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On the Study of Haggadah:

A Note on **Arami Oved Avi** and Biblical Intertextuality

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, zt"l

Transcribed by Rabbi Aton Holzer, MD

[The verse (Devarim 26:7) states] "And he saw our affliction." This refers to abstinence from marital relations as it states, "And God saw the Jewish people and God knew."

Passover Haggadah The essence of *perishus derech erez* (abstinence) is that the Egyptian oppressors disrupted Jewish family life. Because of the killing of their children, Jewish men couldn't live a normal life with their wives. The same happened under the Nazis just a number of years ago. But this basis of this passage in the Haggadah is cryptic. What did the Ba'al Haggadah feel the need to explain? How does he derive "this refers to abstinence from marital relations" from the Scriptural citation?

And the Egyptians treated us harshly and they tortured us and imposed hard labor on us. And we called out to God the Lord of our forefathers and God heard our voices and saw our torture and our toil and our pressure.

Devarim 26:6-7 Vanitzak (and we called out)—what did they complain about? They complained that they were tortured, *Vayaaneinu* and their *tefillah* was accepted. *Vayishma Hashem es Koleinu* (And God heard our voices)—God was aware of the inui. Why did the Torah then have to say *Vayar Es Anyeinu* (and [He] saw our torture)? Apparently *Vayar Es Anyeinu* refers to a different inui than *Vayaaneinu*. There are many kinds of *inuyim*, of torture.

It came to pass many days later that the King of Egypt died and the Jewish people were despondent because of the labor and they cried out and their cries ascended to God from the labor. And God heard their cries and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God saw the Jewish people and God knew.

Shemos 2:23-25 The *za'akah* (prayer) concerned the inui that stemmed from the *avodah* (labor), *Vayasimu Alav Sarei Misim Limaan Anoso Bisivlosam*. (They placed on them taxation officers in order to torture them with their load, Shemos 1:11)—*sivlosam* and this inui are the same. The Jews complained about the fact that their labor was backbreaking, torturous, subject to Egyptian chicanery; they needed to fill a quota every day, and the work was not productive. Slaves become accustomed to their overall way of life and don't resent it, but they do resent unproductive labor, physical pain, the misery of having to deliver a quota of bricks every day, of working without pay, of being beaten. Those were the experiences included in *Vanitzak El Hashem Elokei Avoseinu* (And we called out to God the Lord of our forefathers). How do I know this? The Torah in Shemos records that *Vataal Shavasam El HaElokim Min Haavodah* (their cries ascended to God from the labor)—their cries rose from the work—they complained about all the aspects of cruel, unproductive physical *avodah*. The people complained about the inui from the *avodah*, and God accepted their prayer.

Since the Torah writes *Vayishma Hashem Es Koleinu* (and God heard our voices), the statement *Vayar Es Onyeinu* (and saw our torture) is unnecessary. Therefore, *Vayar* refers to God "seeing" a different matter, one about which they didn't complain. This matter was not included in their prayers, it was unknown to them or, if known, it was a secondary concern, thought to be minor; but God saw that which they did not emphasize. One aspect of bondage worried the people most—work, *Min Haavoda* but there was a different experience of which the people were unaware, one that caused them to suffer, that inflicted pain upon them, even as this kind of suffering was not experienced as a major evil by the people themselves. When God came down to redeem them, *Vayar Elokim* He saw something that they did not see; *Yayeida Elokim* He knew something that they did not know—that it is not the physical slavery, but an aspect unknown to them that nonetheless, in time, would destroy *Knesses Yisrael*. That *anyenu* is *Prishus Derech Eretz* how the Egyptians attempted to dissolve the Jewish family.

God is omniscient; he felt the people's distress and pain about matters that they didn't mention. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* liberated the Jewish people because they were slaves and oppressed, but he saw something they didn't see.

[The verse (Shemos 3:7) states] "And God said: I have surely seen," it doesn't say, "I have seen" but rather, "I have surely seen" (using the same verb twice). God told Moshe: You see one perspective, but I see two.

Shemos Rabbah 3:2 You see the most conspicuous afflictions, but I also see the torture and pain that is private, in your intimate life, that which you don't emphasize, that of which you are not aware. This interpretation is not a *derashah* (homiletic interpretation), but rather *peshat* (literal understanding) in the verse—for without this explanation, there is no need to mention *Divine yedi'ah* (knowledge) after His having heard, *Vayishma Elokim Es Nakasam*, (Shemos 2:24). The message is that those small matters that undermine human dignity are more responsible for Divine action and redemption than the slavery itself.

[The verse (Devarim 26:7) states] "And our toil." This refers to the sons as it states (Shemos 1:22) "Every son who is born shall be thrown into the river and all daughters shall live."

Passover Haggadah *ViEs Amaleinu Elu Habanim* (And our toil. This refers to the sons)—I understand this passage in the same spirit as the preceding. The edict concerning the sons was issued 80 years before Moshe's mission, when Moshe was a baby; the decree had long been abandoned, and the Jews of the Exodus were the third generation on. The Pharaoh who had issued that edict had died, and the Jews had forgotten about his decree; their cries concerned only the whip of the oppressor that cracked over them if they did not deliver their quota. The fact that 80 years before there had been a holocaust of children—this,

they had forgotten. It is not yet 80 years since the Holocaust we witnessed, and how many have forgotten? Chazal raise the possibility that the Pharaoh of the Exodus killed children as well—regarding Vayamas Melech Mitzrayim (The king of Egypt died), Chazal (Shemos Rabbah 1:34) understand that Pharaoh became a leper and killed children for his therapeutic baths. The Jews understood that edict very well, since it concerned their own children. But the Haggadah cites

Kol Haben Hayilod Heyeorah Tashlichuhu (Every son who is born shall be thrown into the river)—those children were the ones killed 80 years ago! But God remembers Es Anyeinu ViEs Amaleinu (our torture and our toil)—not those killed now, but even a decree which was abandoned, archaic by this time, even though the people didn't mention it. Who remembers the Holocaust now? Even people who lost close members of their own family don't remember; even those who themselves went through Treblinka or Auschwitz—many have told me that their feelings are dulled, that they don't remember, that they don't want to remember it.

So the people didn't mention this edict in Vanitzak (we cried out), but as for HaKadosh Baruch Hu—all those matters, He remembered. They complained about the wounds that the oppressor inflicted the day before, Min Haavodah (from the labor), but there were many items, cruel, tragic items that they forgot. One of them was the tragedy of the little children thrown into the Nile—80 years later, who is supposed to remember? But Hakadosh Baruch Hu remembers. That is peshat in Vayar Es Anyeinu Vies Amaleinu.

I want to tell you something else. Everything which is Torah is not simply to be read, but also understood. Sippur yetzias Mitzrayim (the recounting of the Exodus), in particular—sippur means not to be recited, but understood.

A story is told of R. Eliezer, R. Yehoshua, R. Elazar ben Azaryah, R. Akiva and R. Tarfon who were reclining in Bnei Brak and recounting (mesaprim) the Exodus the entire night.

Passover Haggadah What is the meaning of mesaprim? It means that they tried to understand, to study in depth. To understand the Haggadah well is a part of the kiyum (fulfillment) of sippur yetzias Mitzrayim.

The backbone, the center of the Haggadah is the portion of Arami Oved Avi (Devarim 26:5-8); if you omit Arami Oved Avi, the Haggadah is merely a collection of introductions. All of the Haggadah leads up to Arami Oved Avi; the moment it is finished, we say Rabban Gamliel Hayah Omer, and proceed to Hallel.

We recite the parsha of Arami Oved Avi when bringing bikkurim (first fruits), but in hava'as bikkurim (bringing the first fruits), the obligation is limited to reading the parsha. Although the text is the same, the mitzvah of sippur yetzias Mitzrayim has no shiur (fixed amount). Our job is not simply to read the text of Arami Oved Avi, but to supplement it with Torah SheB'Al Peh (oral tradition) whenever there is an interpretation.

In order for Hallel to be justified, every year one must detect something new in the Haggadah. One must understand Arami Oved Avi using the method of parallelism—to take the same word, and look it up in another story of yetzias Mitzrayim in the Torah. By studying both stories at the same time and creating cross-references from one story to another, we understand better the semantics, the words of Arami Oved Avi. In our example, we detected the superfluity in Vayishma Hashem Es Koleinu and Vayar Es Anyeinu in the context of Arami Oved Avi, but we needed to corroborate the difference between them by comparing them with parallel Pesukim in Shemos: Vayishma Elokim Es Naakasam ... Vayar Elokim Es Bnei Yisrael Vayeida Elokim One must compare the parsha of Arami Oved Avi with the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim in Shemos. By following these parallel pesukim, I gain better insight into Arami Oved Avi.

The mitzvah of Haggadah is to understand in depth the parsha of Arami Oved Avi by employing the comparative method, by interpreting Arami

Oved Avi in the light of the sippur yetzias Mitzrayim in Shemos. Usually people don't try to study Arami Oved Avi in depth and get involved; it's very difficult. Sometimes we don't understand the relationship, or the concept behind [the verse linkages]. When I speak about the Haggadah, I try very hard to get to Arami Oved Avi and to clear up these points. I'm now at the end of Arami Oved Avi; it took me several years. There are some very difficult passages, and the matter requires a lot of study. I've spoiled you. You yourselves, in the manner that you work on a Ramban, you should work on the Haggadah, to understand what the relationship is between the parshiyos in Shemos and Arami Oved Avi.

This article is a transcription of portions of an undated shiur at Yeshiva University in the late '70s or early '80s. English translations were added by the editorial staff. Rabbi Holzer ('99YC, '05BRGS, '06R) is a surgical dermatologist in private practice in Miami Beach, FL.

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Charoses: Why Don't We Recite a Beracha?

Rabbi Hershel Schachter Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

Adapted by Rabbi Schachter's students from his sefer, Eretz HaTzvi no. 3.

The Mishna (Pesachim 114a) lists charoses among the matza, maror and other items placed on the table as part of the Pesach seder. However, the Mishna also records a difference of opinion as to the status of the charoses. According to R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok, charoses constitutes a mitzva, just as the other components of the seder ritual. However, the Tanna Kamma rules that there is no mitzva of charoses per se. Rather, the Gemara (116a) explains that it is present at the table so that maror may be dipped in the charoses, "mishum kapa." Namely, the charoses neutralizes harmful contaminants that may be present in the maror.

