The Structure Of The Seder: V'Nomar L'Fanav Shirah Hadashah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I

GOALS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE LEIL HASEDER

A: "SEDER"

"Seder", as everyone knows, means "order" – what a strange name for a feast! Why is this meal different from all other meals, in that it is called an "order"?;

Rambam's wording may prove enlightening. In Hilkhot Hametz uMatza, 8:1, (after having detailed all of the laws of Hametz, Matza, telling the story, drinking the four cups etc.), Rambam introduces the meal as follows: Seder Asiyyat Mitzvot Eilu b'Leil Hamisha 'Asar Kakh Hu: – "The order of performing these [above-mentioned] Mitzvot on the night of the 15th (of Nissan) is as follows:"

In other words, "Seder" refers to a particular order in which we perform a series of (otherwise) independent Mitzvot. Why, indeed, are these Mitzvot placed in any order – and why in the order which we identify with Leil haSeder(Seder evening)?

Before looking into the Seder itself, we find many analogous situations in the mundane world. Some of you may remember the show "This Is Your Life". The components include a (surprised) "target" – whose life will be highlighted on the show – and significant memories and people from his or her past. A neophyte, reading this description, might think that the order in which these memories are presented is irrelevant – indeed, he may think that we could present a jumbled assortment of guests from different times in the "target's" past – and then identify the "target". He might be surprised to find that the show isn't "working" – even though all of the components are there!

We all understand why this show would not succeed – its success is dependent as much on sequence as content.. First the "target" is identified, so that he or she realizes that it is his or her life which will be highlighted – this allows the target to mentally and emotionally prepare for the evening – and allows everyone else in the hall (potential targets each and every one) to "defocus" from their own lives and hone in on the "star's" life. Each memory or personality subsequently brought up heightens the excitement – until the final guest brought out, usually a long-lost friend or relative, brings the excitement of the evening to a climax. It would be hard to envision an episode of "This Is Your Life" without tremendous attention paid to the details of sequence.

Actually, we experience the same thing every morning. Upon waking, we are obligated to wear Tefillin, make sure that all of our four-cornered clothes have fringes, say K'riat Sh'ma, say Tefillah. Theoretically, these acts could be performed independently: say Tefillah, put on a Tallit (and then take it off), say K'riat Sh'ma, then put on Tefillin. However, the Rabbis created a system – or "order" – of performing these Mitzvot. First we put on a Tallit (even if we are not technically obligated – that discussion belongs in Hilkhot Tzitzit); wrapped in that, we put on Tefillin; we then sing praises of God, raising the tone of that praise until the community "comes together" for Bar'khu; this takes us to a communal recreation of angelic praise, which leads directly to K'riat Sh'ma; at that point, if we have properly focused and not been interrupted, the experience of Tefillah will be very ennobling and elevating. This experiential matrix utilizes the various Mitzvot which we must do every day to build an experience which is greater than the sum of its parts.

B: TELLING -> IDENTIFYING -> SINGING PRAISE

Before going into the details of the Mitzvot which we are obligated to perform on the night of the 15th of Nissan (Leil haSeder), we should first look at the overarching goal – or goals – of the evening.

It would seem – both from the prominence of "Maggid" (Telling the Story) in the feast and from the six(!) times (see below) that the Mitzvah of "Haggadah/Sippur" (Telling/Sharing the Story) appears in the Torah – that the goal of the evening is to tell the story. However, a closer look at the text of the Haggadah will demonstrate that telling the story is an objective, the purpose of which is to take us further, to achieve another goal.

Arguably, the central paragraph in the Haggadah comes on the heels of Rabban Gamliel's explanation of the meaning of the three central foods – Pesach, Matzah and Maror. Immediately after that, we declare that

in every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he came out of Mitzrayim (Egypt)…

– "telling the story" is a means towards "identifying with the story".

The next "turning point" comes immediately after this declaration of "identifying with the story":

Therefore, we are obligated to give thanks…to the One who performed all of these miracles for our ancestors and for us….

We have now moved up one more level – from “identification with -” to “singing praises to God for -” the Exodus. The Halakhic term for this type of singing is “Shirah”. At this point, we could argue that Shirah is the goal of the evening -but, as always, there’s much, much more.

C: RELIVING JEWISH HISTORY IN ONE EVENING

When we examine the various Halakhot and Minhagim (customs) performed on Leil haSeder, we find associations with different times in our history – vastly different circumstances. The Seder evening is indeed, a fantasy evening with a very real “time-warp” component to it. We imagine ourselves as slaves in Mitzrayim, as refugees in the desert, as noble freemen enjoying the feast in Yerushalayim with the Beit HaMikdash standing, as nobles reclining at a feast in the manner of our Roman oppressors – and there are even pieces of the Jewish-history-which-has-not-yet-been-realized which sneak into the Seder celebration.

On Pesach, we identify with – and try to reexperience – the Exodus from Egypt. Beyond that, we walk a mile in the shoes of every Jew who ever lived; every Kohen Gadol who entered the Kodesh Kodoshim on Yom haKippurim, every victim of persecution who died with “Sh’ma Yisra’el” on her faithful lips, every hearty pioneer who risked life and limb to drain swamps in order to reclaim more of the Land of Israel for her sons and daughters.

This idea is introduced rather early on in the evening – before beginning the actual “story-telling”, we cover the Matzot (the object around which story-telling happens) and raise our wine glasses (glass #2) (the object used for Shirah) and sing:

v’Hi She’amdah… …Not only one has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us – and the Holy One, who is Blessed, rescues us from their hand.

The Seder is a celebration of Jewish history and of God’s constant role in our survival and success.

D: REASSESSING THE GOAL

We have identified several goals of the evening – identifying with the Exodus, identifying with the rest of Jewish history and Shirah. Is there one, ultimate goal of the evening?

This question is far from moot. Once we grasp the purpose behind what we are doing, it infuses each step towards that goal with meaning and clarifies each piece as it fits into the larger picture.

The answer is likely a combination – which is only reasonable once we understand the relationship between the Exodus and the rest of Jewish history.

Besides the obligation to remember/relive it, the Exodus is presented in T’nakh in several contexts:

As a basis for the relationship between God and the B’nai Yisra’el – “I am YHVH, your God who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim, out of the house of slavery.” (Shemot 20:2) (see Ibn Ezra there);

As a motivation for keeping many of the Mitzvot – e.g. just scales (Vayyikra 19:35-36);

As an internalization of developing proper characteristics: “Do not oppress the stranger – for you know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Mitzrayim” (Shemot 23:9);

As a defining factor governing relationships with neighboring nations – “…do not reject the Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land.” (Devarim 23:8);

As a demonstration of the rebellious nature of the B’nai Yisra’el – “Remember how you angered YHVH your God in the desert…(Devarim 9:7);

As a remembrance of the faith we had in God – “I have remembered the kindness of your youth…following Me in the desert…” (Yirmiyahu 2:2);

As a demonstration of God’s love for us – “Not due to your being the greatest among the nations…rather, out of His love for you…did YHVH take you out of Mitzrayim…” (Devarim 7:8-9);

There are many more facets of the Exodus experience – but it becomes clear that the entire story is something of a historic metaphor for Jewish existence – our relationship(s) with God, with each other, with other nations – our development of national and personal character and so on, are all rooted in this event which took place 3300 years ago – but which continues to take place in every generation.

The goal of the evening, then, is to not only identify with those slaves who marched out of Mitzrayim years ago under the protection of God and under the leadership of His messenger, Moshe – but to identify with all other aspects of Jewish history which are encapsulated in this story. That is, however, only a piece of the goal. Since a central part of the Exodus experience (and later "repeats") was Shirah, brought about by a deep sense of utter gratitude to God (we read about it explicitly at the Sea – but there were doubtless other occasions when the B'nai Yisra'el sang praises to God during the process of the Exodus). The goal of the evening is, therefore, to totally live through Jewish history – with the perception of it all bringing us to sincere and heartfelt Shira.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER

A: THE MITZVOT

In the beginning of the shiur, I pointed out that the "Seder" is really an ordering – or sequencing – of the various Mitzvot which we are obligated to perform on this evening. Before understanding the nature of that order and its structure, let's take a look at those Mitzvot:

I. Mitzvot unique to the night

A. From the Torah mid'Orayta

1. Eating Matzah 2. Telling the Story : Haggadah

B. From the Rabbis – mid'Rabanan

1. Eating Maror (although the Torah commands us to eat Maror, that is only within the context of eating the Korban Pesach (Pesach offering) – without the Korban, the Mitzvah is "only" Rabbinic in source.
2. Drinking four cups of wine

3. Displaying Haroset

4. Hallel (Shirah)

5. Reclining

II. Mitzvot not unique to the night

A.mid'Orayta

1. Kiddush (if Shabbat) 2. Birkat haMazon (blessings after a meal)

B.mid'Rabanan

1. Kiddush (if not Shabbat – according to most Rishonim, Kiddush on Yom Tov is Rabbinic in source) 2. Blessings before food and before doing Mitzvot

As mentioned above, these Mitzvot (at least in most cases) could have been performed independently; but they are interwoven in such a way as to generate the experiential matrix which lies at the heart of the Leil haSeder.

