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The Nine Aspects Of The Haggada

HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik

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We must conclude that each Jew, in addition to offering the first fruits, was commanded to fulfill the mitzva of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Thus there are two times during the year that the Jew must relate the Story of the Exodus from Egypt; at the Havaat Bikkurim and on the night of the Seder.

The Torah presented us with the text for the Havaat Bikkurim. However, with regards to the Seder night all that we find in the Torah is the general commandment: "You shall tell your son on that day, saying, this is done (the Pesach observance) because of what the Eternal did for me when I came out of Egypt" (Shemot 13:8). A specific text is not mandated. ChaZa"L, however, concluded that the "Arami Oved Avi" text which fulfilled the requirement of Sippur at the bringing of the Bikkurim, would also be appropriate at the Seder.

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The essence of the Seder, and hence that of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, is the expression of gratitude to the Almighty on the great liberation and miracles that he wrought for us in Egypt. As the Rambam states in Sefer haMitzvot: "We are commanded to tell the story at the beginning of the fifteenth of Nissan... and we are to thank Him for all the goodness He has bestowed upon us" (Mitzva 157). On the Seder night at the climax of Maggid we say: "Therefore we are obligated to thank and praise... exalt and revere Him who performed all those miracles and for us."

Similarly, the act of Havaat Bikkurim is an expression of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Almighty for granting the farmer and the people this holy land and its abundance after a history of wandering and suffering. The Jew recognizes that this land has come to him and his nation through a chain of miraculous and divinely ordained episodes throughout history. Therefore, the Arami Oved Avi passage contains a short synopsis of early history, with an emphasis on the enslavement in Egypt, the Exodus and the entry into the Land of Israel. The Jew, when bringing the Bikkurim states (Devarim 26:3): "I say today before the Lord, your God...". However, the Targum of Yonatan Ben Uziel translates: "I will give gratitude and praise this day to the Lord...". The passage was understood by ChaZa"L as a statement of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Almighty. (In fact, from this comment of the Targum it is possible to suggest that the word Haggada does not only imply the idea of "telling," but also the notion of thanksgiving and gratitude.)

1) Let us now analyze some of the various aspects of the Haggada. It will help us to begin with a comparison of the Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim that the Jew engages in at the Havaat haBikkurim and that of the Seder night. The common feature and first aspect of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim on both these occasions is the Sippur. We read and tell a story. This recitation must consist of the biblical text of the Arami Oved Avi passage. In a word, we engage in Mikra. In this respect the Havaat Bikkurim and the Seder night are identical.

2) At this stage, however, the two rituals part company. In the act of Havaat Bikkurim, the Torah only required that a text be recited. There is no requirement that it be translated or elaborated upon. In contrast, on the Seder night there are additional demands. The Mitzva of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim at the Seder is basically an act of Talmud Torah. Talmud Torah involves within it elaboration and exegesis. The Mishna in Pesachim (10:4) mandates: "And he explains and elaborates from Arami Oved Avi until he concludes the whole portion." The Mishna speaks of "Limud," which involves translation, asking of questions and conceptualization. In fact, the core of Maggid is a systematic exegesis and discussion of every word of the Arami Oved Avi passage. We engage in a Torah sheBaal Peh analysis, of a Torah sheBikhtav text.

This analysis utilizes all the elements that comprise Torah sheBaal Peh. For our purposes these elements may be subdivided into three different

areas. The first is Midrash. This refers to the exegesis of biblical verses in accordance with the hermeneutical rules set down by our sages (e.g. the Thirteen Middot of Rabbi Yishmael, the Thirty-two Middot of Rabbi Eliezer). The second category is Mishna. This refers to the set laws and statements cited in the Mishnayot and Memrot.

Finally, we have Gemara, which refers to halakhic analysis and conceptualization. Rashi in various places in the Talmud translates Gemara as — the Sevarot — the logical basis for the laws of the Mishna. However, the most full and eloquent definition is given by Rambam in *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* (1:11): "And one is obligated to apportion his time of study, so that he spends one third of his time studying Torah sheBikhtav, another third, Torah sheBaal Peh, and one third in understanding and trying to see the development from one step to another from beginning to end, and he should compare cases and derive one idea from another; these elements are called Gemara." In the Haggada we find that all three areas of the oral law are used and applied. Firstly, we have Midrash. As was quoted above, the Arami Oved Avi passage is interpreted and explained through the different devices of Midrash. Secondly, the Haggada includes a number of passages of Mishna, of set halakhot and statements. Examples include the passage taken from the Mishna in Pesachim (10:5) "Rabban Gamliel used to say, anyone who has not said these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation, etc.," and the response to the wise son "And you shall even tell him, (all the halakhot including) "We do not eat any food after the eating of the Afikoman," which is a law found in the Mishna in Pesachim (10:8). Finally, the Haggada contains elements of "Gemara," of logical deductions and inferences. An example of this is the passage "Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise..." which is a logical conclusion based upon the reading of the immediately preceding Halakhot (i.e. Pesach, Matza and Marror). Thus the Haggada not only involves Mikra, but also Limud. In fact the word Haggada and its root "Haged" imply not only telling, but also an act of study and Talmud Torah, as we find prior to Matan Torah when the Almighty commands Moshe, "Thus shall you say to the House of Yaakov and tell (vetaggid) to the Children of Israel" (Shemot 19:3).

3) It is not enough, however, for the Jew to be a student the night of the Seder; he must also become a teacher. This reflects the third aspect of the Haggada—Masora. The Jew must teach his children and others about the glorious event that occurred in Egypt long ago. The Haggada, before the passage about the four sons, included the portion "Blessed be the Omnipotent. Blessed be He who hath given the Torah to his people Israel. Blessed be He, etc." What, in fact, is this passage? In a word, it is a short version of Birkat haTorah —the blessing made on the Torah. If we carefully examine the Torah blessings, in general, we see that they, too, stress the aspect of Masora, the passing on of tradition. We state "And the house of Israel. And we and our children and our children's children should all be privileged to know your name, and be students of your Torah for its own sake." Moreover, at the close of the blessing we say, "Blessed by the Lord, who teaches Torah to His people, Israel." It is as if the Almighty himself becomes part of that Masora community. After this blessing, appears the passage about the four sons, which concretizes the notion of teaching and passing on the Story of the Exodus to one's children each at his respective level.

4) The fourth aspect is the "question and answer" style dialogue that is found in parts of the Haggada. Why is it so crucial that the child ask questions; why do we prompt him? Simply put, Judaism insists that G-d reveals himself to the man who seeks after and thirsts for God. The verse in Devarim (4:29) reads: "But if you search there for the Lord your God, you will find him if only you will seek him with all your heart and soul." We want to initiate the child into the Masora community that seeks out the Almighty and yearns for his presence and illumination. We want the child to become a "Mevakesh Hashem"— "a seeker of God."

5) The fifth aspect of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim is the central role that the meal and food play at the Seder. The drama of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim

begins with Kiddush and closes with Nishmat and Yishtabach after the meal. In fact, this is the reason that the Shulkhan Arukh, O.C. 472:1, is so careful in specifying that the Kiddush on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan should be recited after astronomical nightfall. (On other festivals, one may usher in the festival and recite Kiddush earlier when it is still daytime.) Kiddush is part of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, and therefore, must take place on the night of the fifteenth proper. Kiddush the night of Pesach plays two roles. One is the normal role of Kiddush as the introduction of the festive meal as on every festival. Secondly, it is part of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Kiddush contains within it the statement "who has chosen us from all nations," which is identical to the third language of Geulat Mitzrayim found in Sidrat Va'era (6:7) "Velakachti": — "and shall take you unto me for a nation." Moreover, there is another more basic reason for Kiddush playing a role in Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim contains within it two elements. One is the recitation of certain passages. Second, is the element of performing certain actions, eating of certain foods, etc. When one eats Matza, Marror, and Korban Pesach on the Seder night one fulfills these specific mitzvot. However, in addition, through the eating of these foods one is able to teach and convey the messages of Geulat Mitzrayim. They function as audio-visual aids in our educational scheme, namely, the Seder. This is what Rabban Gamliel was trying to convey. (in the Mishna "Whoever has not said these three things has not fulfilled his obligation" 10:5, etc.) He wanted the Jew, before he partakes of the foods, to explain their significance and message, to all who are at this table. Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim is a careful blend, then, of narrative, teaching and actions to get across a unified message. Kiddush also opens the Seuda every Shabbat and festival. Kiddush puts the meal in a context of holiness, uplifting it from a mundane effort to satisfy biological needs to the realm of the sacred. The idea of "a meal before God" is a fundamental one in Judaism. It is along these lines that our sages (Berakhot 55a) spoke of "an individual's table is an atonement for his sins" and "a dining table is similar to an altar."