Rambam, in his Commentary on the Mishna, states: R. [Elazar B'Rebi] Tzadok who rules that charoses is a mitzva would require one to recite the blessing, "[He] who has sanctified us with his mitzvos and commanded us on the eating of charoses." This is not the common practice. Rambam, Commentary on the Mishna, Pesachim 10:3

According to Rambam's Commentary on the Mishna, a natural extension of R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok's opinion is that an additional beracha must be recited on charoses, "al achilas charoses." This follows the pattern of matza and maror and other mitzvos that are fulfilled when one eats certain foods.² Rambam concludes by stating that normative halacha is not in accordance with R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok, seemingly because our text of the Haggadah does not include a blessing for charoses, indicating that common practice follows the ruling of the Tanna Kama.

However, in Mishneh Torah, Rambam states as follows: Charoses is a mitzva ordained by the Rabbis to commemorate the mortar used [by the Jewish people] when they were enslaved in Egypt. How is it made? One takes dates or dried figs or raisins or the like and crushes them.

Vinegar and spices are added in the way that mortar is mixed with straw. Charoses is brought to the table on the nights of Pesach. Hilchos Chametz U'Matza 7:11

This ruling stands in contradistinction with the words of Rambam in his Commentary on the Mishna. In Mishneh Torah, Rambam codifies the view of R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok by stating that charoses is deemed a mitzva. Moreover, in Mishneh Torah, Rambam makes no mention of a beracha for charoses, whereas his Commentary on the Mishna identifies the blessing as a logical extension of R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok's opinion.³

Rav Soloveitchik explained that Rambam in Mishneh Torah, in fact, follows the opinion of R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok. However, in order to understand why there is no beracha recited, we must understand the nature of the mitzva of charoses. Indeed, eating charoses or dipping

maror in charoses are not mitzvos in the same formal sense applied to the eating of matza or maror. However, there is a mitzva to place charoses on the seder table because of the symbolic significance of zecher la'teet, a reminder of the mortar used by the Jewish people during the slavery in Egypt.

For this reason, Rambam emphasizes its placement at the table when he lists the components of the seder at the very beginning of his discussion of the seder in Chapter 7 of Hilchos Chametz U'Matza. This serves as the primary designation of the role of charoses at the seder. He describes the dipping of the maror in charoses only later in Mishneh Torah when he expands upon the protocol of the mitzvos of the seder in Chapter 8. The purpose of dipping maror in charoses is merely to establish a connection between the charoses and the meal in which it is eaten. Its presence at the table as a zecher la'teet is actualized through this incorporation into the seuda (festive meal) of the seder night.

The Rav understood Rambam's omission of the beracha for charoses in light of this explanation. As a rule, Chazal instituted blessings for mitzvos only in the context of a ma'aseh mitzva (an action used to perform a mitzva). In other words, when one fulfills a mitzva without performing a specific, prescribed action, no beracha is recited.⁴ Therefore, even according to R. Elazar B'Rebi Tzadok, Rambam rules that no beracha is said. The mitzva of charoses is achieved simply through its presence at the seuda. Dipping the maror is only a vehicle through which halacha recognizes the charoses' association with the seder; it is not a ma'aseh mitzva in its own right.

Rav Soloveitchik demonstrated that the aforementioned principle of birchos hamitzvos is manifest in other areas of halacha, as well. For example, Tosafos cite the opinion of Behag (Ba'al Halachos Gedolos): Halachos Gedolos ruled that if one missed a day of counting the omer, he should no longer continue counting because we require "complete" [counting]. This opinion is very puzzling and should not be accepted. Tosafos, Menachos 66a

According to Behag, if one omits counting one of the 49 days of the omer, the mitzva can no longer be fulfilled. Apparently, Behag views sefiras ha'omer as one mitzva with 49 requisite components. Pri Megadim (O.C. 489:13) questions Behag's opinion based on our practice to make a separate beracha on each night of the omer. Seemingly, the institution of individual berachos indicates that we fulfill 49 individual mitzvos, contrary to Behag's approach.

However, the Rav resolved Behag's opinion based on the above rule. We saw from charoses that a beracha is not recited in the context of a kiyum mitzva (fulfillment of a mitzva) in the absence of a ma'aseh mitzva. Thus, it is the ma'aseh mitzva that is the impetus for the recitation of a beracha. A beracha can be recited in the context of a ma'aseh mitzva, even when it does not constitute a kiyum mitzva. Even Behag agrees that each night of the omer affords the opportunity to perform a ma'aseh mitzva by counting the omer. While Behag believes that no kiyum mitzva exists until all 49 days have passed, a beracha can indeed be recited each time one counts the omer. The beracha is on the ma'aseh mitzva.⁵

2 Tur (O.C. 475) rules that charoses is a mitzva. Nevertheless, he writes that a beracha is not recited because charoses is secondary to the maror with which it is eaten. Therefore, only the blessing "al achilas maror" must be recited. This may parallel the concept of ikar and tafel (primary and secondary) that pertains to birchos hanehenin (Berachos 44a). For further elaboration, see Eretz HaTzvi, pg. 15.

3 See Lechem Mishneh who observes that Rambam must have reversed his ruling and rejected the opinion of the Tanna Kama. However, Lechem Mishneh does not suggest a solution to Rambam's omission of a beracha for charoses.

4 A related expression of this is the principle, one always recites a beracha before its performance (Pesachim 7b). This highlights the

performance (not the fulfillment) as the critical aspect of the recitation of the beracha.

5 Rav Soloveitchik also offered a different explanation to Behag's opinion. The reason why one who skips a day of counting may not continue counting with a beracha is because sefiras ha'omer requires consecutiveness. One who has skipped a day of counting cannot consider himself as "counting" because his count lacks consecutiveness.

According to this explanation, Behag agrees that there are 49 mitzvos. If, for example, one misses the eighth night, it does not negate the fulfillment of the mitzvos that were performed on the first seven nights. It merely prevents someone from continuing to count on day nine because according to Behag, the number eight will always be lacking from his count. Based on this explanation, Pri Megadim's question is no longer valid. The question is premised on the fact that according to Behag, there is only one elongated mitzva. According to this explanation, Behag agrees that one fulfills a mitzva every night of the omer until one misses a night.

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Special Edition
Mitzvah Of "Vehigadita L'Binchoh" Retelling The Story Of Exodus Pesach: The Seder Night

The Mesorah - From Parent To Child Have you ever gone to a lecture or class, only to have it go directly over your head? One of the most important rules of public speaking is to know your audience. Speak to them on their level and with terms with which they are familiar. Otherwise you run the risk of boring them or even possibly putting them to sleep.

At the Pesach Seder, this rule is especially important. The stakes are much higher! If we don't speak to our children and guests on their level, we could miss out on the fulfillment of a Mitzvah D'Oraisa, the commandment to tell our children the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. If we analyze every nuance of the language of the Haggadah at the Seder, causing our children to fall asleep before we have told them the full story, we may have fulfilled the Mitzvah of Limud HaTorah at our Seder, but the Mitzvah of "VeHigadita L'Binchoh" will remain unfulfilled!

As we approach Pesach, it is worthwhile to take a few quiet moments amidst the hustle bustle of our normal Pesach preparations to prepare for the performance of this very important Mitzvah. As parents, we must make sure that we are ready to perform this Mitzvah by teaching ourselves the story, and thinking about how to ensure that it is understood by our children, each on his own level. This can be done by studying the Midrashim relevant to the Exodus - The Midrash Says (Rabbi Moshe Weissman - Bnei Yaakov Publications) on Shemos is an excellent source to look up. Also, in Hebrew, the Sefer Kol Aggados Yisroel has many beautiful and fascinating stories about Yitzias Mitzrayim that are not commonly known.

Why, you ask, is this really so important? The entire year I rely on my children to come home and teach ME about the Parsha? Why all of a sudden when it comes to Pesach must we switch roles?!

Horav Shimon Schwab Zatzal one jokingly commented during one of his Shiurim on the Haggadah that today we have a new Mitzvah of "VeHigadita L'Avicha" - And You Shall Tell Your Father! Our children come home from school weighed down with Divrei Torah and Question and Answer sheets, and are bursting to share their wealth of knowledge with us. However, we must bear in mind that the Torah explicitly states that the manner of the Haggadah must be "Ki Yishalchah Binchoh" - When Your Son Asks You. The child must do the asking, not the parent.

If the parent is asking questions and the child is providing the parent with the answers that he learned in school, their roles are reversed. This specifically rules out use of Question & Answer sheets that the children bring home. (This is not to say that they shouldn't be used at all. They can be used during the daytime Seudos when there is no specific Mitzvah of Haggadah). The Divrei Torah that add to and illuminate the actual story of Yetzias Mitzrayim may be shared. However care must be taken that younger siblings should not be distracted from the Mitzvah at hand.

Throughout the generations it has become customary to invite guests to the Seder. Often, the hosts feel torn between devoting attention to the guests and to the children. Generally, if we would explain to our guests that a Seder must be devoted to the children, as this is the primary time of the year when we transmit the Mesorah to our children, they will welcome the opportunity to participate on those terms. If, however, we see that the guests will need special attention that will come at the expense of the children, we may need to arrange for them to participate in a Seder with a family that does not have such small children, and welcome them to our own homes for the daytime Seudos.

II. Pesach, Matzoh, and Marror

"Rabban Gamliel used to say, whoever neglects to mention these three things on Pesach, has not fulfilled his obligation (of Haggadah); Pesach, Matzoh, and Marror."

At first glance, the above statement is puzzling. Why should it be necessary to mention Pesach, Matzoh, and Marror to fulfill our obligation to retell the story of Yitzias Mitzrayim, when we are actively partaking of them? And if we do mention them, is that considered fulfillment of the Mitzvah even though we might neglect to mention other parts of the story, such as the birth of Moshe, or the splitting of the Red Sea?!

It seems that Rabban Gamliel may be telling us not what to say, but how to say it.

To illustrate, let's take the example of a story told in a full length novel. This novel has basically three parts, a beginning, a climactic middle, and an ending, yet it is 650 pages long. Readers Digest may decide to print a condensed version of this novel and leave out certain parts. However those three basic parts must remain. Someone else may decide to abridge the story further into a children's edition. Much of the original full length novel will be left out, but the three integral parts of the story will remain.