B: THE FOUR CUPS – FOUR PARTS OF THE SEDER

Although the Yerushalmi (Pesahim 10:1) provides a series of "fours" in the T'nakh (most famously the "four terms of salvation" from Shemot 6) to explain the reason for four cups; it seems from the internal Halakhot of the Seder that the reason that there are four cups is because there are four "occasions" for "Shirah" in one form or another at the Seder. The Talmud (Arakhin 11a) rules that Ein Omrin Shirah Ela 'Al haYayim – "Shirah" is only sung over wine. The four points in the seder where we drink are four "poles" of Shirah.

1. KIDDUSH

Kiddush is the conventional first part of any Shabbat or Yom Tov meal – although the words change here, Kiddush is still Kiddush. However, the two major differences here are telling. Unlike any other Kiddush, at Leil haSeder, people recline, in a manner of royalty, while drinking. In addition, unlike any other Kiddush, everyone must have his or her own cup and drink the proper amount. Clearly, then, this Kiddush is somewhat unique. Both of these differences point to the essential difference – tonight we are "B'nai Horin" – nobility and royalty. Each of us has his or her own glass and we all recline like royalty. This is, however, still Kiddush.

2. MAGGID

The second cup, which sits (filled) in front of us throughout the entire Maggid (telling the story) – is drunk at the end of that section. That section, as above, moves us from telling and "old" story, to putting ourselves into the story – to praising God for OUR salvation (more about that later). That praise is certainly Shirah and must be said over wine – cup #2.

3. BIRKAT HAMAZON

As to whether Birkat haMazon T'una Kos – Birkat HaMazon must always be said over a cup of wine (held by the leader of the blessings – the mezamen) see Shulhan Arukh and commentaries at OC 182; however, it seems that we are again doing what we did at Kiddush – turning a "one person drinks" situation into an "everybody drinks" – hence, Shirah.

4. HALLEL

The Hallel at the Seder is broken into two parts – the first part (Psalms 113-114) which focus on the Exodus, is said as the culmination of telling the story. However, there is another part of Hallel to be said – the Shirah for the rest of Jewish history – including the awaited-future which we imagine has already happened immediately after the meal. This Shirah is an anticipatory one, thanking God for the redemption for which we wait. (My high school Rebbi, Rabbi Yoel Sperka, pointed out that the verse in Psalms Kol Rina vi'Y'shua' b'Ohalei Tzaddikim – "the voice of gladness and salvation is heard in the tents of the righteous" – (Tehillim 118:15) is presented in a seemingly backwards fashion – first, there should be the salvation, then the gladness. However, he explained, that is the way of the righteous – to thank God for a salvation even before it has been realized.) The final cup, then, is the Shirah for the anticipated redemption.

These four cups mark off the four basic parts of the Seder – Kiddush, telling the story/identifying with the story/praising God, the meal (including all of those Mitzvot associated with eating) and the praise for the anticipated redemption.

C: MATZAH AND WINE

As mentioned above, the wine is central to the Seder as it is the vehicle for Shirah. Clearly (as indicated in the italicized directions throughout the Haggadah) the Matzah is the central symbol at the table. Whenever engaged in story-telling, we keep the Matzah uncovered – and at least once during Maggid (R. Gamliel says:…) we lift it up.

Matzah is called Lehem 'Oni – (Devarim 16:3) – which literally means "bread of poverty" – or "poor man's bread". For that reason, it is flat and tasteless. And for that reason, we have a broken piece among the three (or two – Rambam) Matzot over which we say "Hamotzi".

In addition, the word "'Oni" could be associated with the word for "response" – (La'anot) – and Sh'muel (Pesahim 115b) makes this connection. Matzah is the bread over which we respond to questions. In other words, it is the focal point for the story-telling.

The pendulum-swinging between wine (Kiddush) and Matzah (Ha Lachma 'Anya) and wine (v'Hi She'amdah) and Matza (Tzei ul'Mad) and wine (L'fikhakh) reflects the way that information (story-telling – with the Matzah as the "show-and-tell" piece) and reaction (Shirah -with the wine) build upon each other to the beautiful crescendo of "Ga'al Yisr'ael". We will examine the particulars of this "buildup" later on.

D: THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE SEDER

Common convention holds that the Leil haSeder is a "children's night" – nothing could be more misleading. While the Torah commands us in four different places (and in four different ways) to teach our children about the Exodus on this night, the Torah also commands us in two other places to "remember" the Exodus. As we shall see when examining the "introductory" part of the Maggid, there are two distinct obligations, directed at two different audiences.

The obligation towards the children (which may devolve solely or chiefly upon the direct parents of each child) involves several components:

(1) Imparting to them specific information about the Exodus;

(2) Gearing that information to each child based on his attitude, background and sophistication;

(3) Using specific objects to teach the child and

(4) Using the "question-answer" method to teach – and, if the child doesn't ask, provoking questions through odd behavior (e.g. hiding the Matzah, dipping vegetables in a liquid, etc.)

In this obligation, there is clearly a teacher (father) and a student (child).

On the other hand, everyone is obligated to participate in story-telling with each other, expanding upon the story as much as possible and analyzing in detail the components of the story. This "adult" (or, better yet, "peer") component is different as follows:

(1) It does not demand specific information be imparted, just involvement with the story all night;

(2) Although any conversation, in order to be successful, must be on a level appropriate for the participants, there is no "leveling" involved here;

(3) There are no objects associated with this teaching (as adults are able to think in abstract terms and generally do not use "show-and-tell" for learning) and

(4) The method is discussive, not necessarily question-answer. There are no "provocations" brought on by strange behavior as part of this obligation.

In contradistinction to the "child" obligation, there are no teachers or students here.

By the way, there is no age limit for either category. There are young children who are already well-versed and enthusiastic who could easily join in with the "adults" (although their father may yet have a particular obligation to engage them in question-and-answer parrying); and there are certainly many adults who lack the background and are just starting out. "Children" and "adults" should be understood as archetypes, not as definite divisions. (See also Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatza 7:1 and 7:2 – the two obligations are clearly presented as independent pieces).

The experience of the Leil haSeder is targeted at everyone present at the table. The scholars, the children, the (temporarily) disaffected, the sophisticated, the eager and the simple. When we left Egypt, Mosheh declared to Pharaoh: "We will go out with our youths and with our aged ones, with our sons and with our daughters…" (Shemot 10:9). That is the goal of the Seder – to recreate the communal experience of everyone going out – but that is a great challenge which demands multiple modes of education.

E: BASIC BREAKDOWN OF MAGGID

1. PROVOKING QUESTIONS

After Kiddush, we immediately begin the story-telling (one could even argue that the reclining during Kiddush is also a provocation for the children to ask – evidenced by "reclining" as one of the "four questions"). By washing (no room here to get into that!) and dipping, we arouse the curiosity of the children (of all ages) who are unfamiliar with the practice. Then, we break a Matzah and hide it – keeping the children ever more interested – if not in the goings on, at least in the outcome of the "hunt'.

A note about the broken Matzah: as I pointed out above, we have a broken Matzah because of the "poverty" angle of Matzah – but, for that purpose, we could just bring 2 (or 1) and a half Matzot to the table to start with! We break it as part of the Seder to arouse the questions.

We then engage the child(ren) with their questions (the four questions is an entire piece which deserves its own shiur) – and we offer a very quick response (which, if you look carefully, isn't really an answer to any of the questions.)