6) As was previously stated, the Mikra Bikkurim involves praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. However, this is an awareness that comes about indirectly. The farmer recites the Arami Oved Avi passage which in itself, when understood, expresses gratitude. It is almost a notion of "Kriyata zu Hilula (Megillah 14a)." The praise is implicit in the narration. In contrast, on the night of the Seder we are enjoined not only to praise and give gratitude, but rather to break forth into spontaneous song — "Let us, therefore, sing a new song in his presence, Halleluya." The Jew's heart is overflowing with feelings of joy and thanksgiving. It is the night of the great romance between the Almighty and Knesset Yisrael—"I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me." It is these feelings that are expressed in the custom of reading the book of Shir haShirim the night of the Seder. Philosophically, one can ask, who is lowly man that he should have the audacity to praise God? Is not man "dust and ashes"? How then does he have the right to praise the infinite being, the Almighty? The Halakha responds true, philosophically, there may be problems, however the Jew cannot contain himself. The Jew, on the night of the Seder, is overflowing with thanksgiving and song to God, and he cannot repress this authentic Blessed be He.

7) As the Jew approaches the Story of the Exodus, there may be a tendency to look at the event as remote and distant from the here and now. Therefore, the Haggada contains within it three passages that help us deal with this problem. First of all, before the recitation of the Arami Oved Avi passage, we say: "And if G-d had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would still be enslaved in Egypt." We make a declaration of relevance. Why, in fact, are we discussing these events of history; what is their relevance to our present situation? And to this we respond that were it not for the redemption in Egypt, there would be no Jewish People today.

Secondly, before Hallel we recite that "in every generation a person should look upon himself as if he personally had come out of Egypt. Not

our ancestors alone did the Holy One, blessed be He, redeem, but us also He redeemed with them." The events of Yetziat Mitzrayim are not only relevant to us, rather, we are actually re-experiencing history on the night of the Seder. It is a current as well as a historical event. This recognition enables us to recite Hallel and break forth into spontaneous song, because it is we who left Egypt as well. Finally, we recite the "Vehi sheAmda" passage: "For not only one tyrant has risen up against us to destroy us, but in every generation tyrants have sought to destroy us and the Holy One, Blessed be He, delivered us from their hands." Not only do we relive the experience of Egypt, but also we realize that danger and annihilation threaten the Jewish people in every generation and locale. We move from the historical events to a better understanding of our current situation. The custom is that at this point in the Seder, one lifts up his cup of wine. Why is this done? The cup is the symbol of Jewish destiny and eternity - Netzach Yisrael, as the verse (Tehillim 116:13) "A cup of salvation I shall uplift, and call on the Almighty's name" indicates. At the Seder we speak of the relevance of historical events, the reliving of those events and the cycle of danger and redemption that is characteristic of Jewish history. 8) The Mishna in Pesachim (10:5) dictates "and he explains the Arami Oved Avi passage until he completes it." However, in our Haggada we do not complete the passage in its totality. We do not recite and discuss the last verse and a half, which read: "He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, a land flowing (with) milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruits of the land which Thou hast given to me, O Lord..." (Devarim 26:9-10). The farmer bringing the Bikkurim would include these verses and then set down the fruits "before the Lord your God." It is understandable why the Haggada did not include the last verse that discusses the actual bringing of fruits, as that is out of place on the Seder night. However, why was the verse discussing the entry into the Land of Israel not included in our version of Haggada? A number of approaches exist to resolve this problem. First of all, if we included this reference to the Land of Israel, we would convey the impression that there are five languages or references of Geula and not four (as we maintain). We would include "veheveti" as one of the references of Geula, and ChaZa"L felt that this would not be appropriate on the Seder night. Why is this the case? Firstly, the four references of Geula that were stated by the Almighty to Moshe in Sidrat Vaera, were new ideas that had not been expressed to the Patriarchs. However, "veheveti", "and I shall bring you into the land..." was already promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov in their respective Brit Avot. They were already promised that their descendants would inherit the Land of Israel. Secondly, although the Jewish people did enter into the Land of Israel subsequent to the Exodus from Egypt this was not the primary goal of Yetziat Mitzrayim. It was their destination but not their destiny. The direct goal of Yetziat Mitzrayim was the revelation at Sinai. The goal was the transformation of a subjugated people into "a nation of priests and a holy nation." It was not just to grant them political and economic freedom, but also to create a sacred people. Moshe, at the episode of the burning bush, asked the Almighty: "Who (am) I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the Children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Shemot 3:11). And the Almighty gives an answer that seems at first to be a bit difficult: "Certainly I will be with you and this shall be unto you the sign that I have sent you: When thou has brought forth the people out of Egypt they shall serve G-d upon this mountain." What was the Almighty saying to Moshe; how did this answer his query? The Almighty was stating,— know, Moshe, that the purpose of Geulat Mitzrayim is not political and social freedom. For that task, I would not have picked you. I did not pick you to be a diplomat or a king or political leader. Rather, the purpose of the Exodus is to create a holy nation, to make them a Torah nation.

For this purpose, G-d says, I need a Rebbe, a teacher and mentor who will lead and guide this people. And for this role, you are the best candidate. Pesach is the holiday of Yetziat Mitzrayim and leads into Shavuot and Matan Torah. These two festivals do not focus on the Land of Israel as a

central theme. According to Rambam in Moreh Nevukhim (3:43), it is Succot, rather, that is the holiday which celebrates the Land of Israel.

Thirdly, it is possible to suggest that during the time the Temple still stood, the text of the Haggada did include the last verses relating to the entry into the Land of Israel. Upon the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent exile, ChaZa"L amended the text in order to conform to the new reality in which Am Yisrael found itself.

9) Finally, on the night of the Seder, the Jew mentions all the wonderful things that the Almighty has done and is doing for him and his people. This, in fact, is the thrust of Birkat haMazon and, therefore, it also functions as part of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim (in addition to its role as Grace after the meal.) After discussing God's special relationship with the Jewish People we move to the Hallel haGadol, which contains a recognition of God's benevolence to the whole world. We recognize and express gratitude for this, as we state, "Who giveth food unto all flesh, for His kindness endures forever." This leads us to the climax of the Seder, "Nishmat", when we speak of the future, the Acharit haYamim, when all living beings shall give praise to the Almighty —Nishmat kol chai tevarekh..." These portions add a glorious eschatological dimension to the Shevach and Hoda'a sections that are so essential to the Haggada.

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Rabbi Yonason Sacks - Yachatz

Citing the Torah's epithet for matzah, "lehecm oni", ("Poor Man's Bread"), the Gemarah in Massechet Pesachim (115b) derives that the matzah of seder night must be broken: "ma darko shel ani beprusa...just as a poor person eats a broken piece of a loaf, so too matzah must be eaten as a broken piece". In addition to the Gemarah's textual derivation, Chazal perceive numerous symbolic elements in the breaking of the matzah. The Da'as Zekeinim Al HaTorah (Shemos 12:8), for example, suggests that the breaking of the matzah may represent the splitting of the Yam Suf and the Jordan River. Similarly, the Chidah (Haggadas Simchas HaRegel) adds that the splitting of the matzah into two halves may symbolize the teaching of Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (ch. 48), that HaKadosh Baruch Hu "halved" the time of the Egyptian servitude from 430 years to 215 years. These various understandings of Yachatz underscore that both slavery and salvation are within the broken matzah, thereby highlighting the central theme that salvation can instantly emerge from the most abject situations of suffering.

While all agree that the matzah must ultimately be broken, the Rishonim debate precisely when the matzah should be broken. The Rambam (Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah 8:6) implies that one breaks the matzos immediately before reciting the beracha of "Hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz." R' Avraham Gershon Zaks (Hagadas HaGershuni, Yachatz) suggests that this is consistent with the Rambam's general understanding of lechem mishneh during the seder. Although lechem mishneh generally requires two whole and intact loaves, the Rambam rules that lechem mishneh of seder night consists of one whole and one half matzah, in keeping with the Gemarah's teaching of "ma darko shel ani beprusa". Apparently, the Rambam understands the halacha of broken matzah as defining the mitzvah of lechem mishneh. Therefore, explains R' Zaks, it is perfectly consistent to maintain that the breaking of the matzah should be performed adjacent to the beracha and consumption of the lechem mishneh as well. R' Zaks adds that this explanation also accounts for the Rambam's omission of any broken matzah requirement for the afikomen. Because the halacha of broken matzah relates specifically to lechem mishneh, the halacha does not necessarily apply to afikomen, which is not consumed as lechem mishneh.