The same is true with the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. There are three integral parts of the story. The beginning, the bondage of the Bnei Yisroel, is represented by the Marror. The climactic middle is the process leading up to their freedom, culminating with Makas Bechoros. This is represented by the Korban Pesach. Finally we have the end, the actual exit from bondage, represented by the Matzah.

Rabban Gamliel is teaching us that we must decide on which version is appropriate for our audience, full length, condensed, or the children's version. But our story must at least touch on each of these three integral parts to fulfill our obligation. If we dwell on Divrei Torah on "Arami Oveid Avi" and have to rush through the remainder as the children are nodding off, we have not fulfilled our obligation!

III. Educating The Child Within

Rav Dessler Zatzal (Michtav M'Aliyahu, Vol. 4) points out that the Haggadah was set up by Chazal to facilitate fulfillment of the Mitzvah of "Vehigadata L'Bincho," engraving the truth of Yetzias Mitzrayim and our formation as a nation, on our children's hearts. From the Haggadah we can learn many educational techniques. For example, we see that teaching is best done in question and answer form, especially if the child is posing the question on his own. That is why we reward questions with candies and/or nuts, and we do many things "Kdei Sheyishalu HaTinokos" - so that the children should ask. Similarly, we use visual animation to stimulate understanding, such as raising the Matzoh and Marror when explaining about them. We explain practical ramifications

by bringing seemingly abstract ideas to life: "If we had not been taken out...we and our children would still be enslaved." And so forth.

However, the Mitzvah to educate about Yetzias Mitzrayim is not only for our children. As the Gemara says, if you do not have a child to ask the Four Questions, your wife should ask. And if you do not have a wife, you should ask yourself! Even if you are in the presence of another Talmid Chochom, you should ask one another the Four Questions, as if you were the youngest child.

How is it possible, asks Rav Dessler, that the educational techniques used for the youngest of children be the same as those used for an eighty year old Talmid Chochom?

Rav Dessler gives the following eye-opening answer: The Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim is to internalize the truth of Yitzias Mitzrayim within our hearts. Although a person may be intellectually mature and wise, we are all young at heart. The way to impress the heart is the same for child and adult. Internalizing into an adult heart requires the same pedagogic skills that are required to penetrate a child's heart. During the Seder we are all required to be young again, and allow ourselves to be impressed and inspired, like the youngest of children, with the story of Hashem's miracles in forming us into Am Yisroel.

Pesach: "We Were Slaves..." A True Story

This true but dramatized story demonstrates that even the Gentiles realize the importance and the impact of The Seder Night on Jewish youth. Erev Rosh Chodesh Nisan 5695 (1935) in the State Run School in the City of Luban, Russia.

"Students!" called the Russian teacher in a loud voice, "I have the following important announcement to make. Tomorrow we start an extended school day schedule. Studies will conclude at eleven o'clock at night!"

An oppressive silence filled the classroom. Only the sounds of quiet rustling could be heard beneath the benches. No one had the nerve to express an opinion on the matter. It was well known what the consequence of that would be, during the reign of the Russian Communists, under the rule of the ruthless Stalin.

The Jewish students exchanged understanding glances. "Of course...tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh Nisan...". They understood very well the reasoning behind this very strange decision.

This was one more way that the Communists chose to wage war against the Jewish faith...

Starting from the time when Stalin rose to power in 1929, the spiritual state of Russian Jewry had continuously deteriorated. The Communists waged a campaign to uproot any trace of the Jewish faith, no matter what the price.

When they saw that their campaign was not very successful with the adults and the elderly, who continued to practice their faith with tremendous self-sacrifice, the Communists decided to turn their attention to the young children.

"We will turn the Jewish youth into great Communists! A new generation will arise that will be ignorant of the archaic customs of their fathers! If we can get the youth - there will be no Jewish continuity," they thought with content.

Some Jews who had distanced themselves from their heritage and joined the Communist Party, told the authorities the big secret: The Seder night. This is when the "brainwashing" occurs. The proceedings at the Seder have a very powerful and influential effect on the souls of the youth. Parents sit and tell their children about the Exodus from Egypt, and imbue their children with the foundations of the Jewish religion.

Therefore, by no means can we allow the youth to participate in this ceremony, or in any of the preparations for it.

A strategy to ensure this was quickly devised. "The children will be required to stay in school until eleven o'clock at night. By the time they return home, they will be too tired to participate in the Seder. This will

definitely put a stop to this nonsensical brainwashing," plotted the authorities.

This plan was immediately implemented. All students were required to remain in school until this extremely late hour. Obviously, towards the late afternoon the students could no longer apply their full attention to their studies. The teachers would try to come up with other ways of occupying the children, such as singing revolutionary songs, and telling stories about what a better place the world was going to be when all countries would see the true light and embrace Communism.

At eleven o'clock the students would return home, physically and emotionally exhausted, and would immediately fall into a deep sleep.

The Seder Night

In a narrow and musty room at a festively set table sat Rav Moshe Feinstein. His appearance was one of glory and Holiness. At his side sat his Rebbitzin, Sima. They gazed at the table with pleasure, how much effort had they both put in to procure a few Kosher matzos - an item forbidden by the Russian authorities...

The shutters of the home were tightly closed. They could not allow the Russians to become aware of what was going on in their home. Secret police were patrolling the streets, the danger was great...

"We were once slaves...and we still are slaves," said Rav Moshe to his Rebbitzin, "but with Hashem's help, we must strengthen ourselves..." He started to say the Haggadah, and from time to time would softly sing the melodies of the Seder night.

Around the table stood chairs for their children, but they remained forlorn and empty...

Where were they? Why weren't they sitting around the table?

Yes... at this late hour they were still in school, by the command of the authorities.

The Feinstein children, and all other Jewish children, would not be allowed to celebrate the Seder with their families.

The clock chimed eleven times.

Rav Moshe and his wife had already completed reading the Haggadah. They looked toward the door with anticipation... "In a few minutes they'll come," they thought.

At eleven thirty the children entered the home, drowsy and exhausted. They could barely keep their heads up.

"What can anyone request from them at an hour like this?" asked Rav Moshe in pain.

"My dear Kinderlach," he said to them in a soft voice, "Come, sit on my knees."

"Oy, Tatte," the children sleepily called out, "Tonight is the Seder. We've been looking forward to this for so long! But..." Their eyes slowly drooped down...

"Come, say after me," their father tried to keep them up for just a few moments longer.

"Rabban Gamliel Omer, Kol Shelo Omar Shelosha Devarim Hallalu Lo Yatzah Yedei Chovosoh. V'Eilu Hein - Pesach, Matzoh, U'Morror! (Rabban Gamliel said, anyone who does not say these three things on Pesach, has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are them - Pesach, Matzoh, and Morror.)"

The children awoke for the moment and repeated after their father, word for word.

The Rebbitzin gave each of them a little wine, a K'Zayis of Matzoh, fed them, and sent them off to bed." It is a Leil Shimurim (a night of protection) tonight," she whispered into their ears, "May Hashem protect you, my precious ones!"

"My dear children," she thought in pain, "Even our Holidays they are stealing from you."

It is difficult! It is very difficult to raise children in this type of atmosphere... We must leave this place as soon as possible...

"L'Shana HaBoh B'Yerushalayim," sang Rav Moshe, "Today we are slaves, next year we will be free..."

"Amen," called out the Rebbitzin as she wiped away a hidden tear from her eye.

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Four New Questions for Your Seder

Sparking discussion on some of Passover's most important themes.
by **Rabbi Benjamin Blech**

Jews love questions. So it's no surprise that the Seder, commemorating the birth of our people, is structured in a question/answer format. Participants are meant to ask and to spark lively discussion and exploration. In this spirit, let me add to the Seder's four questions an additional four that pick up on some of the most important themes to contemplate at the Passover table.

1. A question on the main theme of the Seder Why do we call it the Seder? "Seder" means order. And Jewish commentators explain that the most important idea of the holiday is that history is not happenstance but rather that it follows a divinely decreed order. When God took us out of Egypt we discovered that God didn't exhaust His connection with the world by creating it; He continues to maintain an ongoing and caring relationship with those who love Him. God took us out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, so that we could forevermore know that He is involved with our lives. Whatever happens to us isn't coincidence; it's God's will. The events of our lives follow a script written by God. The existential meaningless of life viewed from an atheist's perspective is replaced by the faith of a believer who knows that there is a Seder, a heavenly decreed order, to the seemingly strange but ultimately profound stories of our lives. A close friend of mine who became religious later in life and who lives in Los Angeles shared with me this story. As a way of publicly acknowledging his love of Torah, he chose for his car's license plate the word halachah. A while back he found himself followed by a driver frantically honking him and motioning him to pull over to the side of the road. Although somewhat frightened, he complied. The man rushed over to his window to tell him he had to share his amazing experience. His life had recently presented him with some severe setbacks. Despondent, he decided he could no longer believe in God or hope for Divine assistance. He was ready to make a break with his past and his commitment to Judaism. He thought to himself, I'll give God one more chance. If He really exists and wants me to maintain my faith, then let him send me a sign. "And then suddenly driving in front of me," he confided, "was the license plate with the word halachah - the Hebrew word for Jewish law. I have to thank you for indirectly being the medium for God's message, and allowing me to hear his response." Was that just coincidence? How wise is the insight that "coincidence is merely God's way of choosing to remain anonymous." There are moments when serendipity is too strange to be anything other than the voice of God reinforcing the concept of Seder, order, in our lives. Question #1: Were there times in your life when it became clear that God intervened - and it was divinely decreed Seder rather than coincidence?

2. A question on the theme of family If the Seder is so important, a student once asked me, how come it's observed in the home and not in the synagogue? The answer was obvious. Precisely because it is so important the Torah made its focus the family rather than the house of God. The story of the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt lacks one detail. Why did it happen? Was there any sin of the Jews to account for the tragedy? The rabbis weren't hesitant to give the answer. When the Jews came down to Egypt, they came "every man and his household"

(Exodus 1:1). They understood the centrality of the home as the forger of morality and commonly held values. The text then tells us, “and the land became filled with them [the Israelites]” (Exodus, 1:7). The Midrash elaborates: They now filled the land, the circuses and the theaters, and no longer saw their homes as crucial to their spiritual being. For deliverance to finally come, God demanded that they “take a lamb for family, a lamb for a household” and re-create what they had lost. The Last Supper of Egypt was a family meal, not a communitywide celebration. At the very beginning of our history it was made clear that appreciating the importance of the home would be the key to our survival. Indeed the very first letter of the Torah, the Rabbis point out, is beit- the Hebrew letter that means “house,” because the Torah itself requires first and foremost commitment to the family. Question #2: How can we recreate the centrality of family in Jewish life?