2. INTRODUCING THE MITZVAH

We then have several introductory paragraphs, which belong to a different shiur (perhaps next year?). However – one note; you will see that the two obligations of "informing" (children) and "discussing" (adults) are outlined quite clearly in these introductory paragraphs. On the one hand, we have the five sages, expansively staying up all night in B'nei B'rak, discussing the Exodus; on the other hand, we have the paragraph "Yakhol meRosh Chodesh" – which clearly limits the Mitzvah of "informing" to a particular time-frame. Note that according to the latter paragraph, the Mitzvah of Haggadah only applies when the Pesach, Matzah and Maror are in front of us. According to R. Elazar b. Azariah, the Pesach may not be eaten after midnight (Pesahim 120b). Why then did he stay up all night discussing the Exodus? He should have left at midnight! Rather, the Mitvah of "informing the children", which is tied to the particular objects at the Seder, begins and ends when those objects are brought and removed. The Mitzvah of "discussing" goes on all night.

3. MIT'HILAH 'OVDEI 'AVODAH ZARAH…

We then begin the pre-history – with a piece about Avraham being chosen by God. The reason for this inclusion is based upon the ruling of the Mishnah in Pesahim that we must begin the story with "disgrace" and end with "praise". Rav and Sh'muel disagree about the "disgrace" meant by the Mishnah – Rav says it refers to the disgrace of our originally being idol-worshippers and Sh'muel maintains that it connects with the disgrace of being enslaved. We follow both leads – although the clear emphasis is on the disgrace of slavery.

There is something else lurking in this paragraph; if we look carefully at the verses chosen (from Yehoshua's farewell speech), we see the theme of wandering already introduced into our history. This sets the tone that the Exodus experience was part – and the archetypal example of – Jewish history. In addition, the two "extra" verses (after the "idolatry" verse) seem unnecessary and somewhat disconnected from the "disgrace" of idolatry -putatively the point of this paragraph. Rather, these two verses help connect the Abrahamic movement with the Mitzrayim experience – by linking Avraham – Yitzchak – Ya'akov – his children – Mitzrayim.

4. V'HI SHE'AMDAH

As I pointed out above, this paragraph is a mini-Shirah, inserted at this juncture to widen the scope of our story (as has just been done with the Yehoshua' paragraph) to encompass the entire historical experience of the Jewish people. What we are about to tell is not just a story about Egypt, Pharaoh and our ancestors – it is about Shushan, Haman and our (more recent) ancestors; it is about Berlin, Hitler and our grandparents – it is about being Jewish.

5. TZEI UL'MAD

This next section is one of the two central pieces of the story-telling (see Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatzah 7:5). The rabbis selected this piece of Midrash (mostly from the Sifri) as it analyzes and interprets four of the verses from the Mikra Bikkurim (recited when bringing your first fruits to the Beit HaMikdash – Devarim 26:5-8); there are many explanations as to why they selected this one. I would like to suggest that since the goal of the evening is Shirah, and this is the only section in the Torah where the Exodus narrative is presented in the context of (commanded) Shirah – it is the most appropriate piece to use for describing the Exodus experience.

The "Tzei ul'Mad" section takes us through the ten plagues (and R. Yehudah's acrostic).

6. R. YOSSI HAG'LILI, R. ELAZAR AND R. AKIVA

The three paragraphs which follow are surely the strangest in the Haggadah (besides "Had Gadya"). Not only are the Midrashim a bit hard to "buy into", they also seem to have no place here. Explanation below…

7. DAYYENU

This selection is really made up of two paragraphs – the 14 Dayyenus (which list 15 great "Ma'alot" which God did for us) and the "Al Achat…" which lists them again, without the "if God had done X but not Y…" formula. Again – explanation to follow…

8. RABBAN GAMLIEL

This section is the second of the two core pieces of the Haggadah. Here we explain the symbolism of each of the three central foods at the table (theoretically – these days we have to make do with only two). It is interesting that each of these foods, along with their attendant explanations, represents one of the three types of experiences we go through as a people –

(a) Pesach – chosenness, royalty, protection – i.e. the good times

(c) Maror – persecution, slavery, vulnerability – i.e. the bad times

(b) Matzah – poverty (but freedom), refugees (but alive and unharmed) – i.e. the slow process of building up from Maror back to Pesach.

The two cores of the Haggadah – "Tzei ul'Mad" and "Rabban Gamliel" also seem to be connected with the two obligations that evening – "Tzei ul'Mad" is a direct invitation to study together, to examine, to discuss – i.e. the "adult" mode. "Rabban Gamliel", on the other hand, directs the attention to physical symbols, is only related to verses (no interpretation) and demands only that specific information be transmitted.

One more comment on "Pesach/Matza/Maror" – as we know from later on in the Seder ("Korekh"), Hillel's opinion is that all three must be eaten as one. Perhaps the lesson is that identifying as a Jew cannot be done selectively – our reconfirmation of our membership in Am Yisrael must include a readiness to celebrate when things are good for our people (Pesach), to share in our sorrows (Maror – see Rambam, Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:11) – and to do the hard work to recover from the difficulties we encounter (Matzah).

9. B'KHOL DOR VADOR

This is the turning point, where we step into the story and make it our own. Rambam has an interesting read here – instead of lir'ot et 'atzmo (to view himself), he reads l'har'ot et 'atzmo – to show himself (as if he left Mitzrayim). This is the source for those customs of walking around the table with the Matzah (in a cover) on the person's back (as if leaving) and other "acting out" Minhagim.

10. LEFIKHAKH – GA'AL YISRA'EL

Story turns to Shirah. With the one word – "Lefikhakh", we acknowledge that, since all of these wonderful things have happened to us, we are duty-bound to thank God for all of it. Note that in the first paragraph, we thank God who did miracles for "our ancestors and us" – whereas in the final paragraph – for "us and our ancestors" – note how the first two paragraphs of the Hallel transform us to center stage.

F: BACK TO THE MIDRASHIM AND DAYYENU

Above, I left two sections unexplained – the three Midrashim of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva – and the Dayyenu. Since they seem to form a bridge between the two core pieces of the Haggadah – and they seem a bit strange on their own – an explanation is in order.

1. KOL HAMARBEH HAREI ZEH MESHUBACH

In the introductory paragraph of the Haggadah (containing the "short response" to the children) we end off by saying "anyone who adds/increases/does more to tell the story of the Exodus, this is praiseworthy." The question could be raised (I have heard this question in the name of the Netziv) – since we are obligated to be involved with the story all night, how can we "increase" beyond the obligation?

Besides quantity/time, there are two other ways to "increase the story". First of all, a person could increase the praise for God by finding more praiseworthy elements in the story which are "hiding" in the verses. Second, a person could increase the scope of the story by adding his own novel explanations. In these three paragraphs, we find each of these great sages adding their own pieces to the story – increasing the story, if you will. They are also adding to the praise for God – since they are multiplying (through valid Midrashic means) the numbers of miracles God performed for us during the Exodus. These three paragraphs, coming on the heels of the obligatory "Tzei ul'Mad" piece, demonstrate for us how we should take our own place at the Seder – by adding our own novel ideas and by increasing God's praise within the story. Note that, in the tradition of our sages, each of them builds on the previous ones' ideas. Instead of negating and ignoring, we validate our fellows' Torah by adding on to it and including it in our own.

2. SHIREI HAMA'ALAH AND DAYYENU

Now, let's reorient ourselves. Before reciting/singing Dayyenu, we have told the story and discussed it – and, hopefully, followed the lead of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva by sharing our own input into the story. Now, we look back on all that we have retold – each of these miracles alone is enough to obligate us to thank God and have this thanksgiving feast.

We could just list all of the things which God did for us; however, in order to bring home the point and not to lose sight of all the "little" things which led to the Exodus – and all of the later miracles which led us to the goal of that Exodus (Sinai, Israel, Beit haMikdash) – we detail them out, one by one.

Earlier, I mentioned that the evening allows us to imagine our way through Jewish history. At this point, as we are about to move into Shirah, we imagine ourselves in Yerushalayim, celebrating at the Beit HaMikdash. The Beit HaMikdash had fifteen steps (Ma'alot), ascending from one section to another. On Sukkot, the Levi'im would climb these stairs, singing one of the fifteen "Shirei haMa'alah" on each – until they reached the top (Sukkah 51b). By detailing 15 things for which we give thanks (note that they are easily divisible into three even groups of five – line them up with Pesach, Matzah and Maror!) and referring to these kindnesses as "Ma'alot", we bring ourselves back to the Beit HaMikdash. This prepares us to recite Rabban Gamliel's dictum -which includes the (temporarily) missing Pesach – and to fully identify with those who are redeemed.

III. POSTSCRIPT

There is, of course, so much more to explain about the Seder. I hope that this shiur has proven to be a helpful guide in understanding the basic goals of the evening, the methods through which these goals are achieved and the way in which the individual components of the Seder help to create the experiential matrix of Jewish history, jammed into one evening, leaving us singing thanks to God for every piece of it.