Most rishonim and achronim disagree with the Rambam, maintaining that the breaking of the matzah must immediately precede Maggid. Several explanations are suggested for this timing. The Beis Yosef (O.C. 473)

suggests that the matzah is broken at this point in order to recite "Ha lachma anya," which describes the poor man's bread. Alternatively, the breaking and hiding of the matzah serves to pique the curiosity of the children, encouraging them to ask questions. The Shulchan Aruch HaRav (ibid. 36) suggests a further possibility. The Gemarah derives a connection between the consumption of matzah and the recital of the Hagaddah, noting that matzah is "lechem sheonin alav devarim harbeh - bread upon which many things are recited." Based on this relationship, one must recite the Hagaddah over matzah which is halachically fit for fulfillment of the mitzvah of achilas matzah. Because achilas matzah requires that the matzah be broken, by extension, the recital of the Haggadah must be performed over a broken piece as well.

The Ran (Pesachim 25b in Rif, s.v. "mihu") cites Rav Hai Gaon, who understands the early breaking of the matzah as a function of the general halachos of lechem mishneh. As the Netziv explains (Shu"t Meishiv Davar I: 21), lechem mishneh generally requires two intact loaves of bread. For purposes of lechem mishneh, however, "intact" is defined in a relative sense: if the mevarech breaks a whole loaf prior to reciting the beracha, the loaf is certainly not considered "intact." If, however, the mevarech receives a loaf which has already been broken, the loaf is halachically considered "intact," since the completeness of the loaf is defined relative to its form at the time of reception. Hence, explains the Netziv, by breaking the matzah a significant amount of time prior to the actual beracha, the mevarech can be considered to have received matzah which was already broken. As such, the broken matzah is halachically considered "whole" for purposes of lechem mishneh, and one thereby fulfills both the need for "poor man's bread" as well as the need for "wholeness" for lechem mishneh.

One other possibility for the early breaking of the matzah is suggested by R' Shlomo Zalman Aurbach (Halichos Shlomo, Pesach 9:29). Although halacha dictates that Kiddush must immediately precede the seuda of yom tov, the recitation of Maggid on seder night seems to create a hefsek, separating the Kiddush from the seuda. By breaking the matzah before the recital of Maggid, one links the Maggid to the meal, demonstrates that Maggid is considered mei'tzorchei achila - for the purposes of eating. The Maggid is therefore not considered a hefsek, but rather a bridge between the Kiddush and the meal, despite the possible passage of several hours in between.

Regarding the actual execution of Yachatz, the rishonim debate which of the three matzohs should be broken. The Smag (283) and the Rokeiach (241) rule that the top matzah should be broken, in accordance with the Talmudic dictum of "Ain ma'avirin al hamitzvos - we do not pass over mitzvos." Of note, Rashi (Yoma 33a s.v. "ain"), quoting the Mechilta, maintains that the very source for this principle comes from the mitzvah of matzah. As the Mechilta expounds, "ushemartem es hamatzos - you shall guard the matzos" to read "ushemartem es hamitzvos - you shall guard the mitzvos." Thus, if a mitzvah presents itself, one should not let it pass. While Tosafos (ibid.) understands this derivation to be mid'oraisa, the Radbaz (ShU"t I:559) opines that it is a mere asmachta (see also Divrei Malchiel O.C. 16).

Despite the cogent argument of the Smag and Rokeiach, the accepted halacha follows the Rosh (Pesachim 10:30) and the Mordechai (Pesachim 38) who maintain that the middle matzah is broken. In defense of the Rosh and the Mordechai, the Bach (Orach Chaim 473 s.v. "v'yikach") explains that breaking the middle matzah does not violate the principle of Ain ma'avirin al hamitzvos. Eating the matzah, as opposed to breaking the matzah, constitutes the primary mitzvah of seder night. When it comes to eating the matzah, the beracha of "Hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz" is recited on the top matzah, while the second bracha of "Al achilas matzah" is recited on the broken second matzah, in perfect adherence to the principle of "Ain ma'avirin al hamitzvos." Thus, by breaking the middle matzah, one ensures that he will not "pass over the mitzvos," as this breaking ensures that the first bracha of "Hamotzi" will be appropriately recited on the first matzah.

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The Necessity for Slavery by Rabbi Josh Kahn

Seder, a key word when discussing Pesach, means order, a major theme of Pesach night. The Seder is arranged in a very precise, organized way. We begin with Genut, describing our lowly state in Mitzraim, but end with Shevach, praising Hashem for our redemption. Throughout Maggid, we are transformed from slaves into free people; yet, although there is a distinct "order" in our Seder, the eating of Matzah, representing our redemption from Mitzraim, precedes the eating of Marror, which represents our slavery in Mitzraim, which is seemingly out of order. Why does the symbol of freedom come before that of slavery? Rav Gedalyahu Schorr quoting the Sefat Emet explains how the slavery ultimately served as the preparation for the Geulah. However, during Galut, exile, it is difficult to appreciate how slavery can be connected to redemption. During the darkness of slavery, Bnei Yisrael could not appreciate how this experience was a vital part of the redemption process. Only after the Geulah can we look back at the Galut and see how it ultimately led to Yetziat Mitzraim. For this reason, the Matzah must precede the Marror, illustrating that in hindsight, after the redemption, we understand the slavery. The idea of a long process that began with our exile and culminated with our redemption is reflected in the obligation at the Seder to begin with Genut and conclude with Shevach. The Seder requires us to unravel the entire chain of events that led up to the redemption because it is all one process. The Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, explains a similar idea in regards to the paragraph of the Haggadah in which we discuss how Eisav inherited Har Seir. Why is it important for the Haggadah to tell us where Eisav and his family lived? The Brisker Rav explains that Eisav had a chance to inherit Eretz Yisrael; however, he didn't want to go through the Brit Ben HaBeitarim process. Eisav was focused on immediate gratification. (This is beyond the scope of this Devar Torah, but as an example, Eisav traded his birthright for a bowl of soup. There are many other examples.) When Eisav understood that a long process was necessary to inherit Eretz Yisrael, he decided he would rather have Har Seir and move there immediately. The Haggadah describes this decision to illustrate how the slavery was part of the process of redemption, which ultimately brought us to Eretz Yisrael. Our slavery in Egypt was a necessary part of the formation of Bnei Yisrael. In Egypt, we transformed from a small family to a nation. Rav Mirsky, author of Hegyonei Halacha, uses this idea to explain why part of the Brit Ben HaBeitarim included slavery in Egypt. The covenant with Avraham should have been completely positive. Why should Hashem promise Avraham a punishment? Rav Mirsky explains that the slavery was also a positive experience, which could only be cherished after the event. In hindsight we are able to appreciate how it contributed to our growth as a nation. This idea is seen in practical situations, as we see individuals become a cohesive unit through experiences, which are often challenging. The ability to survive challenges aids people in joining together and emerging unified. There fore, specifically at this point in Jewish history, slavery was necessary. The length of slavery also created another positive attribute in Bnei Yisrael. The Sochaczever Rebbe, in the Sefer Sheim MiShemuel, explains the necessity of a six month period between the time Moshe first revealed himself to the Jewish people and the ultimate exodus from Egypt. First Moshe whet the Bnei Yisrael's appetite for the Geulah, but they

couldn't leave yet. They needed to long for the Geulah. The extended period of time created a stronger sense of desire for the Geulah. Bnei Yisrael needed to awaken from their spiritual slumber that slavery in Egypt had created. Therefore, Moshe gave Bnei Yisrael six months to get ready. The Sheim MiShmuel uses this idea to explain the role of Karpas at the Seder. Normally, we do not wait very long between an appetizer and the main course. Why do we have such a long break between Karpas, the appetizer, and the meal? We are given a small window into understanding the Jewish experience of slavery. We have our appetite whet by the Karpas, but nothing follows. We get hungry and begin to understand what it means to develop a real desire, and then we transition into the story of how Bnei Yisrael got a taste of Geulah but had to wait, continually wanting it to come everyday. These two messages illustrate the important role that slavery played in the ultimate redemption from Egypt. In hindsight, we can appreciate how the slavery experience molded us into a nation, while simultaneously creating within us a passion and yearning for Geulah. These two motifs of the Seder go together; uniting together as one nation yearning for the Geulah. If we are able to come together as Klal Yisrael, we can experience the statement of Chazal, "In Nissan we were redeemed, and in Nissan we will be redeemed!"