3. A question on the theme of children The Seder revolves almost entirely around the children. The reason is obvious. Passover is the holiday when the Jewish nation was born and it is the time when it must continue to be reborn throughout the generations. The children are our future. They represent continuity and survival. It is to them we pass over our heritage every Passover. And that is no easy task. Not all of our children are willing to follow our guidance. Indeed, there are four kinds of sons. There is the wise son and the wicked son, the simple son and the one who does not even know or want to ask. How do we reach them all? How do we make them appreciate the values that give our lives meaning? There is a profound message in the way the Haggadah describes them. We contrast the wise son and the wicked. Yet this seems to be an illogical pairing. Wise implies intelligence and learning. Its opposite is ignorant. Similarly, the opposite of wicked is righteous; the emphasis is on character rather than cleverness. We should either speak of the wise son versus the foolish, or the pious son versus the wicked. The commentators find a profound idea in this seemingly injudicious juxtaposition. The opposite of the wise son is the wicked son because we believe that the ultimate cause of wickedness is An insufficient exposure to wisdom. The wicked son is wicked because we didn’t teach him enough to make him understand the joy of leading a life dedicated to Torah. We have lost many of our finest youth to assimilation and to a rejection of their heritage. Our successes are glorious. We delighted to read the heartening article by David Brooks in the New York Times a short time ago titled “The Orthodox Surge” in which he took note of the remarkable resurgence of Jews committed to Torah and Jewish values. Spirituality has become not only acceptable but admired by many. Yet the “wicked sons” – perhaps primarily because they were not given the opportunities to become wise – form a significant number of the Jewish community. It’s important to note that they were not cast-off or excluded from the Passover table. We are never allowed to forget them or ignore their presence. We need all of our children as part of our nation. And it is they who represent the greatest challenge to our religious commitment. Question #3: How can we reach – and teach – those of our children we have failed to inspire?

4. A question on the theme of slaughtering the Paschal Lamb The requirement for Jews being saved in the Passover story was to slaughter a lamb and to smear its blood on the doorpost so God would “pass over” that home and spare its inhabitants. What was the meaning of this seemingly bizarre ritual? The lamb was the national god of Egypt. It was the object of their worship. And for the Jews to deserve deliverance they had to prove they didn’t share the false idols of the Egyptians. Idolatry didn’t end with ancient paganism. Francis Bacon popularized the concept of “idols of the marketplace”. They are the false gods people in every generation and culture mistakenly worship. Contemporary society offers us countless examples. Americans worship at the altar of monetary success and fame. Movie stars who flaunt immorality are shamelessly deified. Business tycoons are the modern heroes of our age solely by virtue of their billions. For all too many, the only god is Mammon and

the only goal in life is to accumulate more wealth than others because “he who dies with the most toys wins.” It takes profound courage to go against the popular definition of success. It takes great spiritual strength to deny the superficial allure of a hedonistic lifestyle. It takes incredible valor to choose a life of value over the vanities of the trendy and fashionable tastemakers of our culture. Click here to receive Aish.com’s free weekly email. But that’s exactly what the Jews of Egypt had to do in order to be worthy of the miracle of the first Passover that allowed us to become God’s chosen people. They had to slaughter the lamb of Egyptian idolatry. Our challenge is to replicate their heroism in its contemporary format. Question #4: What are the most powerful idols of our day that challenge us to refute them in our quest for lives worthy of God’s deliverance and blessings? May our discussions at the Seder table bring us greater insight into resolving these four major challenges to our faith – and help us to hasten the time of final redemption.

Our Legacy Passed Along

A Passover letter to my child.

by Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

My dear child, It is now a quiet moment late at night. After an exhausting day of Passover cleaning, you have sunk into the sweetest of sleeps, and I am sitting here with a pile of haggadas, preparing for Seder night. Somehow the words never come out the way I want them to, and the Seder evening is always unpredictable. But so many thoughts and feelings are welling up in my mind and I want to share them with you. These are the words I mean to say at the Seder. When you will see me at the Seder dressed in a kittel, the same plain white garment worn on Yom Kippur, your first question will be, “Why are you dressed like this?” Because it is Yom Kippur, a day of reckoning. You see, each one of us has a double role. First and foremost we are human beings, creatures in the image of God, and on Yom Kippur we are examined if indeed we are worthy of that title. But we are also components of Klal Yisrael, the Jewish People, links in a chain that started over 3,000 years ago and will make it to the finish line of the end of times. It is a relay race where a torch is passed on through all the ages, and it is our charge, to take it from the one before and pass it on to the one after. Tonight we are being judged as to how well we have received our tradition and how well we are passing it on. “It is now 3,300 years since we received that freedom in Egypt. If we imagine the average age of having a child to be about 25 years of age, there are four generations each century. That means there is a total of 132 people stretching from our forefathers in Egypt to us today. 132 people had to pass on this heritage flawlessly, with a devotion and single-mindedness that could not falter. Who were these 133 fathers of mine? One had been in the Nazi death camps; one had been whipped unconscious by Cossacks. One had children stolen by the Czar, and one was the laughing stock of his “enlightened” brethren. One lived in a basement in Warsaw with many days passing with no food to his mouth; the other ran a stupendous mansion in France. One had been burned at stake for refusing to believe in the divinity of a flesh and blood, and one had been frozen to death in Siberia for continuing to believe in the divinity of the Eternal God. One had been hounded by a mob for living in Europe rather than Palestine, and one had been blown up by Palestinians for not living in Europe. One had been a genius who could not enter medical school because he was not Christian, and one was fed to the lions by the Romans... 132 fathers, each with his own story. Each with his own test of faith. And each with one overriding and burning desire: that this legacy be passed unscathed to me. And one request of me: that I pass this on to you, my sweet child. What is this treasure that they have given their lives for? What is in this precious packet that 132 generations have given up everything for? It is a great secret: That man is capable of being a lot more than an intelligent primate. That the truth of an Almighty God does not depend on public approval, and no matter how many people jeer at you, truth never

changes. That the quality of life is not measured by goods but by the good. That one can be powerfully hungry, and yet one can forgo eating if it is not kosher. That a penny that is not mine is not mine, no matter the temptation or rationalization. That family bonding is a lot more than birthday parties; it is a commitment of loyalty that does not buckle in a moment of craving or lust. And so much more. This is our precious secret, and it is our charge to live it and to become a shining display of "This is what it means to live with God." Click here to receive Aish.com's free weekly email. 132 people have sat Seder night after Seder night, year after year, and with every fiber of their heart and soul have made sure that this treasure would become mine and yours. Doubters have risen who are busy sifting the sands of the Sinai trying to find some dried out bones as residues of my great great grandfather. They are looking in the wrong place. The residue is in the soul of every one of these 132 grandfathers whose entirety of life was wrapped up in the preservation of this memory and treasure. It is unthinkable that a message borne with such fervor and intensity, against such challenges and odds, is the result of a vague legend or the fantasy of an idle mind. I am the 133rd person in this holy chain. At times I doubt if I am passing it on well enough. I try hard, but it is hard not to quiver when you are on the vertical shoulders of 132 people, begging you not to disappoint them by toppling everyone with you swaying in the wind. My dear child, may God grant us many long and happy years together. But one day, in the distant future, I'll be dressed in a kittel again as they prepare me for my burial. Try to remember that this is the treasure that I have passed on to you. And then it will be your turn, you will be the 134th with the sacred duty to pass on our legacy to number 135.

Haggadah Teasers by Moshe Erlbaum

Stretch your knowledge of the Haggadah text.

1. The Seder begins with a recounting of the 15 steps to be performed (Simanei Haseder – Kadesh, Urchatz, etc.). Which Hebrew letter appears here the most (9 times)? The letter raish appears nine times: urchatz, karpas, rachtza, maror, koreich, shulchan orech, barech, nirtzah.

2. Which of the Simanei Haseder (Kadesh, Urchatz, etc.) contains a Hebrew letter that is used twice? (4 answers) Hallel has two lameds. Korech has two kafs. Marror has two raishes. Motzie Matzah has two tzaddis.

3. What verse (that we say every day) is the only place in the Haggadah where Moshe's name is mentioned? In the paragraph following the ten plagues, we state that the Children of Israel "trusted in Hashem and in Moshe His servant." We say this verse every morning in Pesukei Dezimra, before the recital of "Az Yashir."

4. What expression describing Hashem appears 11 times in the Haggadah, but nowhere in the Torah? The expression "Hakadosh Baruch Hu" (the Holy One, blessed is He) appears 11 times in the Haggadah, but nowhere in the entire Torah.

5. What Torah text is contained in the Haggadah? The text beginning with the words "Arami Oved Avi" is found in parshas Ki Tavo (Deut. 26:5).

6. Which sages of the Mishnah (Tana'im) are mentioned in the Haggadah? (3 sages are mentioned twice, and 6 sages are mentioned once) Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya are mentioned twice in the Haggadah. Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Tarfon, Ben Zomah, Rabbi Yossi Hagalili, Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehuda are all mentioned once.

7. Which two of the ten plagues are mentioned twice in the Haggadah? The plagues of blood and pestilence (dever) are mentioned twice – once in the full listing of the plagues, and once in earlier paragraphs.

8. How many stanzas are in the "Dayeinu" song? What two other praises of Hashem in the daily prayers contain that same number? There are 15 stanzas in "Dayeinu." There are also 15 blessings in the daily

morning blessings (Birkos Hashachar), and 15 words of praise in the Emet Veyatziv paragraph recited after the Shema.

9. What 7 names of people from the Torah are mentioned in the verses of Hallel? Which 2 appear most frequently (4 references each)? "Yisrael" (Psalms 114:2, 115:9, 12, 118:2) and "Adam" (Psalms 115:4, 16, 118:6, 8) each appear four times in Hallel. These other names appear in Hallel: Mitzrayim the son of Cham, grandson of Noach (Psalms 114:1). Yaakov (Psalms 114:1, 7). Yehuda (Psalms 114:2). Aharon (Psalms 115:10, 12, 118:3). Yosef (Psalms 115:14).