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Haggadah shel Pesach: An Overview and Explanation of Three Sections from the Haggadah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. HA LACHMA 'ANYA

A. The Text

Just before beginning the "question-answer" format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and make a three-tiered statement:

1) This is the bread of poverty/oppression that our ancestors ate in Egypt.
2) Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who needs to, come and partake in our Pesach (offering?) (celebration?)

3) This year we are here, next year – in Eretz Yisra'el. This year, we are slaves, next year – noblemen.

As can be seen, the first "tier" is a declaration regarding the Matzah – it is the lehem 'oni (see D'varim 16:3) which our ancestors ate in Egypt. The second "tier" is an invitation; and the final piece is a prayer, that next year we should be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

B. Approach #1 – an Explanation of "Yahatz"

Just before beginning the "question-answer" format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and According to the Rashbam, this declaration is an explanation of the previous action – breaking the Matzah in half. Although we need to have a broken piece of Matzah as part of our three (or two – according to Rambam, Rif and many other Rishonim) Matzot, we could set the table that way before the meal. Instead, we bring three (or two) complete Matzot to the table and break one of them in front of the assemblage (the most likely reason is to further provoke the children's interest). Rashbam explains that we then explain – in the vernacular (Aramaic at that time) – why we broke this Matzah – because it represents the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate. (See further down, in our explanation on Mah Nishtanah, for a further development of this idea.)

One of the difficulties with this approach (besides it being marked as part of "Maggid" in all standard Haggadot) is that this doesn't explain the rest of the paragraph. The declaration regarding the Matzot explains "Yahatz" – but what does that have to do with the rest of the paragraph?

C. Approach #2 – Re-Creation of Mitzrayim

The Rashbam explains that the rest of the paragraph – the invitation and the prayer – are not part of the explanation to the children – rather, this is what the B'nei Yisra'el would say to each other in Egypt – (it is unclear whether he means that they said this that night – see below for a problem with that understanding – or that they would speak to each other that way in general) inviting each other to share their meager meal. The prayer at the end is also a re-creation of the Egypt experience; the B'nei Yisra'el prayed to God that the next year they would be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

The difficulty with this explanation is one of language – unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this paragraph is in Aramaic. If we insist that it be said in Aramaic, it can only be a "re-creation" of our Babylonian exile, with which we have associations with that language (even in the Tanakh). If it is truly to be part of the "fantasy" of the evening (see our shiur on "The Structure of the Seder"), it should be in Hebrew, like the rest of the Haggadah.

D. Approach #3 – The "Apologia" for the Seder.

Before presenting a new approach, I'd like to summarize and expand on the questions we have asked regarding "Ha Lachma'Anya":

Why is the paragraph in Aramaic?
How could we reasonably be inviting someone into our house for a Seder – at that late hour? This question becomes more impactful once we remind ourselves that no one may partake of a Pesach offering without having joined the Havurah of that particular offering in advance; what, then, is the import of yeytei v'yiph'sach – "let him come and partake of the Pesach"?

Why is the prayer at the end presented in a doubled form – here/Eretz Yisra'el, slaves/noblemen? Why not combine the two?

What is the purpose of this paragraph?

As we defined in an earlier shiur, the ultimate goal of the evening is "Shirah" – giving thanks to God for the Exodus which, from the perspective of that evening's fantasy, has just happened. The vehicle for that Shirah is "Hallel", beginning (but not limited to) T'hillim (Psalms) Ch. 113-118. Since this is an evening of Hallel, it is prudent for us to examine some of the factors which "make or break" a successful Hallel experience.

The Gemara in Megillah (14b) discusses the problem of Hallel on Purim – and why it is not said. The Gemara gives three answers:

a) The Megillah is the Hallel (proper treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this shiur; perhaps next Purim?)

b) Hallel is not recited for a miracle which took place outside of the Land. (The Gemara challenges this by pointing out that the Exodus itself took place outside of the Land – and responds that before we entered the Land with Yehoshua, the entire world was "Hallel-accessible"; it was only after we entered and sanctified the Land that the rest of the world became excluded from that possibility.)

c) Hallel is guided by the opening line: "Give thanks, you servants of God" – the implication being that we are only servants of God,

and not (anymore) servants of Pharaoh. In spite of the great salvation of Purim, we were still enslaved to Ahashverosh.

When we think about the ultimate goal of the Exodus – to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and realize the dream of being a free people, governed only by God's laws, serving as a moral beacon for the rest of the world (see Yeshayah 2) – we must sadly admit that much of that goal has not yet been realized. Even those components which were "real" for a time are not now part of our reality. There is no Beit haMikdash, we continue to be scattered throughout the world and our position as instructors and guides for the world is sorely tarnished by our own ethical and religious weaknesses.

We come to a Seder with only one side of the Exodus experience – the poverty and oppression; the nobility and freedom are still part of an unrealized future and a nostalgic past. There are two roles for the Matzah – as an independent Mitzvah commemorating the refugee experience and as an auxiliary to the regal Pesach offering. The only one which we can honestly point to tonight is the "bread of oppression" – we are very similar to our ancestors in Egypt – before the salvation.

Now we can understand the paragraph. Before beginning our fantasy trip through Jewish history (one symptom of which is conversation around the table in Hebrew), we declare that we are celebrating a "poor" Seder – and we pray that next year, we should be able to do it "the right way".

We make this declaration in the vernacular, as it is the last point of "reality" during the evening.

We ironically invite people in to share our "Pesach" – at once reminding ourselves that the Pesach is missing from the table as the Temple lies in ruins and we are far away from that glory while pointing to the sad situation that we could reasonably have fellow Jews who are hungry and need a place to have their Seder. (This is not close to the dreams we had for our future as we left Egypt). This invitation underscores the pain we feel that our Seder is so incomplete and must be a "fantasy" and removed from our reality if it is to be a celebration at all.

We then point to the two factors making our Hallel (the goal of the evening) incomplete – we are "here" (even those in Eretz Yisra'el say this because the rest of us are not yet home) and we are "slaves" (under foreign rule). As we saw above, these two features get in the way of a complete and proper Hallel.

At this point, we pour the second cup, signifying the redemption which we will reenact – and, God willing, live to experience in "real time".

II. MAH NISHTANAH

The "Four Questions", as they are conventionally known, present us with several difficulties – best expressed with one question:
Who is reasonably asking these questions?
If the asker is honestly "clueless" as to the special nature of the evening (as seems to be the case from the nature of the opening question), how does he know that we will later eat bitter herbs and will dip another time?

If, on the other hand, he is familiar with the rituals of the Seder and knows what to expect – then he already knows how this night is different?

Note: We never really answer these questions. Although we do explain why we eat Matzah (much later on – not very effective for a very young questioner), we never explicitly explain why we avoid Hametz (which seems to be the gist of the first "question".) We certainly do explain the meaning of Maror – but, again that is much later. The final two questions (dipping and reclining) are never (explicitly) answered.

I would like to suggest an approach which is grounded in a basic understanding about the evening:

Although the ultimate goal of the evening is "Shirah", achieved by reexperiencing the Exodus (and, through that experience, all of Jewish history) – this can only be accomplished by successfully informing all assembled about those events which we are endeavoring to reenact. After all, it is impossible to imagine life in Egypt without first learning about it: Haggadah (telling the story) is a necessary prerequisite to reexperiencing and thanking God.
As the Mekhilta (quoted in the Haggadah: "The Four Sons") teaches us, the Torah commands us to teach every one of our children – in a way which is appropriate for each. Not only must each child be informed in a way that he can comprehend – but he must also be drawn into the Seder in a way which is effective – as well as getting a response in an appropriate and timely manner for his level of comprehension and attention span.

I would like to suggest that the opening paragraph – Ha Lachma 'Anya – is directed chiefly at the "child who cannot ask". Note that unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this section is not presented in a question-answer format (and, indeed, directly precedes the opening of that format). Note that the entire message of the Seder is summarized in those three lines:

a) This is what we experienced;
b) We welcome everyone to join us;

c) We pray for a completion of the process.

Ha Lachma 'Anya, following this line of thinking, is said in the vernacular because the "child who cannot ask" will not be attracted to something in a foreign tongue.

Now, let's take a look at the Seder from the perspective of the "third son" ("Tam" or "Tipesh"). I will assume that this child, who, in the wording of the Torah, can only say Mah Zot ("What is this"), is so young that he doesn't yet have a sense of memory from previous years (somewhere between 4 and 6 years old). He does, however, have a sense of "conventional behavior" from regular and Shabbat meals.