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Feeling Freedom

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The four cups of wine that adorn our seder table each year represent a key element in our Pesach experience: freedom. Both men and women are required to drink the four cups, the daled kosot, which are patterned after the four descriptions of redemption at the beginning of Parshat Vaera:

6. Therefore say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with a outstretched arm, and with great judgments; 7. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. Shemot 6:6-7

These four appellations describe the four stages of our redemption from Egypt that we reexperience each year on the eve of the exodus, the night of the 15th of Nissan. Let us explore the nature of this mitzvah to drink four cups of wine, and understand its role in experiencing freedom at the Seder.

An interesting question is raised by Tosafot regarding the four cups:

From the language it seems somewhat that one doesn't give to his children and members of his household, but only to himself and he discharges their obligation with his, and this is logical, because why should the four cups be any different from kiddush of the entire year, when one discharges the obligation of others... Yet, from the Talmud it seems that each one requires four cups, as it states, 'everyone is obligated in four cups, both women and children, R' Yehuda commented, "what purpose is there for children to have wine?" Seemingly, the Tanna Kamma requires cups even for the children. Yet one could deflect this proof [and explain] that it means that [the children] are obligated to hear the blessings on the four cups due to the requirement for Chinuch... And it seems that we should be

strict and require four cups for each one. Tosafot Pesachim 99b s.v. Lo Yifchtu Lo MeArba

Tosafot wonders whether each person present at the table must drink their own four cups of wine. Perhaps it is sufficient to have one member of the Seder drink the cups at the appropriate junctures in the Haggadah and discharge the obligation of all those present at the table, as is our practice at kiddush every Shabbat, when one person recites kiddush for all the rest present. According to this view, the rest of the participants in the Seder would not be required to drink at all, just as those who listen to kiddush on Shabbat are not obligated to drink from the kiddush cup. Tosafot concludes that one should be stringent and require each person at the table to drink his or her own four cups of wine.

Upon reflection, the source of Tosafot's dilemma is unclear. What unresolved issue would determine whether each person must drink their own cups, and why did Tosafot rule that we must do so? Perhaps an exploration of the Rambam's opinion regarding the four cups can shed light on this question within Tosafot. Regarding the four cups, the Rambam codifies a unique law:

If he drank these four cups from wine that was not diluted, he fulfilled the obligation of four cups, but did not fulfill the obligation of freedom; if he drank four cups of diluted wine at one time, he fulfilled the obligation of freedom, but did not fulfill the obligation of four cups. Rambam Hilchot Chametz Umatzah 7:9

Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Halevi Soloveitchik (1886-1959), known as the Brisker Rav, notes that this passage is highly unusual. The Talmud teaches that if one drank the four cups in immediate succession one does not fulfill the Mitzvah, yet the Rambam indicates that in such a case the individual would, in fact, have fulfilled the Mitzvah on some level- a fulfillment of "freedom". Similarly, if one drank four cups in their proper order, but the wine was undiluted and unfit for use, according to the Rambam, one would still have fulfilled the Mitzvah on some level- a fulfillment of "four cups". The Brisker Rav demonstrates that according to the Rambam, there are two distinct aspects of the mitzvah of daled kosot: cheirut (freedom) and the order of four cups according to the Haggadah. The first aspect is reflected by drinking fine wine which demonstrates freedom, while the second simply requires that four berachot be arranged and recites according to four cups of wine in the haggadah. Each of these elements has its own distinct role in the mitzvah of daled kosot; hence, the Rambam suggests that one can fulfill one part of the mitzvah without the other.

Perhaps Tosafot concurs with the Rambam's analysis and understands that there are two aspects to the mitzvah, the drinking, which displays freedom, and the arrangement of the cups, the fulfillment of four cups. However, Tosafot is unsure as to which of these elements represents the basic, fundamental character of the mitzvah. This question may determine whether each person must drink the four cups or one could fulfill the mitzvah via the leader of the seder drinking the wine, as we will explore.¹⁶

¹⁶ The Brisker Rav does not follow this approach and assumes that the Rambam and Tosafot disagree. However, this analysis of Tosafot is based on a lecture by Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, shlit"a, written and published by Rabbi Aryeh Korn in Or Hamoadim, pp.69-78.

The second aspect of daled kosot, the arrangement of the four berachot on four cups, is a recitation, similar to kiddush, in which listeners can fulfill their obligation simply by hearing the kiddush. This principle of equating listening to reciting is known as shomeah k'oneh, and it has drawn extensive attention in halachic literature. However, this notion is limited to a recitation but would not apply to an action, like drinking the wine, the first aspect of daled kosot. Enabling one to fulfill an action, a maaseh mitzvah, via someone else invokes a different principle, the rule of shlichut- agency- which allows someone else to act on my behalf and discharge my obligation.

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Hakohen Heller (1745-1813), in the Ketzot Hachoshen, his classic commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 182:1),

defines the parameters of this key halachic concept based on the words of the Tosafot Rid (R' Yeshaya D'Trani, 12th-13th c.):

There are those who ask, if so, then for all mitzvot, agency should work and a person could say to his friend, sit in the succah for me, put on tefillin for me. And it is not so, for any mitzvah that the Torah requires one to do with his body, how can he fulfill this via an agent and [the sender] will do nothing? Tosafot Rid, Kiddushin 42b

The Ketzot Hachoshen explains that any mitzvah whose fulfillment is in one's body would not be subject to the laws of shlichut, because shlichut does not transform the agent into the person of the sender. Only for those mitzvot that require an action can we invoke Shlichut because the action itself can be attributed to the sender. For example, one could have an agent put tefillin on his arm, as the action of putting on tefillin can be delegated to an agent. However, one could not fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin by putting tefillin on the arm of a shaliach because shlichut cannot relate to the body of the sender.

The aspect of daled kosot which requires drinking the wine to express freedom is clearly not subject to the principle of shlichut. A sense of emancipation demonstrated by enjoying a beverage cannot be transferred as it is a personal experience, not a detached action. Tosafot wonders whether the core of daled kosot is the recital of berachot that would be subject to fulfillment by listening, and the actual drinking is an ancillary aspect, or is the drinking, the experience of freedom, the key element, which could not transfer. Tosafot concludes that the basic character of the mitzvah of the four cups is the experience of freedom, and hence, each person must drink his or her own four cups.

This notion of freedom as the key to the mitzvah of the daled kosot is a central motif in the entire seder experience. In the Haggadah, we note that each year we are obligated to see ourselves as if we were freed from Egypt. The Rambam adds that we must not only experience but also demonstrate this freedom of the Exodus:

In every generation a person is obligated to show himself as if he himself left right now from the servitude in Egypt, as it says in the Torah, "and He took us out from there" Rambam Chametz U Matzah 7:6

This, the Rambam adds, is the source for our custom to lean while eating and drinking at the Seder:

Therefore, when a person feasts on this night, one must eat and drink and recline in the manner of freedom. Rambam Chametz U Matzah 7:7

The mishna in Pirkei Avot adds a fascinating insight into the notion of freedom.

"Engraved on the tablets." Do not read it engraved, rather, emancipated as there is no free person other than one who studies Torah. Avot 6:2

On the surface, this mishna is difficult to comprehend. What does emancipation have to do with the study of Torah? How does this verse demonstrate the principle that the mishna taught? Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik (1917-2001) describes the Jewish notion of freedom in his book, *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind* (pp.138-139):

The common understanding of freedom translates into the Hebrew term *cheirus haguf*, freedom of the body. The Torah, however, teaches and demands a higher level of liberty, namely, *cheirus hanefesh*, freedom of the soul. One who has attained *cheirus haguf*, although no longer subject to the will of others, is still enslaved by passions, whims and desires. On a physical level, one is only as free as one's addictions allow; is such a person truly liberated? The Torah, on the other hand, in cultivating *cheirus hanefesh*, commands discipline and self-control on a physical and intellectual level, which paradoxically nourishes freedom of the soul.

This teaches that one who drifts in the winds of societal fads is not truly emancipated. He is a slave to the trends and attitudes that surround him. In contrast, one who is connected to his inner soul is truly free.

