected to the previous paragraph of עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ. At the end of עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ we say two very important things:

(1) ... וְאֶפְלוּ כָלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים כָּלֵנוּ זְקֵנִים כָּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. (2) וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח.

...Even if we were all sages, all discerning, all elders, all knowledgeable about the Torah, it would be a

commandment upon us to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt. And anyone who adds [and spends extra time] in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt, behold he is praiseworthy.

The Haggadah says that even if one knows the story of יציאת מצרים one still needs to retell the story at the seder and the more time one spends retelling the story the better it is. According to the Vilna Gaon, the story of the five rabbis proves the exact same point that עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ is teaching us. The five rabbis in Bnei Brak knew the story of יציאת מצרים yet they still retold it at their seder. They not only retold the story, but they spent the entire night talking about the story of יציאת מצרים.

Most of us also know the story of the Jewish People in Egypt yet we can learn from these five rabbis that no matter how well we know the story, we should still spend as much time as possible learning about the story and retelling the story at our seder.

In the sefer Divrei Negidim on the Haggadah written by Rav Yudel Tarlow'er (fun fact: Rav Yudel Tarlow'er emigrated to Toronto in 1913, became the Rabbi of the Beth Jacob Congregation and was one of the founders of Eitz Chaim Schools) inspired by the teachings of the Maharal he writes that when telling the story of the five rabbis, the Gemara uses the word “מְסֻבִּין” for a very important reason. The Gemara uses this word when talking about the story of יציאת מצרים to teach us that they were not telling the story because they had an obligation to, rather they were telling the story because they wanted to, and they gained enjoyment from talking about יציאת מצרים.

We can learn many important lessons from this seemingly underrated story. First off, lead by example, the best way to inspire people to do something is to do it yourself. Secondly, do mitzvot not only because we are obligated to, but because we enjoy them. Finally, when reading the story of יציאת מצרים, try as best as possible to make it fun and gain enjoyment from the experience of telling the story.



Dayeinu's Hidden Meaning

Jacob Astroff Grade 10 Student

Dayeinu. One of the most iconic songs of the Pesach Seder. This passage, said towards the end of Maggid, recounts the amazing acts of kindness that Hashem did for us during and following our exodus from Egypt. Following each clause, we recite the word “Dayeinu,” which means “It would have been enough,” showcasing how Hashem went above and beyond in His kindness towards us.

When I read this passage this year in the Haggadah, one question came to mind: This passage is recounting all the kindnesses that Hashem did that impacted us. Most of the clauses in Dayeinu are like this. However, some of the clauses we recite seemingly have nothing to do with us! The three clauses I’m talking about are the first three, which say:

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים ולא עשה בהם שפטים, דינו.
אלו עשה בהם שפטים, ולא עשה באלהיהם, דינו.
אלו עשה באלהיהם, ולא הרג את בכוריהם, דינו.

If He took us out of Egypt but didn't make judgements for them, it would have been enough.

If He made judgements for them, but didn't make them for their gods, it would have been enough.

If he made them for their gods, but didn't kill their firstborn, it would have been enough.

These three clauses, (1) Hashem making judgment for them, (2) Hashem making judgment on their gods, and (3) killing the Egyptian firstborns don't seem to have anything to do with us, but rather Hashem punishing the Egyptians as we would have already been freed. Why would we say this in our song of gratitude towards Hashem when these three

clauses seemingly have nothing to do with us? What is the author of the Haggadah trying to tell us?

I believe that in order to understand this better, we need to delve deeper into the three clauses that were chosen.

The Haggadah is saying that Hashem specifically punished Mitzrayim for two things:

- Aveirot between man and man (from Mishpat from the word שפטים, I got this idea from the Ma'aseh Nissim Haggadah חכם מה הוא אומר because of the horrible treatment and slavery that they made us go through
- Idol Worshipping (because Mitzrayim were also idol worshippers so Hashem was punishing that as well.)

Hashem killed their firstborns as a result of their horrible actions.

These three clauses were chosen to show how much Hashem cares about us. Hashem punishing the Egyptians can be compared to a parent and a child:

In the first clause, (ולא עשה בהם שפטים) – but didn't make judgements for them) Hashem punishes the Egyptians for their enslavement and horrible treatment of us, like a parent would want to get a bully in trouble for mistreating their child.

In the second clause, (ולא עשה באלהיהם) – but didn't make them for their gods) Hashem goes a level beyond this by exacting judgment against their gods (who are inanimate objects), thereby destroying the Egyptians' hopes and spirits because they mistreated Israel (Hashem's precious children).

In the third clause (ולא הרג את בכוריהם) – but didn't kill their firstborn): this refers to Hashem killing specifically every firstborn in Egypt while saving the lives of all Jewish firstborn children. By doing this, Hashem is showing that we (Israel) are the firstborn to Hashem. Hashem tells Moshe before speaking to Pharaoh בני בכרי ישראל – My firstborn child is Israel. Hashem is **CONTINUES NEXT PAGE**



trying to tell us how much He loves us because we are a firstborn to Him, which means we have a special responsibility and role in the family – to be a role model and positive influence to the younger siblings in the family. In our case, it means being a light unto the other nations who are also Hashem’s children and bring Hashem’s light into the world.