What does he see? Kiddush (so far, so good); washing (okay – but why no B'rakhah?) – then, instead of the usual bread, father takes out a small vegetable, dips it in something and says the B'rakhah over it. This is a clear departure from the norm. Then, father takes the Matzot, breaks one and announces that it will be hidden until the end of the meal etc. This is decidedly strange and should evoke the question: "What is going on here?" from this child.

[That the child would ask here is premised on a household which encourages questions and which does not smother a child's natural curiosity – food for thought].
Now – a child who asks this type of question would reasonably be afraid of ridicule (from older siblings, perhaps) over such a "dumb" question. Father does the most effective thing here to continue to promote questions – he not only validates the question by attending to it, he also strengthens the question by adding his own information to it. "Not only have we done strange things until now, we will also avoid Hametz, eat bitter herbs etc.".

There aren't four questions – there is one – "Why is this night so different"? The father supports this question (which is answered in the next paragraph) with added information, thus strengthening the child's interest in participating in the education happening around the table.

III. DAYYENU

The section known as Dayyenu is comprised of two parts: The "If…but not" section, in which each stanza ends with Dayyenu and the Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah paragraph which follows it. I would like to pose several questions regarding these two paragraphs: [I strongly suggest following this section with Haggadah in hand].
1) It seems that the Ba'al haHaggadah (author) "stretches" the narrative a bit, including both "bringing us close to Har Sinai" and "giving us the Torah", both "taking care of our needs for forty years in the desert" and "feeding us the Mahn". Why the stretch?
2) Why does this paragraph come immediately before "Rabban Gamliel says…"?

3) What is the meaning of the rarely-used word Ma'alot (kindnesses) in the opening line?

4) An ancillary question: Why do we use the Arami Oved Avi paragraph as the focal text of the Haggadah – and not the narratives in Sh'mot?

5) If this is part of the Exodus narrative, why does it end up at the Beit haMikdash – instead of at Sinai or at the Reed Sea?

6) Why are there two paragraphs of "Dayyenu"?

7) What is the meaning of Dayyenu? Is it even thinkable that we could exist without every one of these events?

In order to understand this, we have to review the point made in the "The Structure of the Seder"shiur – the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history (using the Exodus as the archetype) and to give thanks to God in the form of Shirah.

The central locus of Shirah in our lives is the Beit haMikdash. Not only is our Shirah limited as a result of – and in response to – the destruction of the Temple, but one of the Avodot (worship actions) of the Levi'im performed there is Shirah.

Dayyenu is a form of Shirah – in two parts. The two paragraphs, in the style of "Talmudic" reasoning, establish the motivation for giving such thanks. Each one of these great things which God did for us is enough, on its own, to obligate us to sing praises and thanks to God. In other words, the "Dayyenu" does not mean "it would have been enough for us to exist", it means "it would have been enough reason to give thanks" (Question #7). This is the premise established in the first paragraph. The second paragraph takes this argument to its logical conclusion: How much more so (Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah) that He did all of these things for us – are we obligated to give thanks (Question #6).

As mentioned, the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history – through the prism of the Exodus. Keeping in mind that the goal of the Exodus was to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and for us to build a House for God in the place where He chooses to make His Name dwell (i.e. Yerushalayim) – it is reasonable that we would want to include all steps leading up to that event in our Shirah of the evening (Question #5).

This explains why we use the Mikra Bikkurim paragraph (Devarim 26) as the springboard for the Haggadah – it is the Torah's example of a later generation of Jews, standing in the Beit Hamikdash and giving thanks to God (the ideal Seder – see above at Ha Lachma 'Anya) and describing the process of the Exodus (Question #4).

The Ba'al haHaggadah wants to evoke the image of the Beit haMikdash (and enhance the "fantasy" of our Seder taking place there) by utilizing Mikdash-associations. The word Ma'alot (lit. "steps") immediately brings the 15 Shirei haMa'alah – the fifteen chapters of T'hillim (120-134) which begin with the title Shir haMa'alot (except #121 – Shir laMa'alot).

According to the Gemara in Sukkah (51b), these fifteen songs of "steps" were sung by the Levi'im as they ascended the fifteen steps from the Women's Courtyard to the Israelite Courtyard in the Beit HaMikdash – during the celebration of Sukkot (which begins on the fifteenth of Tishri). The use of Ma'alot in this context cannot help but evoke the Beit HaMikdash and the beautiful Shirah sung there (Question #3).

As we explained in the "Structure" shiur, the three symbolic foods (Pesach, Matzah and Maror) which Rabban Gamliel maintains must be explained – and which Hillel held must be eaten as one – are representative of the three stages in Jewish history – slavery/oppression (Maror), royalty and chosenness (Pesach) and refugee/transition (Matzah). If you look carefully at the Dayyenu, you will see that there are fifteen events/miracles recalled in that list – which break down very neatly into three groups of five each:

A) Maror (in Egypt): Exodus, plagues, warring with their gods, slaying the firstborn and giving us their money;
B) Matzah (transition): splitting the sea, walking us through, drowning them, giving us our needs, the Mahn;

C) Pesach (special relationship with God): Shabbat, Sinai, Torah, the Land, the Beit haMikdash.

This explains why this section is immediately followed by Rabban Gamliel's statement. Once we have sung all of God's praises for each of these three steps, we explain the association with the foods in front of us (Question #2).

This also explains why some of the items seem to be a bit "stretched"; the Ba'al haHaggadah created a symmetry of these three "groups" in order to highlight (via foreshadowing) the implication of Rabban Gamliel's triumvirate of Jewish historical stages (Question #1).

By doing so, he also created fifteen "steps" from Egypt to the Beit HaMikdash – corresponding to the fifteen steps inside the Beit haMikdash itself. Just as these songs were sung on the holiday of the fifteenth (Sukkot), so we give thanks on the night of the fifteenth (Pesach).

One final note: Since the Korban Pesach is symbolic of our "chosenness", we now understand why the Beit haMikdash is referred to as "Beit haB'hirah" ("the chosen house") – it is reflective of our being chosen by God as He passed over our houses in Egypt.

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UNDERSTANDING MAGGID - A biblical Perspective

[revised 5768]

Expression of Gratitude
or
Recogniton of Destiny

Should Passover be understood as our 'holiday of freedom' - a special time set aside to thank God for taking us out of slavery?

Certainly, the popular song of "avadim hayinu... ata benei chorin" ['We were once slaves, but now we are free'] - seems to state exactly that point.

However, if you *read* your Haggada carefully, you'll notice that those words never appear (in that combination). And if you *study* the Haggada, you'll notice that it states quite the opposite, i.e. that we remain 'servants', but we simply have a new 'boss'!

In the following 'Guide for Maggid', we attempt to arrive at a better understanding of how and why we tell the story of the Exodus - and how that story explains why Passover is such an important holiday. Hopefully, it will ask help make your Seder evening a little more interesting (and life - a bit more meaningful).

THE SOURCE FOR MAGGID in Parshat Bo

Even though we are all familiar with the pasuk "ve-higadta le-bincha..." (Shmot13:8) - the Biblical source for our obligation to recite MAGID - when one reads that pasuk in Chumash, it's not very easy to translate.

[Try it yourself, and you'll immediately notice the difficulty.]

So let's begin our study by taking a careful look at this 'source pasuk' within its context - as it will be very insightful towards understanding what MAGID is all about.

Towards the end of Parshat Bo, Bnei Yisrael have already left Egypt and set up camp in Succot. For food, they have just baked "matzot" from the dough that they had taken with them (in their rush to leave Egypt - see Shmot 12:37-39). After the Torah concludes this narrative, Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to remember these events in the following manner:

"And Moshe told the people - Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the House of Slavery, for God has taken you out with a strong hand...

[Then, when you come to the land of Israel...]

Eat matza for seven days... and don't see any chametz..."

(see Shmot 13:3-7)

With this context in mind, note how Moshe concludes these instructions with the following commandment:

"ve-HIGGADETA le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor" -

And you must TELL your son on that day, saying:

BA'AVUR ZEH -

for the sake of this -

ASA Hashem li BE-TZEITI mi-MITZRAYIM -

God did for me [?] when he took me out of Egypt"

(see Shmot 13:8).

Even though we all know this last pasuk by heart, it is not so easy to translate. In our above transliteration, we have highlighted the difficult words - which we will now discuss:

Let's begin with the meaning of the word 'zeh' [this]. Based on its context (see 13:6-7), 'zeh' most probably refers to the matzot that we eat, for the previous psukim describe the mitzva to eat matza for seven days. Hence, this pasuk implies that we must tell our children: 'for the sake of this matza - God did for me [these miracles ?] - when I left Egypt'.