The notion that freedom of the soul is true freedom can be understood with an idea of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook (1865-1935). He observed that true freedom is the ability to connect to and experience one's self. A slave lacks freedom because he is inhibited from pursuing his

personal calling, his unique destiny. In this light, emancipation is not a physical concept; it is a mindset. While in Egypt, the Jews were enslaved not only because of their physical labor, but in the way that they were not able to connect to themselves, to their heritage and their essence. The Egyptian exile shackled the Jewish people spiritually and they were unable to pursue their destiny. They were so broken, that when Moshe arrived to announce the impending redemption, they were unable to even listen to him.

When Hashem emancipated the Jews, He immediately brought them to Har Sinai to accept the Torah, at which time they achieved true freedom. They were able to live with the fullest freedom of the soul because their lives were connected to Torah, to Hashem, to their true selves. Each person has a divine spark that is the source of our spiritual freedom, and the Torah is the key to connect with that freedom.

Now we can better understand the mishna's description of freedom and engraving. Engraving is different from other forms of writing, in that the standard means of writing involves placing ink on paper. This bond of ink and paper is a close one, but the two substances do not form one organic whole. In contrast, letters which are engraved in stone are part and parcel of the material. The mishna indicates that our relationship to Torah is not a connection between two foreign substances like ink and parchment. Rather, it is similar to engraving, as every Jew is inherently connected to Torah. This is the source of our freedom, as one who studies Torah achieves freedom of the soul through his connection to his inner self, to his true identity and destiny.

At the Seder night, when we express our emancipation through drinking four cups of wine and other expressions of freedom, we are really celebrating freedom of the soul. We are toasting to the gift of our freedom, and to the hope that our people will soon fulfill the purpose of leaving Egypt, acceptance of the Torah. This gives us the greatest freedom, freedom of the soul.

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So the Children Will Ask

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Chazal instituted that sippur yitziat Mitzrayim be performed in a question-answer format, as derived from the Mishnah in Pesachim (117a).¹¹⁴ The Emek Brachah (Haggadah, 1) quotes Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik who observes that this specific format is one of the three elements that distinguishes the mitzvah of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim at the seder from the mitzvah of Zechirat Yitziat Mitzrayim that applies every day of the year. Likewise, the Rambam's codification of the seder procedures includes the question-answer format.

Chazal instituted several practices that encourage children to ask questions, among them: removing the food early on, as if the meal was over (115b), dipping vegetables twice (114b), and distributing treats to younger members of the family (Rambam, Hilchot Chametz u- Matzah 7:1). Along these lines, Rav Gershon Zacks (Haggadah Siach ha-Grid, pp. 8, fn. 1) suggests that the Rambam opines that one should add anything he or she can that will cause children to ask questions. Rav Moshe Soloveichik explains that the custom to wear a Kittel at the seder is meant to spark the children's curiosity. This symbol of solemnity and sadness, donned at a time of redemption, will bring children to inquire about the custom.

The Rosh emphasizes the importance of questions in fulfilling the mitzvah of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim. The Rosh holds that one can only satisfy his Torah obligation of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim by responding to questions that are posed. Rav Yerucham Perlow (Sefer ha-Mitzvot le-Rasag, Asin 33, p. 167) notes that the Rosh holds that a lone person is only rabbinically obligated to ask himself questions at the seder. The Biblical obligation is limited to a seder where children are present, as described in the verse, "And it shall be when your son asks you..." (Shemot 13:14). However, the

Rabbis, in order to reflect the Biblical commandment of answering the child's questions, required a single person to utilize the question-answer format.

Rashi's explanation of the verse in parshat Re'eh, Devarim 16:3, "lema'an tizkor - so that you will remember," seems to support the ruling of the Rosh. Rashi states that the only way of remembering is through eating the Korban Pesach and matzah, and "only when the son asks did the Torah impose the obligation to tell him."

The rabbis prescribed actions that would beg the questions of the children, in order to ensure the fulfillment of the Torah obligation. If children were not motivated to ask, they might remain silent, depriving the adults of the mitzvah to answer them. This type of institution exists regarding other mitzvot. Chazal require one to purchase a four-cornered garment in order to create a Torah obligation to attach tzitzit to it. This stems from the Gemara in Menachot (41a) that tells us that in a "moment of anger" Hashem will punish one who does not obligate himself to wear tzitzit.

In light of the Rosh's opinion, one can understand the words of Tosfot in Pesachim (114b, s.v. Zot Omeret): If one has only enough greens for either karpas or maror, he should use it for karpas, which arouses children's curiosity, even though he will sacrifice proper observance of the mitzvah of maror. The Rashbam (ad loc.) finds this problematic. Why should one forfeit the mitzvah of maror simply for the purpose of arousing the curiosity of the children? The answer, based on the Rosh, is that karpas invites the questions of the children, allowing for the fulfillment of the Torah commandment of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim. Perhaps this opportunity, which arises first, supercedes the mitzvah of maror, which today is a rabbinical requirement.

In contrast to the Rosh, the Rambam (Hilchot Chametz u-Matzah 7:2) obligates one in the mitzvah of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim even in the absence of any questions.

Q If so, why was it necessary for Chazal to institute elements of the seder that are intended to invite questions?

Q Furthermore, it is clear from the Rambam's codification (ibid.) that even if no questions are spontaneously asked, one should still perform the mitzvah through the question and answer form. Why is this required?

Q The Rambam (ibid. 8:2) requires that the leader of the seder, rather than the children, ask the questions. The purpose of this is to focus the attention of the participants on the observances of the night. If so, the goal of the questions is actually the questions themselves, not the answers. Why is this focus so important?

Q Moreover, over the years, many practices have become so familiar that their observance does not arouse any questions at all. Indeed, the Rambam states that one may introduce new practices that invite inquiry. Why, then, do we still practice those customs that no longer arouse the curiosity of the participants?

Q The Shiblei ha-Leket (218) explains that we read "Baruch ha-Makom baruch Hu" before the section of the Four Sons as a Birkat ha-Torah to precede the sippur yitziat Mitzrayim. Rabbenu Yeshaya is quoted as expressing a similar opinion. Why is there a need for a special Birkat ha-Torah before learning on this night more than any other night of the year?

Sippur Yitziat Mitzrayim through Talmud Torah

To answer these questions, we must begin with a fundamental principle that is alluded to by the Rishonim and illuminated by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Shiurim le-Zeicher Abba Mari z"l vol. 2, pp. 156). The Rav explains that we are required to tell the details of the Exodus via the medium of talmud Torah. The proof is the fact that the Haggadah revolves around the exposition of the portion from the Torah of Arami Oved Avi, recited by one who brings bikkurim - first fruits - to Jerusalem. Rabbi Yaakov of Lisa (Haggadah Maaseh Nisim, Introduction) and Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik (quoted in Emek Bracha) note that sippur yitziat Mitzrayim requires ha'arachat devarim - extensive elaboration. The way of one who wishes to express appreciation is to do so at length (see Rashi, Bamidbar 33:1). One would therefore expect the Haggadah's focus to be on the

lengthy, organized verses of Shemot or the aggadot and midrashim that directly address leaving Egypt. Yet instead, the Haggadah focuses on disorganized drashot from the selection of Arami Oved Avi. Why is this so?

Chazal wanted us to engage in sippur yitziat Mitzrayim through a Ma'aseh Limud, learning a portion of the Torah with the thirteen methods of Torah exposition. The pesukim in Shemot are too explicit, and would not allow for the same richness of limud Torah. Therefore, the Torah chose more cryptic verses, to facilitate the limud experience of the seder.¹¹⁵

This idea, that we tell the story of the Exodus through the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, emerges from the Mishnah in Pesachim (116a) and the Rambam (ibid. 7:2). Both express that the story must be told in a way that befits the intelligence of the children involved. This element is characteristic to the mitzvah of Talmud Torah itself, as explained by the Rambam in Hilchot Talmud Torah (1:6). The Rambam also states (ibid. 4) that the more intelligent and wise one is, the greater is his fulfillment of the mitzvah of talmud Torah. The Rambam also indicates that each person should elaborate on yitziat Mitzrayim to the best of his or her ability, and that the more one elaborates, the more he or she deserves praise. Clearly, it is not the terse specific text that is most important, but the learning and understanding of the subject.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the author of the Haggadah intended for all the participants at the seder to fulfill the mitzvah of talmud Torah in a complete fashion. The seder, therefore, includes portions from all sections of the Torah (see Brachot 11a): mikra, midrash, Mishnah and Gemara. According to Rashi, included in the category of Gemara are the answers of the Mishnayot that provide halachic rulings; for example, the Mishnah of "yachol mei-rosh chodesh." According to the Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:12), gemara is defined as creative learning. This too can be fulfilled at the seder.

Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that the words, "afilu kulanu chachamim... chayavim anu le-saper beyitziat Mitzrayim," serve as an imperative. One is required to tell over the story in great depth. The Haggadah emphasizes the obligation of even Chachamim and Nevonim, people who are very knowledgeable in Torah. One is not merely required to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, le-saper et yitziat mitzraim, but to be involved in telling the story, le-saper be-yetziat mitzraim.

Rabbi Soloveitchik cited another proof to the idea of the seder revolving around the mitzvah of talmud Torah. The Haggadah includes the Mishnah of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and the sources of Zechirat Yitziat Mitzrayim. Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that the Rambam's version of the Mishnah had Rabbi Elazar and the Chachamim actually debating the derivation of the mitzvah around the seder table. Yet the derivation of the mitzvah has nothing to do with the story itself; why, then, is it present? Clearly, the mitzvah is broader than mere story-telling; the mitzvah is to learn the sugya of yetziat Mitzrayim.

Further proof is found in the answer given to the Chacham, i.e. all the laws of Pesach, as well as the Tosefta that states that one should delve into the laws of Korban Pesach until the rooster crows. The laws of the Korban Pesach do not belong to the narrative portion of the exodus story. Yet their study is desirable, because sippur yitziat Mitzrayim is not merely a story; it is a sugya.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (Haggadah Siach haGrid pp. 39) also points out that the word "Sippur" can be understood in two different ways: retelling, as well as learning. Ibn Ezra (Tehillim 119:13) notes that the verb sippur is used to describe teaching Torah.

Q Why does the Haggadah formulate our gratitude to Hashem for freeing us from slavery in the form of talmud Torah?

Perhaps the purpose of this is to highlight that receiving the Torah was the ultimate purpose of the redemption. However, a deeper meaning may be seen in light of the Ramban's discussion of the selection and salvation of the Jewish people. The Ramban in his introduction to Shemot writes that the redemption is the process through which the Jewish people return to the level of the patriarchs and serve as the "Chariot of Hashem" in this world.

In this way, the Exodus was not merely a transition from Hester Panim to Gilui Panim - G-d finally clearly revealing His Providence in the world. Rather, it was also the process through which the Jews themselves became the embodiments of Hashem's Presence and accepted responsibility for its further revelation in the world. The book of Shemot, the Sefer ha-Geulah - Book of redemption, begins with a nation that does not yet realize God's providence, and ends with Moshe's teaching Torah to the Jews and the Jewish people's travels through the desert - events that proclaimed Hashem's providence in the world. Through learning Torah, we perpetuate the exodus' legacy; we make ourselves "Chariots of Hashem" in this world. Specifically, the learning of great scholars, Talmidei Chachamim who have mastered the entire Torah, helps us accomplish this goal. The deeper one delves into this learning, the more Hashem's presence becomes known. The greater the understanding one achieves, the more Hashem's holiness is valued in this world. Through this, one becomes a partner in the process of the redemption; one exhibits an appreciation of its benefits and goals, and, as a result, is grateful for it in a most profound way.

Teaching Others The Gemara (Bava Batra 21a) describes the development of yeshivot in Jewish communities.

Originally, fathers would teach their sons individually, but since some boys had no father to teach them Torah, a system of Jewish education began with yeshivot in Yerushalayim. However, attendance was limited to older boys of the age of sixteen or seventeen. Yehoshua ben Gamla is credited with enabling the continuance of the Torah by expanding the yeshiva system to a national scale and including boys from the age of six or seven. Tosfot (ibid. s.v. Ki me-Tzion) explains that the yeshivot were originally founded in Yerushalayim, because the students there would see the great sanctity of the city and the Kohanim performing the service in the Beit haMikdash. This environment would inspire them towards a greater fear of Heaven and a greater love of Torah study. Yet how was this supposed to aid the educational situation of orphans in other Jewish cities?

The Gemara explains that the impetus for providing education to the orphans stemmed from the verse "Ve-limaditem otam - and you shall teach them [i.e. words of Torah, to your sons]," which can be expounded upon to mean "and you shall teach them [i.e. all Jewish children who need education]." Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman asks why this explanation is necessary, if Chazal have already taught that the verse Ve-shinantam le-vincha - Eilu ha-talmidim indicates the obligation to teach Torah to students (see Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:2; Sefer ha-Mitzvot 11).

The Birkat Avraham writes that the mitzvah to teach one who is not his son only applies if that student comes forward of his own volition. One is not required to search out others to teach, with the exception of his son (see Kiddushin 29a). He cites the words of the Vilna Gaon (Yoreh Deah 245:5) as proof. The Vilna Gaon explains that the requirement of a Talmid Chacham to teach students stems from the mitzvah of tzedakah - charity. Therefore, explains the Birkat Avraham, just as one need not give money to a poor person when that individual is not interested in the gift, one need not teach a student who does not wish to learn. It is not the responsibility of the rebbe to pursue the student.

However, this understanding is problematic according to the opinion of the Rambam. The Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:2,3) lists the differences between the requirement to teach one's son and the requirement to teach others. He mentions only that one's son takes precedence over other children, and that only for the education of his own child is one required to spend money. The Rambam does not list that one must seek out and teach his son, but that one need not seek out others' children.

The Rambam explains the mitzvah of teaching Torah as, (mitzvah 11) 'Ve-shinantam le-vincha' - eilu ha-talmidim she-ha-talmidim keruyim banim - 'You shall teach it to your son:' this is a reference to the students, since the students are called children [of the teacher]." By quoting this exposition of the Sifrei, the Rambam implies that one is obligated to teach Torah to his students. Formulating the obligation as teaching those who are

already one's students appears to be consistent with the opinion of the Vilna Gaon quoted above. Although the mitzvah begins as tzedakah, once the teacher gains students, he becomes obligated to teach them, for they are treated by the Torah as his sons.

Perhaps for this reason, Chazal learn the obligation to teach the children of others from the verse "Veshinantam," from the word Shinun, which implies repetition or teaching for a second time. Only after he has taught them once and made them his students is he obligated to teach them a second time.

This may also be the explanation of the Beraita (Bava Metzia 33b) that states that one who learns one chapter, one halachah, one dibbur, or even one letter from someone else must treat this individual with the respect due to one's teacher. He is considered a student, and under these circumstances, the teacher is required to teach the student further. Hence, the Vilna Gaon would understand that the Rambam's list of differences between teaching one's son and teaching others only applies when both obligations are already in effect, i.e. after the others have sought out their teacher.

With this background we can understand the institution of Yehoshua ben Gamla. The intention was to create the Rebbe-Talmid relationship that obligates continuing Torah study. The creation of yeshivot through the contributions of the community allowed greater opportunities for those relationships to exist. As Tosfot explain, the effort to focus the building of the yeshivot in Yerushalayim was due to the great influence that the environs of the Holy City would provide. When a father-son or Rebbe-Talmid relationship already exists, both elements naturally commit themselves to the study. However, when this relationship does not exist, the proximity to the Beit ha-Mikdash and the Temple service allows for the students to devote themselves and their efforts to receiving the Torah of their teachers. We also understand what follows in the Gemara, the acceptance of younger children to the yeshiva system. Though older students may be more prepared to absorb the teachings, it was too late in life to hope for the expected impact of Beit ha-Mikdash and the ability to capture the hearts of the students in order to influence them.

In conclusion, we can answer our earlier questions on the Rambam. Why is the question and answer format necessary, even when children volunteer no questions, and even when one is alone? Why is the focus generated by the seder leader's questioning so important? Why do we ask questions even about things that no longer appear strange to us? Why is there a birkat ha-Torah on sippur yitziat mitzrayim?