10. Which 8 body parts are mentioned in Hallel? These body parts appear in Hallel: (1) hands (Psalms 115:4, 7), (2) eyes (115:5, 116:8), (3) ears (Psalms 115:6, 116:2), (4) legs (Psalms 115:7, 116:8), (5) fingers (Psalms 115:4), (6) mouth (Psalms 115:5), (7) nose (115:6), and (8) throat (Psalms 115:7).

11. Which body of water is mentioned in Hallel? The Jordan River (Yarden) is mentioned in Psalms 114:3.

12. Which chapter of Hallel is the shortest chapter of the entire Tanach? Psalms chapter 117 has only two verses.

This article can also be read at:

<http://www.aish.com/h/pes/f/hh/Haggadah-Teasers.html>

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to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

date: Thu, Mar 21, 2013 at 5:01 PM subject: articles for Yom Tov Making Our Days Count

**A Review of the Halachos of Sefiras HaOmer
 Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

In *Parshas Emor*, the Torah teaches us: *Hashem* spoke to Moshe saying, Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: "When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you will cut its harvesting, then you shall bring an *omer*-sized portion from the first of its harvest to the *kohen*. And he (the *kohen*) shall wave the *omer* before *Hashem* for your benefit, on the day after the 'day of rest' the *kohen* shall wave it... And you should count for yourselves from the day after the 'day of rest,' from the day you bring the *omer* of waving, until there will be seven complete weeks. Until the day after the seventh week, you shall count fifty days." (*Vayikra* 23:9-11, 15-16). It should be noted that the words in the *pasuk*, *mimacharas hashabbos*, which we have translated as the "the day after the 'day of rest,'" would usually be translated "the day after Shabbos." However, the Oral Torah (*Torah sheba'al peh*) teaches us that the words "day of rest" here mean the first day of **Pesach** (*Menachos* 65b). Thus, the *omer* offering is brought on the second day of Pesach, whether or not that date falls on the day after Shabbos. We begin to count the *omer* from the day we bring the *omer* offering, until the counting of seven weeks is completed.

The *Gemara* recounts a fascinating story that occurred at the time of the Second Temple. There was a group of non-believing Jews, the *Baytusim*, who disregarded the teachings of *Chazal*. (Indeed, the *Baytusim* also disavowed belief in reward and punishment and other basic Jewish tenets [see *Avos deRabbi Nassan*, Chapter 5:2].) Since the *Baytusim* followed their own interpretation of the *pasuk*, they decided that the *korban omer* must be offered on a Sunday and not necessarily on the second day of Pesach. They plotted to have *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* fall on Shabbos, realizing that the second day of Pesach would then fall on Sunday. The result would be that the *korban omer* would be offered on Sunday, even though it was not supposed to happen that particular year.

The *Baytusim* were so determined to have the *korban omer* offered on Sunday that they hired false witnesses in an attempt to manipulate the main *Beis Din* to declare *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* on a Shabbos. Fortunately, one of the witnesses they hired did not believe in the *Baytusi* creed and told the *Rabbonim* about the plot (*Rosh Hashanah*

22b). Because of this event, major changes were instituted in the type of witnesses accepted by the *Beis Din* (*Rosh Hashanah* 22a).

As mentioned above, the mitzvah of counting *omer* begins from the day the *korban omer* is offered. This implies that, when there is no *korban omer*, there is no requirement *min hatorah* to count the *omer* (*Menachos* 66a). Indeed, most *poskim* contend that since there is, unfortunately, no *Beis Hamikdash* today and there are no *korbanos*, there is no mitzvah *min hatorah* to count *omer* (*Ran*, end of *Pesachim*; see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 489:3 and *Mishnah Berurah*). However, *Chazal* instituted our counting *omer* even though there is no *Beis Hamikdash*, in order to remember the mitzvah as it was at the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* (*Menachos* 66a).

Details About the Counting Before counting the *omer*, one recites a *beracha* on the performance of the mitzvah. One should be careful to stand while reciting both the *beracha* and the counting (*Rosh*, end of *Pesachim*; *Shulchan Aruch* 489:1).

The Torah states: “And you should count for yourselves... seven complete weeks. Until the day after the seventh week, you shall count fifty days.” It is important to note that the Torah makes two statements: one that we should count seven weeks, and a second that we should count fifty days. Based on this observation, the *Gemara* derives that there are two mitzvos, one to count the days and the other to count the weeks (*Menachos* 66a).

Tosafos raises the following question: Why does the Torah say, “Until the day after the seventh week, you shall count **fifty** days,” if the mitzvah is to count for only forty-nine days? *Tosafos* explains that the verse should be translated: “Until the day after the seventh week, which is the fiftieth day, shall you count” (*Menachos* 65b s.v. *Kasuv*.) According to this translation, there is a mitzvah to count up until the fiftieth day, which is *Shavuos*, but that there is no mitzvah to count the fiftieth day itself.

As mentioned above, the *Gemara* rules that there is a mitzvah to count the weeks. Obviously, there is no mitzvah to count the weeks until the end of the first week, at which point there is a mitzvah to state that one week of counting has been completed. From this point on, is there a mitzvah to mention the weekly count every day, or is it sufficient to count the weeks only at the end of each week? According to the latter interpretation, one counts the weeks only seven times, once at the end of each week (*Tur*, quoting *Yesh Omrim*). However, the accepted opinion is that every day of *sefirah* (except for the first six days) one counts the number of days and then one calculates how that divides into weeks and days. Thus, on the eleventh day of *sefirah* we count, “Today is eleven days, which is one week and four days in the *omer*” (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 489:1). (According to the opinion of the *Yesh Omrim*, there is no mitzvah to count the weeks on the eleventh day. According to this opinion, the entire counting is: “Today is eleven days.”)

Some Practical Applications Someone who counts the wrong number has not fulfilled the mitzvah. However, if he remembered immediately and corrected his error, he has fulfilled the mitzvah (*Mishnah Berurah* 489:32).

One should not recite the blessing without knowing the day’s exact count, even if he knows that he will hear the correct count from someone else immediately. Rather, one should first find out what the correct count is before reciting the blessing (*Mishnah Berurah* 489:29 and *Shaar Hatziyun* ad loc.).

Sefirah can be counted in any language, provided one understands what he is saying. If he does not understand what he is saying, he has not fulfilled the mitzvah, even if he counts in Hebrew (*Magen Avraham*).

A very common question is whether one who missed counting one day of *sefirah* may still recite a *beracha* when he counts the remaining days. Several early *poskim* contend that someone who missed counting one day has no mitzvah to count the remaining days, since his counting of forty-nine days is no longer complete (*Tur*, quoting *Behag*). According

to this opinion, someone who missed one day may continue to count *sefirah*, but he is forbidden to recite a *beracha*, since he is no longer fulfilling a mitzvah. However, other *poskim* contend that missing one day does not affect the upcoming days. In their opinion, there is a mitzvah each day to count the *sefirah* of that day, even if one has not counted the preceding days (*Tur*, quoting *Rav Hai Gaon*). The *Shulchan Aruch* (489:8) treats this *shaylah* as an unresolved issue. Thus, he rules that someone who missed counting one day of *sefirah* should count the remaining days without a *beracha*. The count should continue, because it is possible that he is still fulfilling the mitzvah. Yet he does not recite a *beracha*, because if he is no longer fulfilling a mitzvah, the *beracha* would be a *beracha levatalah* (a *beracha* recited in vain).

In this case, and all other cases where there is a doubt as to whether one is still fulfilling the mitzvah, it is preferable to hear the *beracha* from someone who is definitely required to count (*Mishnah Berurah* ad loc.). The person reciting the *beracha* must have in mind to include the other person in his *beracha*, and the person who is not reciting the *beracha* must have in mind that he is being included in the *beracha*. If there is no one available to make the *beracha* for him, he should count *sefirah* without a *beracha*.

An Interesting *Shaylah* There is another interesting *shaylah* that results from the above-mentioned dispute whether each day’s *sefirah* counting is dependent on still having a complete count: Does a boy who becomes bar mitzvah between Pesach and *Shavuos* recite a *beracha* on the counting of *sefirah*? Even if the twelve-year old was counting *sefirah* every night very diligently, he was not fulfilling a mitzvah, since he was still a minor. Thus, if the mitzvah of counting *sefirah* is dependent on a complete count, the bar mitzvah *bachur* may not have a complete *sefirah* count.

Many *poskim* discuss this issue, and there is no common agreement what to do (See for example, *Birkei Yosef* 489:20; *Shaarei Teshuvah* 489:20; *Shu’t Maharam Shick* #269; *Shu’t Har Tzvi* 2:76). Therefore, one should ask his *rav* for a ruling on this *shaylah*.

As we mentioned above, someone who missed one day of *sefirah* should continue counting, but without a *beracha*. However, someone who is not sure if he missed counting one day may still count with a *beracha* (*Shulchan Aruch* 489:8). Since it is not certain that his counting is incomplete, he can rely on the possibility that his counting is still complete, with the possibility that the *halacha* is that one can recite a *beracha* even if the count is incomplete. This concept is called a *sefek sefeika*, which means that there are two possible approaches toward permitting one to do something. In this case, as there are two possible justifications for making a *beracha*, he may do so.

Similarly, in any other case where it is questionable whether he fulfilled the requirement to count, or where the law is that he should count without a *beracha* on a particular night, the *halacha* is that he may continue counting the next night with a *beracha* (*Mishnah Berurah* 489:38).

If, on a given night, someone counted *sefirah* without reciting a *beracha* first, he may not recite the *beracha* afterwards for that day’s counting. Though he fulfilled the mitzvah of counting *omer* that night, he is unable to fulfill the mitzvah of making a *beracha* on the counting. Therefore, one should be careful not to tell someone what night of *sefirah* it is before one has fulfilled the mitzvah (*Shulchan Aruch* 489:4). The accepted practice is to respond to the question “What night is it?” by stating what was the count of the previous day.

Some Unusual Applications What is the *halacha* if someone alluded to the correct number of the day’s *omer* count, but did so in an unusual way? For example, has someone fulfilled the mitzvah if he counted on the thirty-ninth day of the *omer* that today is “forty days minus one”? Is this considered a valid method of counting thirty-nine days, or must one count thirty-nine in a direct way? The *halacha* is that this unusual

method of counting is considered counting, and he has fulfilled the mitzvah (*Be'er Heiteiv* 469:6).