Indeed, this commandment instructs us to 'remember' this day by telling something to our children; however, it is not very clear what the Torah wants us to explain.

There are two possible directions of interpretation. Either we must explain to our children:

- **Why God took us out of Egypt** - i.e. to eat matza! - Or,
- **Why we eat matza** - because God took us out of Egypt!

Even though we are most familiar with the latter reason, the first interpretation seems to be the simple meaning of the pasuk. As you'd expect, the classical commentators argue in this regard.

Ramban (on 13:8) explains (as most of us understand this pasuk), that we eat matza to remember HOW God took us out of Egypt. However Rashi (and Ibn Ezra) disagree!

In his commentary, Ibn Ezra explains (as 'simple pshat' implies) - that we are commanded to explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt IN ORDER that we can eat matza; implying that God intentionally placed Bnei Yisrael in slavery in order to redeem them - so that we would keep His mitzvot!

Rashi provides a very similar explanation, but widens its scope by stating that God took us out of Egypt in order that we would keep ALL of His mitzvot, such as pesach matza & maror.

[Chizkuni offers a similar explanation, with a slightly different twist - i.e. in the ZCHUT (in merit) for our readiness to perform the mitzvot of pesach matza & maror for all generations - God redeemed us from Egypt.]

According to Rashi and Ibn Ezra's understanding of this pasuk, the primary mitzvah at the Seder should be not only to explain to our children **what** happened, but also **why** it happened.

In our study of Maggid, we will show how this specific point emerges as a primary theme - but first must consider where that story - that we are commanded to tell over - should begin.

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

Let's contemplate for a moment where would be the best (or most logical) point to start the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim from. One could entertain several possibilities.

The simplest and most obvious approach would be to begin with Bnei Yisrael's enslavement in Egypt. In fact, this is precisely where Sefer Shmot begins!

On the other hand, one could start a bit earlier with the story of Yosef and his brothers, for that would explain how Bnei Yisrael first came to settle down in Egypt. However, if we continue with that logic, we could go back another generation to the story of Yaakov, or even back to story of Avraham Avinu. [Or maybe even back to the story of Creation!]

This dilemma appears to be the underlying reason behind the Talmudic dispute between Rav and Shmuel. Let's explain:

THE MISHNA in Mesechet PESACHIM

The Mishna in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim sets some guidelines concerning how to fulfill this obligation 'to tell the story', including one that deals with its format:

"matchilim bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" -

- We begin our story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise.

In the Gemara's subsequent discussion (see Pesachim 116a), we find two opinions concerning what this opening comment should be:

- **Rav** - "Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." - At first. our ancestors were idol worshipers..."
- **Shmuel** - "Avadim hayinu..." - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt..."

At the simplest level, it seems that Rav & Shmuel argue concerning what is considered a more derogatory statement- i.e. the fact that we were once slaves, or the fact that we once idol worshipers. However, this dispute may also relate to a more fundamental question - concerning **where** the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim actually begins - from our slavery in Egypt (Shmuel), or from the time of our forefathers (Rav).

In our study of Maggid, we will show how we actually quote both of these opinions, but not as the starting point of the story, but rather as important statements of purpose.

So where does the story begin?

We will now begin our detailed study MAGGID not only to answer that question, but also in an attempt to better understand HOW we fulfill this mitzva of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" when we read the Haggada.

HOW WE [DON'T] TELL THE STORY IN MAGGID

Even though the primary obligation of the Seder evening is to 'tell the story' of Yetziat Mitzrayim, when we read Maggid at the Seder, it is not very clear where that story actually begins (or ends). To determine when, where, and how we actually fulfill this mitzva, we will examine Maggid - one paragraph at a time.

As we study each paragraph, we will ask ourselves: is this part of the story?

If it is, then we can determine how we tell the story.

If it's not, then we must explain why this paragraph is included in Maggid nonetheless.

'HA LACHMA ANYA'

The opening paragraph of MAGGID - 'ha lachma anya..' is definitely not the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, but rather a quick explanation to the guests about the MATZA on the table. Let's explain why:

In the opening sentence, the leader of the Seder explains how this 'special bread' on the table is what our forefathers ate in Egypt; then he quotes what our forefathers said to one another in Egypt as they prepared to partake in the first Korban Pesach.

"kol dichfin…" - reflects how they invited one another to join a common group to eat the korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:3-6);

"hashta hacha…" reflects their expression of hope that by next year they would no longer be slaves in Egypt, but rather a free people living in the land of Israel.

As we will explain later on, this quote of what our forefathers said to one another in preparation for the very first 'seder' in Jewish History is thematically very important, for at the end of Maggid, we will express our need to feel as though 'we were there' ("bchor dor v'dor…")!

Nonetheless, this section is not the story itself – however, it forms a very meaningful introduction.

[See Further Iyun Section for a discussion of the meaning of "lechem oni". Re: how the matza eaten with the 'korban Pesach' had nothing to do with being in a rush, but rather reflected a '*poor man's bread' ["lechem oni"],* see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo regarding 'two reasons for matza'.]

MAH NISHTANA

Similarly, the 'ma nishtana' is not part of the story. Rather, we want the children to ask questions to ensure that they will take interest in the story that we are about to tell.

As our obligation to tell this story is based on the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-BINCHA" - and you must tell your children... (see Shmot 13:8), it makes sense that we try to capture their attention before we tell the story. However, as you have surely noticed, this section contains only questions, but no answers.

It should also be noted that these 'four questions' are really one question; i.e. – the **one** question is: 'Why is this night different'? Afterward, the child brings four examples/questions to support his claim that tonight is indeed different.

It is for this reason that we never answer these 'four questions'; Rather, Maggid continues with the answer to the 'one question' – of why this night is special.

'AVADIM HAYINU'

At first glance, the next paragraph: 'avadim hayinu...' seems to begin the story. [In fact, it appears that we have followed Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a) that we should begin the story with 'avadim hayinu'.]

However, if you take a minute to carefully read this entire paragraph, you'll immediately notice that this paragraph does NOT begin the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Instead, the 'avadim hayinu' section makes two very important statements, which provide the answer the 'one question' of WHY this night is so special. Hence we explain:

- **WHY** we are obligated to tell this story – for had it not been for this story of how God saved us from Egypt, we would still be slaves till this day;

And, then we explain:

- **WHO** is obligated to tell this story - i.e. 've-afilu kulanu chachamim..' - and even if we [who gather] are all very wise and learned and know the entire Torah, it remains incumbent upon us to tell that story; and the more we elaborate upon it, the better!

From this paragraph, it appears that before we actually tell the story, the Haggada prefers to first discuss some fundamentals relating to the nature of our obligation!

The first statement deals with a fundamental question regarding **why** this story is meaningful to all future generations, even though we will be discussing an event that took place thousands of years earlier.

The second statement comes to counter a possible misunderstanding, based on the source-text of "ve-higgadeta **le-bincha**..." - that this mitzva applies **only** to teaching **children** [i.e. those who never heard this story]. Therefore, before we tell the story, the Haggada must remind us that **everyone** is obligated to discuss the story - even 'know it alls'.

[See Further Iyun section for a more detailed discussion of how to understand this section in light of Devarim 6:20-25.]

MA'ASEH BE-R. ELIEZER...

To prove this second point of the 'avadim hayinu' paragraph (that even ' know it alls' are obligated to tell the story), the next paragraph in MAGGID quotes a story of five great Torah scholars (in fact Tannaim) who gathered for the Seder in Bnei Brak. Even though they certainly knew the story; nonetheless they spent the entire evening (until dawn the next morning) discussing it.

[This reflects a classic format for a Rabbinic statement. First the Rabbis state the obligation [in our case, that everyone is obligated to tell the story - even 'know it alls'] - afterward they support that ruling by quoting a story [in our case, the story of the five scholars who spent the entire evening discussing the story of the Exodus, even though they surely knew it.]

Even though the Haggada does not quote their entire conversation of that evening, the next paragraph does quote one specific discussion. Let's explain why:

AMAR RABBI ELIEZER BEN AZARYA...

The specific discussion that we quote concerns the Biblical source for our **daily** obligation to '**mention'** the story of the Exodus (see Devarim 16:3). In Hebrew, this obligation is commonly referred to as "**zechira**" [to passively remember], in contrast to our 'once a year' obligation at the Seder of **"sippur" -** to actively **tell** the story of the Exodus.