The firstborn child has a unique level of preciousness and belovedness for the parent because of their unique role. Hashem shows how we are His firstborn by killing every non-Jewish firstborn and that shows how precious we are to Hashem and what kind of special role we have in the world.

So, why did the author of the Haggadah put these clauses in Dayeinu? It shows how much Hashem

cares about us. He gets angry when others oppress us, and expresses how valuable and precious we are to Him as His firstborn children. If those clauses weren’t there, we wouldn’t have the context to appreciate the kindness shown to us in the remainder of Dayeinu, like giving us the Torah and bringing us to Israel. Now that we were given the reasons for why Hashem is so kind and loving towards us, we can appreciate the rest of the passage.

Hashem should give us the koach to accomplish our mission as the firstborn of bringing light into the world so we may merit to see the final redemption
 לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה.



The Nature of the Four Cups

Noah Wolfson Grade 10 Student

You may be surprised to learn that there are two independent mitzvot of the Four Cups we drink during the Seder. Tosafot on Pesachim 99b comments the Mitzvah of the Four Cups should be similar to the Mitzvah of Kiddush on Shabbos, in the sense that one could fulfill his obligation of Kiddush on Shabbos by merely listening and having in mind to fulfill his obligation (without drinking from the cup). Tosafot dismissed his assumption without further explanation, stating that it is best for each person to drink the Four Cups of wine (at the Seder) and not rely on a third party.

Perhaps the answer to the Tosafot's obscurity can be clarified with Rambam's Sefer Mishneh Torah. The Rambam on Hilchot Chametz Umatzah (7:9) rules based on a Gemara in Brachos (108b) that if one drank undiluted wine,¹ he has fulfilled his obligation of the Four Cups but has not fulfilled his obligation of freedom. If one drank all the Four Cups of diluted wine simultaneously, he has fulfilled his obligation of freedom but not of the obligation of the Four Cups.

Through Rambam's codification of the Laws of the Four Cups he gives insight into the nature of cups. He teaches that the cups have a dual purpose. One is to allow one (Jews) to fulfill the biblical commandment of seeing themselves as if they left Egypt (and drinking diluted wine allows for this experience).² The other is to fulfill the mitzvah of drinking the Four Cups of wine of Pesach.

The difference between Kiddush on Shabbos and the Four Cups on Pesach mentioned in Tosafot is that the four cups are an experience-based action, but Kiddush of Shabbos is an external-based action. On Shabbos, there is a collective responsibility to sanctify the day and remember Hashem's creation and therefore a person is able to sanctify Shabbos on behalf of others listening. Contrasted with the Four Cups, there is an individual responsibility for every single person to feel as if he has been redeemed from the slavery of Mitzrayim, and not only to recite and drink the Four Cups.

Tosafot teaches us that it is better for every person to have their own set of cups, because Tosafot views the primary purpose of the Cups to facilitate the experience of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

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- 1 In the times of the Gemara the wine fermented was too strong to be consumed, so it was diluted with water to make the wine more enjoyable.
 - 2 Mishneh Torah, Leavened and Unleavened Bread 7:6–7.





V'hi She'amda: What Stood For Us?

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By this point in the Haggadah, it may seem as though this section of Maggid will be telling the story of the origin of the Jewish People in chronological order. We have just recalled Hashem's promise to Avraham at Brit Bein HaBetarim, and we are about to progress into the stories of our nation's encounter with Lavan, the slavery in Egypt, the ten plagues and Keriat Yam Suf. But suddenly, amid all these stories, appears a text that may at first glance seem completely out of place: V'hi She'amda. Every year we say, *אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו*; *והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם*; In every single generation people rise up to destroy us – but the Holy One saves us from their hands.

V'hi She'amda is simply a statement saying that this promise Hashem made to Avraham is what kept the Jewish nation alive through our many years of persecution. Wouldn't it make more sense to say this after the fact? We haven't even recalled a single story of persecution or hardship! Shouldn't it be a summary of all the times Hashem has saved us, like Dayeinu? If we look deeper into the text, then maybe we can find an answer.

One solution to this question could be to think of this sentence as an answer to some questions we may be asking during the upcoming storytelling portion of the Haggadah. Some of them may be: Why did we not assimilate during our thousands of years in exile? Why did Hashem have to punish

us with persecution every generation? Why did we merit to be saved so many times?

Every time we mention a time of hardship such as Lavan, slavery and almost being doomed on the beaches of Yam Suf, we must always look back at Hashem's initial covenant with Avraham. And this, V'hi, is what stood for us. This is what stopped us from assimilating, this is why we needed to be persecuted and this is why we merited to be miraculously saved every single time.