Another *shaylah* about an unusual method of counting has very common application. In Hebrew, one can allude to a number by reciting the Hebrew letter or letters that represent it. For example, one could attempt to count the eleventh day of *sefirah* by stating that today is *yud alef b'omer*, or attempt to count the thirty-third day of *sefirah* by counting that today is *lag b'omer*. *Poskim* dispute whether one fulfills the mitzvah if one counts this way. Whereas some *poskim* rule that this is a valid method of counting, other *poskim* rule that he has not fulfilled the mitzvah, since he did not count the number explicitly (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 489:6).

There is a very common *shaylah* that results from this dispute. On the evening of *Lag Be'omer* someone stated "tonight is *Lag Be'omer*" before he counted *sefirah*. Can he still recite a *beracha* on the counting of *sefirah* that night, or do we say that he has already counted for that night and cannot recite the *beracha* anymore? *Bi'ur Halacha* rules that this issue remains unresolved. Therefore, one should count in the regular way to make certain he fulfills the mitzvah, but without a *beracha* since there is a doubt whether he is still obligated to perform the mitzvah (*Bi'ur Halacha* 489:1 *s.v. moneh*). On subsequent nights, he would be able to resume counting with a *beracha*.

The *Korban Omer* was harvested at night, hence the mitzvah of counting *Omer* is at night. If the *omer* was not harvested at night, there is a dispute among *poskim* whether it could be harvested in the daytime (*Tosafos, Menachos* 66a). The same dispute is reflected in a different very germane *shaylah*: If someone forgot to count the *omer* at night, can he still fulfill the mitzvah if he counts in the daytime? Since the matter is disputed, he should count in the daytime, but without a *beracha*, since we refrain from making a *beracha* whenever it is uncertain whether one is performing a mitzvah (*Shulchan Aruch* 489:7). The accepted *pesak halacha* is that he may resume counting with a *beracha* the following evening (*Mishnah Berurah* 489:34).

Counting Before Nightfall As we mentioned above, according to most *poskim* the mitzvah of counting the *omer* is only rabbinic in our era, since unfortunately, the *Beis Hamikdash* is no longer standing. Some *poskim* contend that since the counting is only *miderabanan*, one is permitted to count the *omer* before nightfall (*Rosh* and other *Rishonim*, end of *Pesachim*). Thus, the practice developed in some communities to count the *omer* during twilight, even though it is uncertain whether it is day or night. *Shulchan Aruch* rules that one should preferably wait until after nightfall to count. However, someone who is *davening* in a *shul* where the people are counting before nightfall is permitted to count with them, lest he forget to count later (see *Shulchan Aruch* 489:2-3). In this situation, *Shulchan Aruch* rules that he should count together with the *shul* without a *beracha* and have in mind that if he remembers later, he will count again. If he indeed remembers to count again, then he recites a *beracha* and counts a second time. This ruling seems very strange. How can one count the second time with a *beracha* — didn't he fulfill the mitzvah the first time he counted? Counting with a *beracha* should be a *beracha levatalah*, a *beracha* recited in vain!

The answer is that, when he counted the first time, he made an automatic condition that if he indeed remembers to count again later, he does not want to fulfill the mitzvah now. It is considered that he specified that he does not want to fulfill the mitzvah. However, if he forgets to count later, then the first counting he performed is valid, since his condition was not fulfilled. Thus, he will rely on the opinions that counting *sefirah* before nightfall is valid, and he may resume counting the following night with a *beracha*.

Writing the Count Is writing out the number count of the *sefirah* considered counting *sefirah*? If someone wrote a letter before he had counted *sefirah*, and he dated the letter with that night's *sefirah* count, may he still count *sefirah* with a *beracha*? This issue is discussed at

length by *poskim*. The conclusion is that, although writing shows the intention of the person, it does not constitute speaking. When a mitzvah requires one to speak, such as saying *Shema*, reciting *tefillah*, or counting *omer*, one does not fulfill his mitzvah by writing. Thus, someone who dated a letter with the night's *sefirah* count before he counted *sefirah* can still recite a *beracha* on the night's *sefirah* count.

As mentioned above, the Torah associates the counting of the *sefirah* with the offering of the *korban omer*. An additional idea is conveyed by the *midrash*. When the Jews brought the Pesach offering in Egypt, they were eager to receive the Torah immediately. When they asked Moshe, "When do we receive the Torah?" he answered them, "On the fiftieth day." In their enthusiasm, each of them counted every day, in eager anticipation of the exciting day on which they would receive the Torah. In commemoration of this event, we count the days from Pesach until *Shavuos*. (This *midrash* is quoted by the *Ran* at the end of *Mesechta Pesachim*.) May we all be *zocheh* to anticipate receiving the Torah anew on *Shavuos* with the same excitement and enthusiasm that our ancestors had.

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Use of the Term Makom, Omnipresent, in the Haggadah

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Editor's note: This essay is adapted from Rabbi Adler's, Haggadah Shel Pesach Vayaged Yosef.

The name Makom referring to God is used frequently in the Haggadah: Blessed is the Omnipresent, Blessed is He And now the Omnipresent has brought us close to His service. How many levels of greatness has the Omnipresent provided for us?

Why is God identified as Makom and why is this name referred to so prominently in the Haggadah? The Rav suggested that the answer can be understood with the perspective of a comment found in the Gemara:

Rava said: Yechezkel and Yeshaya saw the same thing. What is Yechezkel comparable to? A villager who sees the king. What is Yeshaya comparable to? A city resident who sees the king.

Chagiga 13b Compare the initial revelations of Yechezkel and Yeshayahu. Yechezkel describes his initial vision throughout the first chapter of Sefer Yechezkel. That which he experiences is identified as *ma'aseh merakvah*. He is compared to the villager who is privileged to see the king on one special occasion and consequently is effusive in describing this sole encounter. Yeshayahu describes his initial encounter with God in the sixth chapter of Sefer Yeshayahu, and it occupies barely three verses. He is compared to a city resident who sees the king on a daily basis.

Yeshayahu offers prophecy during the time of the First Temple, when everyone could experience divine revelation. Anyone who entered the Beit ha-Mikdash encountered the Shechinah (Divine Presence). The Shechinah could be felt and seen everywhere. Therefore, when God appears to Yeshayahu, he does not elaborate and says:

Holy, Holy, Holy, is God, the Lord of Hosts, His glory fills the land. Yeshayahu 6:3

Yeshayahu, who lived during a time when one could see the king's palace every day, as it were, is described as the city boy who has access to the king at all times. There was no reason for him to elaborate upon his feelings and experience of divine revelation, since this was a common occurrence. On the other hand, Yechezkel offers prophecy at the time of the Temple's destruction, as the Jewish people are on the way to Bavel. When God appears to him it is a most unusual experience.

Consequently, he describes that initial encounter in effusive detail. Yechezkel does not know whether he will have the privilege of a second encounter. As he feels the Shechinah leaving him he says:

Blessed is the glory of God from his place (Makom). Yechezkel 3:12

Yechezkel is referring to mekomo hanistar, His hidden place. He is saying, I am willing to acknowledge God even if I never have the privilege of seeing his Shechinah again. Makom, therefore, is the name selected for God to describe him in a state of hester panim (hiding). It is for this reason that on Monday and Thursday, after the Torah reading, we recite a moving prayer:

Our brethren, members of the Jewish people, who are subject to persecution or captivity ... The Omnipresent should have compassion on them.

The Rav noted that this also explains why upon leaving a house of mourning, we say to the mourner: ha-Makom yenachem etchem, the Omnipresent should comfort you. The mourner has experienced some degree of hester panim. Many laws concerning behavior in a house of mourning, such as not extending the greeting of "shalom aleichem" and the omission of birkat Kohanim from davening, confirm the state of hester panim that the mourners have experienced.

Our Haggadah is designed primarily for the experience of exile. Rambam, at the conclusion of the "Laws of Chametz and Matzah," chapter 8, provides a text of his Haggadah. His introductory remark is: This is the text of the Haggadah that the Jewish people have used during the exile.

There are many indications to support the idea that our Haggadah is designed for the exile. For example, we are told: One must analyze the section (Devarim 26:5-9) beginning with "My father was a lost Aramean" until one completes the entire section. Pesachim 116a

We have an obligation to read and interpret the entire parsha (section) of Arami oved avi. Yet, we omit the recitation and accompanying midrashic comment of the last verse of this unit thanking God for having brought us into the Land of Israel (Devarim 26:9). Indeed, this verse was recited during Temple times, and during periods of destruction and exile, it was omitted. Our Haggadah emphasizes that the obligation of sippur yetziat Mitzrayim (recounting the Exodus) applies equally to a generation living in Israel with an autonomous government and one during the Crusades, the pogroms, and in the midst of the Warsaw rebellion. In every generation, Jews must make the effort to recognize the miracles of yetziat Mitzrayim even if their own personal condition reflects hester panim. For this we say Baruch ha-Makom, with Makom, the Divine Name, associated with hester panim.

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Gems from Rav Soloveitchik on the Haggadah

by **Rabbi Chaim Jachter** (TABC)

Introduction

Rav Hershel Schachter published a work in 2001 entitled MiP'inei HaRav, his second volume of collections of Torah insights of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. In this essay, we shall present a number of the Rav's ideas regarding the Seder that Rav Schachter published in this work.

Ha Lachma Anya

The commentaries to the Haggadah pose many questions regarding the introductory section to Maggid, Ha Lachma Anya. We shall focus on the question regarding the relevance of the declaration we make at the conclusion of Ha Lachma Anya, "This year we are here, next year we shall be in the Land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we shall be free." Many ask why we mention this at the conclusion of Ha Lachma Anya, whose purpose is to invite any who are hungry to come and join us at the Seder.

Rav Soloveitchik cites a Mishnah (Bava Metzi'a 7:1) to resolve this problem. The Mishnah there relates a story about Rav Yochanan ben Matyah, who instructed his son to hire some workers for a particular job. The son proceeded to hire Jewish workers and he agreed, among other things, to provide them with food. When the son told the father what he did, the father became concerned regarding the fact that the son did not specify to the workers what type of food he agreed to provide them. The father ordered his son to immediately tell the workers before they started the job that he agrees to provide them with only an average meal. Rav Yochanan explained that without specifying otherwise, the workers enjoyed the Halachic right to demand the most lavish meal imaginable. This is because the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov are entitled to the finest treatment possible.