Most likely, the Haggada chose to quote this specific discussion as it relates to the obvious connection between these two mitzvot ("zechira" & "sippur").

One could suggest that the story we tell at the Seder ("sippur") serves as the reference point for our daily mention ("zechira") of the Exodus - when we recite the third 'parshia' of keriyat shema (see Bamidbar 15:41), every morning and evening. To mention this story on a daily basis only becomes meaningful if we first 'tell the story' in full (at least once a year).

We should note as well that the very pasuk: "I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt **to be for you a God**" (Bamidbar 15:41) supports the opinion of Rashi & Ibn Ezra (quoted above) that God took us out of Egypt **in order** that we keep His commandments.

Notice however, that we are still discussing the nature of our obligation - but the story itself has not yet begun!

THE FOUR SONS

The next section of MAGGID - beginning with 'baruch ha-Makom', discusses the Four Sons. Here again, we do not find the actual story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, rather another aspect of 'defining our obligation', as this section discusses **HOW** we should tell the story.

This section reflects the statement in the Mishna: '"l'fi da'ato shel ha-ben, aviv melamdo" - based on the level of the child, the parent should teach [the story]. [See Pesachim 116a.]

Based on this dictum, the Haggada quotes a Mechilta, which offers **four** examples of **how** to tell the story to different types of children - each example based on a pasuk in Chumash (where the father answers his son).

The opening statement of this section: 'baruch ha-Makom...' serves as a 'mini' "birkat ha-Torah" [a blessing recited before Torah study], as we are about to engage in the study of a Mechilta - the Midrash on Sefer Shmot. The quote itself begins with "keneged arba banim dibra Torah..."

[For a deeper understanding of this Mechilta, see the TSC shiur on 'The Four Sons' - tanach.org/special/4sons.doc]

This section certainly teaches us HOW to be a 'dynamic' teacher as we tell this story, and adapt it to the level of our audience. However, note once again that the story has yet to begun!

"YACHOL ME-ROSH CHODESH"

In the next section, beginning with: 'yachol me-rosh chodesh...' we discuss yet another aspect of our 'obligation to tell the story' - this time concerning **WHEN** we are obligated. Here, the Haggada quotes an analytical discourse which arrives at the conclusion that the story must be told on evening of the Seder.

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[In case you'd like to follow the logic behind this discourse: Because the Torah's first command to **remember this day** is recorded in Shmot 12:14, as part of a set of commands given to Moshe on Rosh Chodesh Nisan (see 12:1-2), one might think that the phrase "v'haya ha'yom ha'zeh l'**zikaron**" (in 12:14) refers to Rosh Chodesh [that's the "hava amina"].

However, when Moshe relays these laws to Bnei Yisrael in chapter 13, he informs that they must remember this day that they left Egypt, not eat chametz & eat matza for seven days (see 13:3-7), and then they must tell the story to their children **on that day** "ba'yom ha'hu" (see 13:8) - which may refer to the **day time,** i.e. when they first offer the Korban on the 14th in the afternoon [based on Shmot 12:6 and hence "yachol m'b'od yom..."].

The drasha rejects that possible understanding based on the next phrase in 13:8 - "ba'avur zeh" - where "zeh" in its context must be referring to the matza - hence the story must be told at the same time that we eat matza and the korban Pesach, i.e. on the **evening** of the 15th.]

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[At most Seders, probably at least an hour has gone by, but we haven't even begun to tell the story!]

"MI-TCHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA..."

After defining the various aspects of our obligation, it appears that MAGGID finally begins telling the story with the paragraph that begins with "mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." (apparently following Rav's opinion in Pesachim 116a).

If so, it would seem that we actually begin the story with the story of our forefathers [the Avot] and how Avraham grew up within a family of idol worshipers.

However, if you read this paragraph carefully, you'll notice it isn't a story at all. Instead, the Haggada is making a very important **statement**, and then proves that statement with a text-proof from Yehoshua chapter 24.

To appreciate what's going on, let's take a closer look at this statement and its proof.

The Statement:

"Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara.hayu.avoteinu, ve-achshav kirvanu ha-Makom le-**avodato**"

At first, our forefathers were servants to strange gods - but now, God has brought us closer to Him - **[in order] to serve Him**!

The Proof:

"And Yehoshua said to the people: 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt in the past - beyond the River, even Terach - the father of Avraham, and the father of Nachor - and they **served** other gods.

And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Yitzchak.

And I gave unto Yitchak Yaakov and Esav; and I gave Esav mount Seir, to possess it; and Yaakov and his children went down into Egypt" (Yehoshua 24:2-4).

This statement should not surprise us, for once again we find the Haggada emphasizing the point (discussed above) that God chose the people of Israel for a purpose - i.e. to **serve** Him!

However, if you study the quoted text-proof, you'll notice that it only proves the first half of our statement, i.e. that we were once idol worshipers, but it doesn't proves the second half - that God brought us close in order to serve Him.

RE-AFFIRMING BRIT SINAI in Sefer Yehoshua

The solution to this problem is very simple. To show how this quote from Yehoshua proves the second point as well, we simply need to read the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. In that chapter, after teaching a short 'history lesson' (see 24:2-13), Yehoshua challenges the people saying:

"Now - fear the LORD, and **serve Him** in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and **serve ye the LORD.**

And if it seem evil unto you to **serve the LORD**, choose you this day **whom you will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD**" (Yehoshua 24:14-15).

The entire reason why Yehoshua gathered the people in Shchem and reviewed their history was in order to challenge them with this goal - i.e. their willingness to truly serve God. After all, as Yehoshua explains, it was for this very reason that God chose Avraham Avinu. Thus the proof on the second half of the opening statement comes from the continuation of that chapter!

Note as well how the chapter continues, emphasizing over and over again this same theme:

"And the people answered: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for the LORD our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and that did those great signs in our sight...
therefore we also will **serve the LORD**; for He is our God.'

And Yehoshua said unto the people: '**You cannot serve the LORD;** for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins....

And the people said: 'Nay; but **we will serve the LORD**.'

And Joshua said unto the people: 'You are witnesses that **you have chosen God to serve Him.** - And they said: 'We are witnesses.'--

And the people said unto Yehoshua: '**The LORD our God will we serve**, and unto His voice will we hearken.'

So Yehoshua made a **covenant** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem."

[See Yehoshua 24:16-25!]

Hence, the proof for the entire statement of 'mi-tchila...' is found in the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. Most probably, when this section was first composed, the Haggada assumed that its readers were well versed in Tanach, and knew the continuation of that chapter.

[Note as well how psukim that we do quote from Yehoshua (see 24:2-4) form a beautiful summary of Sefer Breishit, as they focus on the key stages of the 'bechira' process.

Should you be looking for something novel to do at your Seder, you could have the participants read from this section. Note as well that Yehoshua 24:5-7 is an excellent (albeit short) review of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.]

This background can help us appreciate how this statement of 'mi-tchila' sets the stage for the story that we are about to tell - for it explains why God originally chose Avraham - i.e. to become the forefather of a nation that will serve Him. The next paragraph of MAGGID will explain its connection to the story that we are about to begin.

"BARUCH SHOMER HAVTACHATO"

In the next paragraph we find yet another 'statement' (and not a story) followed by a proof-text, that relates once again to God's original choice of our forefathers. We will now show how this section explains why the story must begin with Avraham.

Statement:

"Baruch shomer havtachato... - Blessed is He who keeps His promise [of redemption] to Am Yisrael, for God had calculated the end [time for redemption] as He had promised Avraham Avinu at brit bein ha-btarim. As God stated:

Proof:

'Know very well that your offspring will be **strangers in a foreign land** which will **oppress and enslave them** for four hundred years. But that nation who will oppress them I will judge, and afterward they will go out with great wealth"

[See Breishit 15:13-18].

In this statement, we thank God for keeping His promise to Avraham Avinu, at “brit bein ha-btarim”, to ultimately redeem Bnei Yisrael from their affliction, after some four hundred years.

At first glance, this statement sounds like yet another expression of gratitude. However, when considering its position in Maggid, one could suggest a very different reason for its mention specifically at this point.

Recall how the previous paragraph explained that God had chosen our forefathers to establish a nation to **serve** Him. In order to become that nation, God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu – i.e. "brit bein ha’btarim" - which forecasted the need for Avraham’s offspring to first undergo suffrage in ‘a land not theirs’ in order to become that nation.