There is a unique fulfillment of talmud Torah on the seder night as a vehicle to perform the mitzvah of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim. The mitzvah of Talmud Torah uncovers hidden ideas, gives expression to the geulah we celebrate, and ultimately reveals hidden evidence of Hashem's dominion in this world. Since focus is essential to talmud Torah, Chazal required one to focus on this night's learning through the medium of questions, either because of the "ki yishalcha vincha" imperative, or because of a rabbinical decree to emphasize this element of talmud Torah. Moreover, question and answer format emphasizes the Talmid-Rebbi relationship, which is the neshama of Talmud Torah. Through the questions, one prepares himself to focus and receive the learning of the seder; children will feel the humility necessary for successful learning, and the mitzvah of talmud Torah will be performed in its complete form. This is why, according to the Shibbolei ha-Leket, a special Birkat ha-Torah is made. The purpose of every Birkat ha-Mitzvah is to focus the mind, according to many Rishonim. Similarly, the purpose of birkat ha-Torah at the seder is to focus the mind on the forthcoming talmud Torah. This emphasizes that the Sippur will be performed through the mitzvah of Talmud Torah and will prepare the participants for the great task at hand.

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<http://www.globalyeshiva.com/profiles/blogs/shabbos-taam-hachaim-parashas-21>

By Ben

Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim Parashas Tzav-Shabbos HaGadol 5769
Avraham and Pesach

Introduction This week is Shabbos HaGadol, literally translated as the Great Shabbos. What is the significance of this Shabbos? The Halacha teaches us that on the Shabbos prior to the Jewish People being redeemed from Egypt, HaShem instructed the Jewish People to take a sheep and tie it to their beds. Given the fact that the sheep was the deity of the Egyptians, the Egyptians were distressed to hear from the Jewish People that their deity would be slaughtered. Nonetheless, the Egyptians were powerless to confront the Jewish People, and this was cause for celebration. Thus, every year, on the Shabbos prior to Pesach, we celebrate this event by referring to the Shabbos as Shabbos HaGadol. Upon further contemplation, however, there appears to be a difficulty with this appellation. Referring to this Shabbos as Shabbos HaGadol is fine, but what significance does this Shabbos have with relation to Pesach? Is this commemoration merely a prelude to Pesach, or does this Shabbos have a significance in its own right?

Commemorating the redemption and all its facets In order to answer this question, we must reflect on the history that culminated in the redemption of the Jewish People from the Egyptian slavery. HaShem made a pact with Avraham Avinu, known as the Bris bein HaBesarim, the Pact of the Parts. When HaShem informed Avraham that his descendants would inherit the Land of Canaan, Avraham questioned the promise and HaShem responded that the Jewish People would have to endure many years of slavery in an alien land. Nonetheless, along with this forewarning of suffering, HaShem promised Avraham that those who persecuted Avraham's descendants would be duly punished and the Jewish People themselves would leave their master's land with great wealth. Thus, in addition to commemorating the Egyptians slavery, we are also required to recall every facet of that redemption, which incorporates all the promises that HaShem made to Avraham. Avraham represents the Attribute of Kindness, referred to as Gedulah, greatness.

The Shabbos connection What is the association between Avraham and Pesach? In addition to the fact that HaShem promised Avraham on Pesach that his descendants would be redeemed from Egypt, HaShem also informed Avraham on Pesach that he would have a son, Yitzchak, born to him on Pesach. It is evident that Avraham is intertwined with the redemption of the Jewish People from Egypt. Thus, it is appropriate that this Shabbos is referred to as Shabbos HaGadol, the Great Shabbos, as the fact that HaShem fulfilled all His promises to Avraham regarding His descendants is a testimony to HaShem's greatness and kindness. We should merit that this year HaShem will demonstrate to us His kindness and redeem us from this long and bitter exile, and next year we will all be together with Moshiach Tzidkienu in Yerushalayim Habenuyah.

Shabbos Story Just Let Me Know When You Are Done

Dr. Kook, a known doctor in Yerushalayim, told about an amazing encounter he had with the Gaon Rav Aharon Cohen, one of the Roshei Yeshivah of Chevron. Reb Aharon once had a deep wound in his shoulder which was not healing on its own, and Dr. Kook decided he needed to operate. However, Reb Aharon was a very weak man, virtually skin and bones, and Dr. Kook was in a dilemma about how to operate on him. He was afraid to put him under anesthesia due to his frailty, but if he wouldn't put him to sleep, R' Aharon would suffer terrible pains during the operations. Dr. Kook discussed the dilemma with R' Aharon, and R' Aharon immediately said, "There's no need to use anesthesia. Just tell me when you begin to operate, and everything will be fine."

Dr. Kook then accounted what occurred during the operation. "I informed R' Aharon when I began the operation. After I had finished operating, R' Aharon asked me if I had finished. Until today I can't believe how a person could be capable of withstanding such pain without reacting at all. I asked him how R' Aharon how he did it, and he said that he thought about words of Torah, and he was so immersed in his learning that he even had to ask if the operation was finished!" (Shaal Avicha Veygadcha)

Rav Naftali Trop Stays Up To Watch The Thief A vagrant Jew had acquired a reputation as a thief, and was ostracized by society. However, when he came to Radin, he encountered Rav Naftali Tzvi Trop, the famed Rosh Yeshivah of the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva. Rav Trop greeted him warmly, invited him to eat by his table, and even offered him a bed to sleep for the night in his home. The Jews of Radin began murmuring with each other, wondering why R' Trop was exerting himself for this unsavory character.

Someone worked up the courage to ask R' Trop directly why he was treating this thief with such warmth. R' Trop answered in surprise, "It's known that a thief pays back double the value of what he stole, and if he can't pay it back, he's sold as a slave. But where is it written that I'm exempt from fulfilling the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim? Isn't he a Jew? Didn't Avraham Avinu fulfill the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim even with Arabs who worshipped the dust of their feet? It's true that it's risky to bring a suspected thief into my house, but I can watch over him carefully the whole time he's in my home. However, I have no excuse to exempt myself from the mitzvah."

The next day, the people in Radin heard that R' Trop had done exactly what he had said. He had stayed awake the entire night to guard the thief while he slept in his home. (Sidras Tikun HaMidos) [Reprinted with permission from www.Revach.net]

Shabbos: Taam HaChaim Acharei Mos-Shabbos HaGadol-Pesach 5768

Shabbos Story No one could get Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev angry. No matter what anyone did, he would always find something nice to say. He believed in treating all Jews kindly, no matter how much his patience was tested. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's neighbor had a son who did not want to keep any of the mitzvos. One year, during the Seder, the family was about to make a sandwich of matzah and maror for koreich. To everyone's surprise, the boy pulled from his pocket two slices of bread and some meat, and made himself a sandwich. His father started to cry: "How dare you bring bread to my Seder?" "But father," the boy answered, "I'm hungry after reading the Hagadah. What difference does it make if I eat bread or matzah? I'm sure Rabbi Levi Yitzchak wouldn't mind. The father jumped up from the table and grabbed his son. "Oh, wouldn't he? Let's go ask him." The whole family marched next door, the father leading the boy by the ear. "Rabbi," the man said, "even you would not tolerate what my son just did. He ate bread at our Seder. I have four sons, rabbi, and I don't have to tell you which one he is."

Everyone in the room was shocked; everyone, that is, except for Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. He smiled at the boy and asked if it was true. "Certainly, Rabbi," the boy said. "I was hungry so I made myself a sandwich." "Don't you know that on Pesach Jews don't eat bread?" Rabbi Levi Yitzchak continued. "Well, Rabbi," the boy answered, "to be totally honest, I don't really believe in all this. What difference could it possibly make if I eat bread or matzah?" The entire room was silent. Only the boy's mother could be heard sobbing in the doorway. "Please come here," Rabbi Levi Yitzchak called to the boy. The boy walked slowly, afraid that this time he had gone too far. As he approached the table, the rabbi hugged him. "Such a fine boy," he said to the father, "and so honest too," he added to the mother. "He's ready to admit what he did and he's acting according to his beliefs. Such a fine, honest boy must sit with me at my Seder. I have so much to learn from him! Just one thing though." The rabbi turned to the boy and said, "There'll be no sandwiches at the Seder table - unless you make them with matzah."

[This story was related by Rabbi Label Lam, reprinted with permission from Torah.org] A few years back, my wife and I had the pleasure to spend Shabbos at a hotel with Rabbi Pesach Krohn. He told over the following story. A young man from Mid-West was married for a good number of years without the blessing of children. One year his wife was expecting and she gave birth prematurely. The child weighed only a few pounds and remained hospitalized in Neo Natal Intensive Care Unit. After a period of

time the child was strong and healthy enough to be sent home. They made a Bris and named the boy Yaakov. Now with his son at home, the father of the boy didn't forget the tireless effort of the nurses that cared day and night for his child. He wanted to express his gratitude somehow. He did something seemingly unusual. He called his Rosh HaYeshiva – his spiritual mentor Rabbi Elya Svei in Philadelphia and asked him what he thought would be appropriate as a thank you gift. Should he get flowers, candy, or balloons etc.?