Similarly, at the Seder, explains Rav Soloveitchik, when we invite Jewish people to join us, they are entitled to the most lavish meal imaginable unless we specify otherwise. Hence, when we extend an invitation to poor people to attend our Seder, we indicate that in principle they are entitled to the finest meal possible. However, due to our current pre-Messianic circumstances we are unable to provide them with such a meal. This indication raises the self-esteem of the poor guests as we gently imply that their status as Jews endows them with "VIP status" and that anything we give them is less than what they deserve.

VeHi SheAmdah

Why do we mention at the Seder that in every generation there are people who seek to destroy the Jewish people? What does this have to do with Sipur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim, telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt? The Rav explains that it places the Egyptian experience into perspective. We might have sought to explore whether there was some sociologic, economic, or political motivation for the Egyptian oppressors. However, we note that in every generation and in every imaginable circumstance, enemies have arisen to oppress us. Thus, we cannot attribute any particular set of circumstance as the trigger for hatred of Jews. We must conclude that the reason for the Egyptian oppression is the sad reality that Rashi quotes in his commentary to BeReishit 33:4, that it is the way of the world that Eisav hates Ya'akov. The implications for the contemporary situation are painfully obvious.

Anoos Al Pi HaDibur

We emphasize that Ya'akov went to Mitzrayim Anoos Al Pi HaDibur, coerced by the divine instruction to descend to Egypt. Rav Soloveitchik explains that we emphasize this to contrast Ya'akov's leaving Eretz Yisrael with Eisav's exit from Eretz Yisrael. Eisav gleefully abandoned Eretz Yisrael, regarding it a nuisance. Rashi (BeReishit 36:7) explains that Eisav felt that the price to inherit a share in Eretz Yisrael – four hundred years of being rootless and enduring slavery and torture, as foretold in the Berit Bein HaBetarim – was too steep, and he was happy to rid himself of this great burden. This attitude caused Eisav to forfeit any right he had to Eretz Yisrael when he left the country. Ya'akov, by contrast, left Eretz Yisrael unwillingly and thus did not forfeit his right to the land.

This is reminiscent of a comment of Rama (O.C. 539:7, citing the Maharil) who states that when one leaves his Sukkah because of heavy rain or some other significant irritant his attitude should not be that he is happy to rid himself of a nuisance. Rather, he should be upset that Hashem has exiled him from his Sukkah by sending rain or some other disturbance. Interestingly, our sages compare the Mitzvah of sitting in the Sukkah with the Mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael. For example, the Vilna Gaon noted that the only two Mitzvot that we fulfill with our entire bodies are that of sitting in the Sukkah and Yishuv Eretz Yisrael.

Similarly, the attitude of those of us who do not have the privilege of living in Eretz Yisrael should be like Ya'akov Avinu and not Eisav. Our attitude should be that the circumstances that Hashem has placed upon

us (familial, economic, etc.) force us to reside outside the Land. We should not be happy that we reside Chutz LaAretz.

Hallel

The Rav questions why we don't sing Shirat HaYam at the Seder as the song that celebrates Hashem's delivering us from slavery. Why did Chazal choose Hallel as the celebratory song of the Seder, especially if Shirat HaYam was created in the context of Yetzi' at Mitzrayim? He answers based on Rashi's commentary to the Pasuk in Sefer Shmuel (Shmuel II 23:1) that describes David HaMelech as the "sweet singer of Israel." Rashi explains that "the Jewish people do not sing songs of praise to Hashem in the Beit HaMikdash unless they were composed by David HaMelech." The Rav notes that the same applies to Pesukei DeZimra, where we note in Baruch SheAmar that we will sing David HaMelech's songs of praise to Hashem. Indeed, it is for this reason that Rambam (Hilchot Tefilah 7:13) records a custom to recite Shirat HaYam in our daily prayers only after the Berachah of Yishtabach is recited. He believes that since David HaMelech did not compose Shirat HaYam, its place is not in the Pesukei DeZimra that are recited between Baruch SheAmar and Yishtabach. Similarly, the Rav suggests that at the Seder we utilize songs composed only by David HaMelech to sing praise to Hashem for redeeming us from Mitzrayim.

The Division of Hallel

The Rav explains why the first two chapters of Hallel are recited before the meal and the rest of Hallel is recited after the meal. He notes (see Pesachim 108a for a basis for this assertion) that before the meal we should feel as if we were just redeemed from Mitzrayim. After the meal, the mood is one of reflecting on the fact that we have been redeemed in the past. Accordingly, before the meal we engage in Hodayah, an expression of thanks to Hashem for redeeming us from Egypt. Hodayah may be offered only by someone who experienced the redemption and thus may be expressed only before the meal. Shevach (praise), on the other hand, may be offered even by someone not involved in the event. After the meal, we can no longer thank Hashem for redeeming us (as at that point we no longer feel as if we were redeemed), so instead we express Shevach to Hashem for what He did for us in the past. The Rav explains that the first two chapters of Hallel are expressions of Hodayah and are thus appropriate to recite before the meal. The subsequent chapters are only expressions of Shevach and thus are appropriate for recitation only after the meal.

Shefoch Chamatcha

Many wonder why Chazal included the plea of Shefoch Chamatcha in the Haggadah. The Rav explains that it is an introduction to the prayer of Nishmat that is recited soon after we say Shefoch Chamatcha, at the end of Hallel. In the Nishmat prayer, we pray for the arrival of the Mashiach, when the soul of all people will call out to Hashem. This is appropriate for the Seder since Hashem introduced himself to Moshe Rabbeinu and Am Yisrael as "Ekyeh Asher Ekyeh," "I will be who I will be" (Shemot 3:14). Rashi (ad loc.) explains this phrase to mean "I am with them during this period of misfortune and I will be with them in future periods of misfortune." The Rav explains that Hashem promised Moshe Rabbeinu that just as He will redeem Klal Yisrael from Egypt, so too He will redeem us from future difficulties. As such, we ask Hashem at the Seder to fulfill His promise made on the eve of the redemption from Egypt that He redeem us from our current difficulties and send the Mashiach. Similarly, in the Malchuyot prayer of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur we ask Hashem to bring the time when all of humanity will recognize Hashem "and all of creation will know that You created them."

Accordingly, those people who do not know Hashem might be preventing the arrival of the Mashiach. It is for this reason we ask Hashem to take His wrath to those who do not know Him, so that an impediment to redemption is eliminated.

We may suggest a variation of this theme. We emphasize at the Seder that Hashem fulfilled His promise that He made at the Berit Bein HaBetarim (BeReishit 15:14) to punish the nation that will torture and enslave us. We develop at length how Hashem punished the Egyptians both in Egypt and at the Yam Suf. Indeed, part of Rambam's (Sefer HaMitzvot 157) definition of the Mitzvah of telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt includes telling how Hashem punished our oppressors. The point of this emphasis is to demonstrate that there is a heavenly Judge and there is heavenly Justice, which is a general theme of Pesach (see Ramban at the conclusion of his commentary to Parashat Bo).

Accordingly, in Shefoch Chamatcha we ask Hashem to fulfill His promise to punish our contemporary oppressors, those who do not know Hashem, just as He punished our Egyptian oppressors. "Those who do not know You," that we mention in Shefoch Chamatcha, seems to refer to those who reject the seven Noahide Laws such as the prohibition to kill people. Even "religious" people who kill innocents seem to be included in this prayer.

Conclusion

We hope you found these insights to be helpful and inspiring. The entire Shema Kol Libeinu staff wish its readers a Chag Kasher VeSamei'ach.

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Rav Aviner Parashat Tzav-Pesach - #275 Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com "The Time of our Freedom" [Ha-Rav's commentary on the Haggadah] Question: What is the connection between freedom and the prohibition of chametz (leaven)? The entire process of ridding ourselves of chametz seems like a heavy burden which robs a person of his freedom. In fact, all of the mitzvot seem to deprive a person of his natural freedom of movement! Answer: Rav Kook explained that true freedom includes two aspects: a. Freedom of the body: Physical freedom from any foreign subjugation: Anything which forces the image of G-d within a person to be subjugated to any other power lessens that person's worth. b. Freedom of the soul: Spiritual freedom from anything which turns it from the straightness which is its essential existence. G-d created man upright, and He cleanses man from any refuse which sullies his inner holiness. Each morning we recite the blessing, "who has not made me a slave." The mitzvot are not foreign entities which are forced upon a person, rather they are commands that reveal his inner essence. Before the mitzvot were engraved on the tablets that were given at Mount Sinai they were written on the "tablets" of every Jew's soul. Our Sages therefore said: They were "charut" (engraved) on the tablets – do not read the word as "charut" (engraved) but as "cherut" (freedom) (Pirkei Avot 6:2). By slightly changing the vocalization of the word, we learn an incredible lesson: in order to truly be a free people, it is not enough to be liberated from physical slavery. On the contrary, it is possible to have an

enlightened slave whose spirit is full of freedom, and a physically free person whose spirit is enslaved. We were transformed into free people on Pesach, but we do not become truly free until we rid ourselves of anything which robs us of our natural essence. This is the reason for destroying the chametz, which symbolizes the evil inclination and is called "the yeast in the dough," since it ferments in the heart of people and causes them to transgress (see Bereachot 17a). The destruction of our internal chametz is what allows us to raise the flag of freedom (Olat Re'eyah vol. 2, pp. 244-245).

<http://www.yutorah.org/togo/pesach/>

Rabbi Akiva's Seder Table: An Introduction **Rabbi Kenneth Brander**

The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future

I wish to thank Yeshiva University Presidential Fellows Daniel Elefant and Anosh Zaghi for their assistance with this introduction.

Rabban Gamliel and the elders were reclining [at the seder] in the house of Baitos the son of Zonin in Lod and they were engaged in the halakhot of Passover all night until the call of the rooster.

Tosefta Pesachim 10:12

It is told of Rabbi Eliezer (lived in Lod, second generation Tanna), and Rabbi Yehoshua (lived in Peki'in, second generation Tanna) and Rabbi Elazar the son of Azarya (lived in Yavneh/Tzipori, third generation Tanna), and Rabbi Akiva (lived in Bnei Brak, third generation Tanna) and Rabbi Tarfon (lived in Lod, teacher of Rabbi Akiva, third generation Tanna) were reclining at the seder service in B'nei Berak, and had spent the whole night telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, until their pupils came and said to them: "Our masters, it is time to recite the morning Shema!"