Interestingly, this problem also bothered one of the more recent Torah leaders. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky also wondered what the significance of this statement immediately preceding the story of Lavan. Also, Lavan's story starts with the words *צא ולמד*, go and learn, implying that this story is a proof to what we just said. He answers by saying by looking at the pesukim, Yaakov was successful when he worked for Lavan. He came to Lavan with nothing, amassed a lot of wealth, and at the end, he left a rich man. But his real intention was to *לעקור את הכל*, uproot everything. By putting these two texts back-to-back, we learn a general rule that even in times of prosperity, danger could be lurking in the background. But, even with all this, Hashem will with 100% certainty save us from their hands.

This Pesach as we are commemorating the anniversary of our freedom from slavery, we should look back at what freedom really means to us. We should reflect on the questions that V'hi She'amda answers from today's perspective. Why did we not assimilate during our thousands of years in exile? Why did Hashem have to punish us with persecution every generation? Why did we merit to be saved so many times? Also, we should reflect on Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky's interpretation that V'hi She'amda is a warning to recognize the danger lurking in the background, but ultimately Hashem will save us no matter what. These thoughts will guide us towards really discovering what it means to be free, and how it all connects back to a promise made to Avraham.



L'shana Haba'ah

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The phrase “L’shana Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim” has a central place in Jewish tradition and expresses the longing for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and the ultimate redemption of the Jewish People. This phrase is traditionally recited at the end of the Passover Seder, marking the conclusion of the festival and the beginning of the next year’s journey.

The idea of rebuilding the Temple and the ultimate redemption of the Jewish People has significant theological and spiritual implications. The Holy Temple was the dwelling place of God’s presence, and its destruction represents the severance of the direct connection between God and His people. The yearning for the rebuilding of the Temple thus symbolizes the longing for the renewal of this relationship and the restoration of the Divine presence in our midst.

The phrase “L’shana Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim” is not only a passive hope, but also a call to action. It reminds us that we have a responsibility to work towards creating a world where the presence of God

can be felt, where justice and righteousness prevail, and where humanity lives in harmony with one another and with the environment.

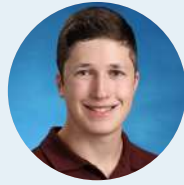
The phrase “L’shana Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim” is not limited to the physical rebuilding of the Temple, but is also about the spiritual rebuilding of the Jewish People. It calls on us to engage in the process of personal and communal growth, to cultivate virtues such as compassion, kindness, and empathy, and to strive for intellectual and spiritual excellence.

At the Passover Seder, we retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, a story of liberation and redemption. This story teaches us that redemption is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process. It is a process that requires effort, dedication, and commitment. We are reminded that just as God redeemed the Jewish People from slavery in Egypt, He will redeem us again, and that this redemption requires us to actively participate in the process.

As we say “L’shana Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim,” we are called upon to renew our commitment to the pursuit of holiness, justice, and righteousness. We are called upon to work towards the creation of a world where the presence of God can be felt, and where humanity can flourish in peace and harmony.

May we all be blessed with the strength and determination to do our part in bringing about the ultimate redemption of the Jewish People, and may we be reunited with our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, the city of peace, in the very near future.





Echad Mi Yodea

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Nirtzah is full of poetic writing and songs, and one of the best known is Echad Mi Yodea. Singing the song, it recounts thirteen numbers that represent something in Judaism. If that is just the case, then what is this song doing in the Haggadah? Isn't it just some children's song?

Well, it turns out that is correct. According to most sources, although the original author is unknown, it is likely this song originated in medieval Germany, sung by schoolchildren as a way to learn their numbers. The song first made its way into the Haggadah sometime in the 16th century, which means there must be more to it than just a cool way to count. According to Rav Yissachar Dov of Belz, there is a reason Echad Mi Yodea is at the closing of the Haggadah. He compares it to a humble wealthy man who had a little too much wine and started showing off all his possessions. After hopefully not too much wine, we are much the same at the Seder table, Echad Mi Yodea being a list of our nation's treasures.

The Ma'aseh Nissim adds that the song is a way of listing thirteen ways in which we differ from other nations: We have one G-d, Hashem gave us the Luchot, we come from three Avot and four Imahot, the written Torah was given to us, the Oral Torah was given (and is unique) to us, we were given Shabbat and Brit Milah, Jewish lineage is through the mother, we were given the Ten Commandments, our actions can affect our decrees, we descend from twelve tribes, and we ask for Hashem's mercy. Similarly, Rabbi Chagai Vilosky is of the opinion that these

are a collection of statements from Chazal of the Jewish People's merits that lead to our redemption.

I think that all these reasons integrate with each other perfectly. Echad Mi Yodea is a reflection of what makes the Jewish Nation special, and a list of the values we treasure the most. We recognize that we are different from all the other nations, and with these merits Hashem took us out of Egypt.

It is worth noting that the only line that is repeated in every verse of the song is "Echad Elokeinu". We conclude the seder with pride in being the chosen nation of the Master of the Universe, and that we are able to thank Hashem for each and every one of the reasons He took us out of Egypt.

Now, who knows one?