The Rabbi's answer was at first surprising. He told him to get them nothing. Misunderstanding, the young man reiterated his reason. He only wished to express his gratitude to those who had benefited his child so much. The Rosh HaYeshiva had, of course, understood that. He asked, "What reward did HaShem give to the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah (Alias Yocheved and Miriam) for risking their lives to care for the Jewish infants in defiance of Pharaoh? Everyone thinks, "That He made for them houses", that is, family dynasties, but that's not what the verse says. It states, "G-d benefited the midwives- and the people increased and became very strong." This was their benefit that they saw the work of their hands prosper before them. Rabbi Svei advised that he should rather bring the child back to visit the hospital staff each year on his birthday and offer personal thanks. That's what he did. Year after year he paraded little Yaakov before the nurses and to thank them again and again.

Before his 13th birthday and for the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah young Yaakov and his father delivered a Bar Mitzvah invitation personally to the hospital. Soon afterward, they received a reply. The head of nursing writes, and I paraphrase what Rabbi Krohn read verbatim from the text of the letter. "Congratulations on your family milestone. We wanted to let you know how much your visits have meant to us over the years. We work in a high risk setting never knowing if things will turn out alright. Even after a child leaves our care we have little or no idea what ever became of our efforts. I was not even at the hospital when your Yaakov was treated here but you should know that when we train for this difficult and often thankless task your son has become the poster child of what's possible. We mention again and again that the infant that you are currently caring for may turn out like "Yaakov". Then she adds as a postscript, "Many people send us flowers, balloons, and candies. The flowers eventually wilt, the balloons deflate, and the candies are eaten up but the gift that you have given us has been proven valuable beyond comparison." Take note how a Gadol- a Great Torah Scholar learns Chumash with such depth and practicality. How wise it is to follow their priceless advice.

http://www.aish.com/societyWork/society/No_Bread1.asp

by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

What insights does Passover provide into our current financial crisis that can help alleviate our collective pain?

A fresh look at the Seder's traditional four questions offers much food for thought around your Seder table.

1. Why is it that in all other years we eat bread and matzah, but this year we eat only matzah?

Bread is the staff of life. Matzah is the symbol of poverty. To make money, in slang, is to "make some bread." To be blessed with much is to "have a lot of dough." But this year as we look at our bank accounts, our retirement plans and our depleted wallets, we are all too often reminded of the "bread of affliction" our ancestors subsisted on in the land of Egypt.

Why did this happen to us? Perhaps it's because G-d wants us to understand a biblical truth that we seem to have forgotten. "Man does not live by bread alone" the Torah teaches. We dare not confine the strivings of our lives solely to accumulating money. We must not make material gain our sole priority. There comes a time when we have to learn to negate our overriding emphasis on "making more bread." While society stresses wealth as the primary measure of personal worth, Judaism insists that once a year

on Passover, we demonstrate the moral courage to renounce the power of bread as the ultimate ruler of our lives. Surrounded by our families we declare we can survive without the trappings of luxury.

It's ironic that one of the wealthiest men in the world didn't learn this lesson until it was too late. Sam Walton was the multibillionaire CEO of Wal-Mart, the fourth largest US Corporation. As he was lying on his deathbed, he struggled to get out his last three words on earth. He had given his life for his business. In that area, he succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Yet, it was at a price. He hardly spent any time with his wife, his children, and his grandchildren. He didn't allow himself the moments of loving interaction, of playing and laughing with his loved ones. His final three words? "I blew it!" He had the billions, but by his own admission he had failed. Maybe we now should be thinking about and thanking G-d on Passover for this important reminder.

2. Why is it that in all other years we eat all kinds of vegetables, but this year we eat only bitter herbs?

Why does a good G-d sometimes make our lives not better, but bitter? The Jews asked it in Egypt with regard to their servitude. We ask it today with regard to our dwindling financial assets. It is a problem that every believer has to face in one form or another.

We can learn a great deal from a story that is told about the saintly rabbi, the Chafetz Chaim. Meeting a former student after many years, the rabbi asked about his welfare. The student, in difficult straits, responded, "Unfortunately things are very bad."

The rabbi immediately shot back, "God forbid, you are not permitted to say that. Do not ever declare that things are bad. Say instead they are bitter."

Perplexed, the student asked, "Bad, bitter -- what's the difference? My life is terrible."

"No, my son," the rabbi answered, "there is all the difference in the world between them. A medicine may be bitter but it isn't bad."

True faith requires an understanding that life often presents us with challenges -- bitter moments that temporarily leave us with an acrid taste, but help us to grow, to mature and to eventually become better human beings.

G-d planned the Egyptian experience for a purpose. In Deuteronomy He refers to it as "a fiery furnace" -- the way in which precious metals were purified. As harsh as it seemed at the time, it was all for a reason. The Torah tells us that the Jews who had endured and survived were all the better for it. And that too must be our hope as we confront our contemporary crisis. Yes, it is bitter -- just like a medicine that will make us better.

3. Why in all other years do we not dip even once, but in this year dip two times?

The past led many of us to believe that we could expect no dips in the economy. The good times would always roll without interruption.

It was in 1929, just before the Great Depression, that many of the brilliant economists of the time predicted that the "age of cycles" was over. The rules that limited human progress were no longer applicable. The stock market could now only go up and up. They claimed unlimited wealth was inevitable. The hubris of man clearly needed to be humbled. The crash of the 30s silenced those who had previously put all their trust in "my might and my power."

The prognosticators of our new millennium proved to be just as blind as their predecessors. They, too, assured us the old rules no longer applied, that we could spend without regard to the future, that we need not save because the value of our homes would only keep rising, that in short we were invincible and almighty.

In a striking passage, the Talmud explains why Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel were all barren from birth, requiring divine intervention in order to conceive. It was, the rabbis teach us, because "God desires the prayers of his beloved." When things come too easily to us we fall victim to a sense of entitlement. We think we no longer have to pray for blessings to come to us if they arrive even without being asked for. Prayers answered before they

are spoken deny us the need and the opportunity to express them. Blessings too freely granted can also make us lose sight of our requirement for gratitude.

So we have dips in our fortunes. The good news is that they need not be permanent if we learn from them. All they ask of us is that when times are once again good we don't forget the source of our blessings.

4. Why is it that in all other years we eat either sitting or reclining, but in this year we eat only reclining?

To recline is to lean. And this year there are many who are forced to lean on others for assistance. The demands placed this year on charitable organizations are unprecedented. No one can simply sit back comfortably in his or her own chair, insensitive to the suffering of those around them.

That, in fact, is the very reason G-d tells us he forced our ancestors to spend all that time in Egypt before he brought them back to the Promised Land. "Be kind to the poor and to the stranger," He commands us, "because you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt." The purpose of Egyptian slavery was meant to teach us to empathize with the oppressed in every generation. We know what it means to be poor, to be hungry, to be mistreated. We were schooled in misery precisely so that we would not fail in our mission to be a light to the world, teaching compassion and kindness.

"This is the bread of affliction -- let all those who are hungry come and eat with us, let all those who are needy come and share our festive meal with our family." This is the way we begin our Passover Seder. It is the most fitting introduction to the holiday whose very story took place in order to teach us this lesson.

We all strive to be happy. We search for different ways to achieve this goal. What is the best way to secure it? We have tried so many different ways unsuccessfully. Social scientists have recently come to a remarkable conclusion. A recent issue of the prestigious Science magazine reveals that studies prove helping others is perhaps the most surefire way to gain personal happiness.

Strange then, isn't it, that we spend so much of our days dedicated to getting, when we would be so much better off if we put more of our efforts into giving. We could all learn much from Michael Bloomberg, the self-made billionaire founder of the Bloomberg financial information firm and New York Mayor, who donated \$235 million in 2008, making him the leading individual living donor in the United States, according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy. In explaining his philosophy, he said he intends to give away most of his fortune, because "the best measure of a philanthropist is that the check he leaves to the undertaker bounces." And that will insure that he dies a very happy man.

These explanations may not resolve our pressing contemporary problems, but they do permit us to realize that there are profound issues implicit in the divine reaction to our difficulties that transcend our understanding. Our struggle for meaning must always be matched with our firm belief that the G-d who cared enough for us to perform miracles in days of old continues to love us in the same measure to help us overcome our present crises. That is, after all, why we celebrate Passover.