Passover Haggadah While there are several accounts of rabbinic Passover seder gatherings, the most famous of these is the account recorded in our Haggadah: the seder of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar the son of Azarya, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon. This account appears in the Haggadot of Geonim, such as R. Amram Gaon, and the Haggadot of Rishonim, including that of the Rambam (Hilchot Chametz u'Matza, Nusach Haggadah), Tosafot (Ketubot 105a, s.v. de-chashiv), and the Ritva.

Several questions arise when analyzing this account:

1. Rabbi Akiva is one of the younger members of the rabbinic cohort present at the gathering, while Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua are elder members. Rabbi Elazar the son of Azarya is the nasi (president of the high court and of the rabbinic community). Why does the seder take place in Rabbi Akiva's hometown of B'nei Berak and not in a city where one of the more prominent members of the group resides? Normally, the student is expected to visit the teacher. It is not common for a teacher to visit a younger student.

2. Why do these particular Tannaim sit together around the seder table? Do they represent something unique or is this a random grouping of rabbinic figures?

To answer these questions, we must first note that the Pesach Haggadah is divided into two parts. The first is the pre-meal section of the Haggadah, where we recite maggid and consume ritual foodstuff — matza, wine, maror and charoset—and the post-meal section of the Haggadah. The pre-meal section of the Haggadah focuses on the Jewish people's servitude in and eventual redemption from Egypt. The post-meal section of the Haggadah focuses on the future redemption and destiny of our people and society.

The Talmud states (Pesachim 116b) that we bifurcate the recitation of Hallel. In the maggid section of the Haggadah, we recite the first two psalms of Hallel. This is due to the fact that these psalms focus on the Egyptian saga. The third psalm and the remaining psalms of Hallel are

recited in the post-meal section of the Haggadah as they focus on the Messianic era (Pesachim 118)

This division prompts disagreement between two of the rabbinic participants at the Passover seder we read about in our Haggadot, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon. Rabbi Tarfon contends (Pesachim 116b) that the concluding blessing for maggid should focus solely on the theme expressed in maggid and the pre-meal section of the Haggadah, namely the redemption from Egypt. Rabbi Tarfon's version of this blessing reads, "Blessed are you Lord our God Who has redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt."

Rabbi Akiva disagrees. He refuses to allow this blessing to focus only on the redemption of the past. He insists that the blessing of maggid also contain language that focuses on the future:

Rabbi Akiva states: [the blessing should also include] likewise O Lord our God, God of our fathers, enable us to celebrate many other festivals and holy days which will come peacefully upon us; joyful in the rebuilding of Your city, and exalting in Your service: and may we eat there of the festive sacrifices ... Blessed are thou our God who has redeemed Israel.

Pesachim 116b For Rabbi Akiva, it is never sufficient to focus on the past. We must always remember to look toward the future and its redemption.

This difference in perspective also enlightens a later account about the remaining participants of this rabbinic cohort:

Again it happened that [Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar the son of Azarya (in some manuscripts the person is Rabbi Eliezer), Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiva] went up to Jerusalem. When they reached Mt. Scopus, they tore their garments. When they reached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerging from the place of the Holy Holies. The others started weeping; Rabbi Akiva laughed. Said they to him: "Why are you laughing?" Said he to them: "Why are you weeping?" Said they to him: "A place [so holy] that it is said of it, 'the stranger that approaches it shall die' (Bamidbar 1:51), and now foxes traverse it, and we shouldn't weep?" Said he to them: "That is why I laugh. For it is written, 'I shall have bear witness for Me faithful witnesses—Uriah the Priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah' (Yeshayahu 8:1). Now what is the connection between Uriah and Zechariah? Uriah was [in the time of] the First Temple, and Zechariah was [in the time of] the Second Temple! But the Torah makes Zachariah's prophecy dependent upon Uriah's prophecy. With Uriah, it is written: 'Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed as a field; [Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the Temple Mount like the high places of a forest]' (Micha 3:12). With Zachariah it is written, 'Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem' (Zechariah 8:4). As long as Uriah's prophecy had not been fulfilled, I feared that Zechariah's prophecy may not be fulfilled either. But now that Uriah's prophecy has been fulfilled, it is certain that Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled." With these words they replied to him: "Akiva, you have consoled us! Akiva, you have consoled us!"

Makkot 24b Rabbi Akiva's focus is fixed on the future redemption, even in the most difficult and trying of times. It is not coincidental that these rabbinic figures gather around Rabbi Akiva's seder table. They are individuals who were influenced by the weltanschauung of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva has the courage to be an optimist and focus on the future even in the darkest of moments. Even when there is a bounty on his head by the Romans, even when he is martyred and the future of his people seems bleak, Rabbi Akiva knows that it is tenacity of spirit that guarantees the immortality of our people.

It is significant that these personalities gather around Rabbi Akiva's table to discuss the redemption during the darkness of night. They realize that it is Rabbi Akiva's charismatic spirit that enables hope and paves the Jewish nation's path toward the morning kriyat shema—a credo with God that is recited when there is clarity, when one can

discern between the colors of covenantal tapestry, the blue and white fringes of the tallit (B'rachot 9b).

It is the ability to discuss redemption during the darkness of the Hadrianic persecutions and the Bar Kochba revolt that enables students to live and thrive in the phenomenological framework of morning, a time at which the Jewish nation can be a people of destiny instead of a people of fate. It is in B'nei Berak, the city of Rabbi Akiva, the city in which we are told the descendants of our darkest enemies become sources of light, (for it is in the city of B'nei Berak that the descendants of Haman study Torah [Sanhedrin 96b]), that such a Passover seder must take place.

How appropriate that we inaugurate the Benjamin and Rose Berger To-Go Series with an edition celebrating the holiday of Pesach. For the lives of Benjamin and Rose the credo of Rabbi Akiva. The couple immigrated to America during difficult times yet recognized that the redemption and the immortality of our people is only guaranteed by Jews who are not willing to sacrifice their eternal heritage. Benjamin and Rose always saw the morning light, even in times of great peril and darkness. They sat at the seder table of Rabbi Akiva, and when the morning star arose in their lives, they created a home of kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichol (Let all who hunger come and eat).

We are indebted to Rabbi Hy and Ann Arbesfeld, longtime supporters of RIETS and CJF, for continuing to support Torah education by establishing the Benjamin and Rose Berger Torah To-Go series.

As we commemorate the twentieth Yahrzeit of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Harav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik zt"l, we are reminded of the fact that it was through his teachings and communal activity that spiritual daybreak rose for the North American Jewish community. It was his partnership with gedolim such as Rav Aharon Kotler that inspired the building of yeshivot around North America. It was his blend of Torah and philosophy that inspired a generation unsure if Torah had the sophistication to speak to a post-war generation of American Jews. The Rav spent his life training the next generation of pastors, pedagogues and poskim to ensure a bright future for our people. May we continue to learn from his Torah and integrate his gestalt in our personal and communal lives. May his memory always be a blessing.

<http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin The TorahWeb Foundation
Listen to your Matzah

The Torah (Devarim 15:3) refers to matzah as "lechem oni". The second word, which we pronounce as "oni - answering", is written in the Torah "ani - poor". When interpreted using the written form of the word (i.e. the ksiv - "ani") the phrase means poor man's bread. Shmuel (Pesachim 36a) understands the pronounced version of the word (i.e. the kri - "oni") to be the source that we are to recite many recitations over, and in conjunction with, the matzah. The Talmud further understands "lechem ani - poor man's bread" to prescribe the meager ingredient list of flour and water and to exclude matzah made with wine or oil as well as what we call today egg matzah. In addition, we are taught that just as when an impoverished individual receives a loaf of bread he saves a half for the future, so too the matzah is characterized by it being a prusa - a broken half. We integrate both themes - oni and ani - at the Pesach Seder. We begin the recitation of magid with "Ha lachma anya", thus highlighting matzah's role as the bread of affliction over which we are going to recite (oni) the Hagadah (specifically, magid and the first two paragraphs of Hallel). Immediately prior to magid we break the middle matzah at yachatz just as a poor man would save part of his loaf of bread in order to present the matzah in its true form following the ksiv - ani. We further integrate the kri and ksiv by proclaiming that the matzah is the bread of the poor, and we invite the poor to join us in our celebration. The mishna (Pesachim 116b) teaches that in every

generation we are to view ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. Rav Yosef Salant zt"l suggests (in Be'er Yosef) that by proclaiming that this is the bread of the poor we relive the evening of the Exodus, reminding ourselves that our ancestors were slaves and poor and ate matzah for centuries prior to the Exodus, helping us focus on that frame of mind, and allowing us to feel as if we personally left Egypt. It is thus understandable that the declaration, "ha lachma anya di achalu avhasana b'ar'ah d'Mitzrayim - this matzah that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt" has two connotations. The first connotation is that we ate matzah as slaves, and the second is that we ate matzah on the way out of Egypt. It speaks of our servitude and our freedom. Perhaps, then, another reason for splitting the matzah at yachatz is to call attention to the dual theme of matzah and note that the larger half is for the afikomen, the sign of our freedom and deliverance. The Bear Yosef additionally notes that while there is the mitzvah to invite the poor and needy and those who are alone to all yom tov meals (as the Rambam emphasizes in Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18), the special mitzvah on the night of Pesach to have the needy at your table is a further fulfillment of demonstrating that you personally left Egypt in that very state. It is the actual reliving of the moment. Hence, the inclusion of "kol dichfin yeisei v'yeichol- let all who are hungry and needy join us." There is one more fascinating connection between the ksiv of ani and kri of oni. The Torah informs us that the Jewish people demonstrated incredible faith by leaving Egypt without provisions. True, we are taught that the Egyptians gave the former slaves silver and gold vessels and garments, however they did not have food except for the matzah they took with them. Rashi (Beshalach 16:1) teaches that miraculously that matzah lasted and sustained them for thirty one days and sixty one meals! By proclaiming and pointing to the matzah, the poor's man bread, we are encouraging the poor that just as He provided for all of us who were needy at that time, may He similarly provide for those still impoverished. Ha lachma anya thus bespeaks of our historical past, our faith and our optimism. Copyright © 2013 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.