In other words, this historical process of slavery, followed by a miraculous redemption, was to serve as a ‘training experience’ that would facilitate the formation of that nation. [See concept of "kur ha'barzel" and its context in Devarim 4:20.]

Hence, this paragraph explains why the story of the Exodus must begin with “brit bein ha’btarim” - for our slavery in Egypt was not accidental, rather it was part of God's master plan. In a certain sense, God put us into Egypt - in order to take us out!

[This does not imply that every event that happened to Am Yisrael was already predetermined since the time of Avarham Avinu. Rather, this overall framework of becoming a nation in someone else's land - followed by oppression and servitude - then followed by redemption - was forecasted. How exactly it would play out, who would be the oppressor, and how intense that oppression would be- was yet to be determined. See Rambam Hilchot Teshuva chapters 5 & 6; see also Seforno's introduction to Sefer Shmot as his commentary on the first chapter.]

As we thank God for fulfilling His promise to Avraham, we are in essence thanking God for His covenant **and its very purpose**, not just for taking us out of Egypt.

Therefore in this section of Maggid, before we tell the story of WHAT happened - we must first explain WHY it happened.

This point is proven in the next paragraph:

"VE-HEE SHE-AMDA"

As we lift our cups and recite the "v'hee sh'amda" - we declare yet another important statement, connecting that covenant and the events of the past with today:

"ve-HEE she-amda la-avoteinu **ve-LANU** "

- And it is THIS [Promise that was part of the COVENANT, i.e. brit bein ha-btarim] which stood for our fathers, AND for us as well. For not only once [in our history] did our enemies try to destroy us; but in EVERY generation we are endangered, but God comes to save us [for the sake of His covenant]."

The word "hee" in this statement obviously refers to the promise ['havtacha'] of brit bein ha-btarim (mentioned in the previous paragraph). This statement is so important that our custom is to raise the cup of wine before reciting this proclamation!

Here we explain that "brit bein ha-btarim" was not merely a 'one-time coupon' promising one major redemption, but rather it defined an eternal relationship between God and His people. The events of Yetziat Mitzrayim are only the initial stage of this everlasting relationship. Therefore, anytime in our history, whenever we are in distress - God will ultimately come to redeem us. However, the reason why God redeems us is in order that we can return to serve Him (that's why He chose us).

This provides us with a deeper understanding of why every generation must tell-over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. At the Seder, we are not simply thanking God for the 'event' but rather for the entire 'process'. Yetziat Mitzrayim was not simply a 'one-time' act of redemption. Rather, it was a critical stage in an on-going historical process in which God desires that Am Yisrael become His special nation.

As this purpose is eternal, so too the need to remind ourselves on a yearly basis of the key events through which that process began.

This understanding explains why redemption requires spiritual readiness, for in every generation Bnei Yisrael must show their willingness to be faithful to that covenant.

[In our TSC shiur on Parshat Bo, we explained how this concept explains the symbolism of why we must rid ourselves of chametz, prior to and during the time when we thank God for Yetziat Mitzrayim.

This may also explain why we invite Eliyahu ha-navi, when we begin the final section of the Haggada, where we express our hope for our future redemption. According to the final psukim of Sefer Mal'achi (the Haftara for Shabbat ha-Gadol!), Eliyahu will come to help the nation perform proper 'teshuva' - to become worthy for redemption.]

At most Seder's - surely, over an hour has passed; yet we still haven't told the story!]

"TZEY U-LMAD" / "ARAMI OVED AVI"

With this thematic background complete, the Haggada is finally ready to tell the story (for those who are still awake). However, as you may have noticed, we do not tell the story in a straightforward manner.

Take a careful look at the next section of MAGGID, noting how the Haggada takes four psukim from Devarim 26:5-8, and quotes them one word (or phrase) at a time. Each quote is followed by a proof of that phrase, usually from either the story of the Exodus in Sefer Shmot or from a pasuk in Sefer Tehillim.

[To verify this, be sure to first review Devarim 26:1-9 before you continue.]

This section begins with "tzey u-lmad: ma bikesh Lavan...." which is simply a drasha of the opening phrase 'arami oved avi', and then continues all the way until the 'makkot' -the Ten Plagues. In a nutshell, this section constitutes a rather elaborate Midrash on four psukim from 'mikra bikkurim' (Devarim 26:5-8).

The reason why MAGGID chooses this format to tell the story is based once again on a statement in the Mishna in the tenth chapter of Masechet Pesachim: "ve-dorshin me-arami oved avi ad sof ha-parasha" - and then we elaborate on the psukim from 'arami oved avi' until the end of that unit - and that is exactly what the Haggada does!

In other words, the Haggada uses Devarim 26:5-8 - beginning with 'arami oved avi' - as the 'framework' for telling over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Even though 'technically' it would suffice to simply quote these psukim, we elaborate upon them instead, in an effort to make the story more interesting and meaningful. [In fact, we are quoting a Sifrei - the Midrash on Sefer Devarim, which most probably was composed for this very purpose.]

From a 'practical' halachic perspective, this is critical to understand - for in this section we finally fulfill our obligation to TELL THE STORY - and hence this section should be treated as the most important part of MAGGID!

[Unfortunately, this section is usually one of the most neglected parts of the Haggada, since we are usually 'out of steam' by the time we reach it. Also, if one is not aware of the elaborate nature of these quotes, it is quite difficult to understand what's going on. Therefore, it's important that we not only pay attention to this section, but we should also be sure at this point to explain the details of the story to those who don't understand these psukim.]

WHY MIKRA BIKKURIM?

It is not by chance that Chazal chose to incorporate a Midrash of "mikra bikkurim" - even though it is rather cryptic - as the method through which we fulfill our obligation of sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Let's explain why.

Recall from our shiur on Parshat Ki Tavo, that "mikra bikkurim" (see Devarim 26:1-10) serves as a yearly proclamation whereby every individual thanks God for His fulfillment of the final stage of brit bein ha-btarim.

[This is supported by numerous textual and thematic parallels between the psukim of mikra bikkurim (Devarim 26:1-9), and brit bein ha-btarim (see Breishit 15:7-18). Note as well the use of the word 'yerusha' in 26:1 and in 15:1-8!]

This proclamation constitutes much more than simply thanking God for our 'first fruits'. Rather, it thanks God for the Land (see Devarim 26:3) that He had promised our forefathers (in brit bein ha-btarim / see Breishit 15:18). The 'first fruits' are presented as a 'token of our appreciation' for the fact that God has fulfilled His side of the covenant - as each individual must now declare that he will be faithful to his side of the covenant.

As mikra bikkurim constitutes a biblical 'nusach' ['formula'] through which one thanks God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim, one could suggest that it was for this reason that the Mishna chose these same psukim as its framework for telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

[It very well may be that this custom to tell the story at the Sefer with "mikra bikurim" began after the destruction of the Temple (note that the Tosefta of Mesechet Pesachim does not include this custom, while the Mishna (compiled later) does include it! Without the Temple, the individual could no longer recite "mikra bikkurim". However, we can at least remind ourselves of this yearly need to proclaim our allegiance to God's covenant - by quoting from "mikra bikurim" at the Seder!

This may explain why the Haggada only quotes the first four psukim of mikra bikkurim (where it talks about Yetziat Mizraim) but not the pasuk that describes how He bought us into the Promised Land.

Finally, note also the word 'higgadeti' in Devarim 26:3 and compare it with the word 've-higgadeta' in Shmot 13:8!

See also Rambam Hilchot Chametz u-Matza chapter 7, especially halacha 4.]

THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES

When you study the "drashot" of these four psukim, note how the drasha of the final pasuk leads us directly into the Ten Plagues. At this point, the Haggada quotes an additional drasha - by R. Yossi ha-Glili - that there must have been 5 times as many plagues at the Red Sea than were in Egypt [based on the ratio - 'etzba' of the Makkot to 'yad' at Kriyat Yam Suf, i.e. hand/finger = 5/1].

Then R. Eliezer and R. Akiva add multiples of 4x and 5x for each plague - based on Tehillim 88:49.

[Note in the Rambam's nusach of MAGGID, he skips this entire section. This suggests that this Midrash is an additional 'elaboration', but not a necessary part of the story that we must tell. In other words, if you need to skip something, this section is a 'good candidate'.]

DAYENU

Now that the story is finished, it's time for 'praise' -following the format of the Mishna "matchilin bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach' - and we will now explain how DAYENU serves as a special form of HALLEL (praise).

You are probably familiar with all the questions regarding what we say in Dayenu, for example, how could a Jew say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a 'zionist' say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

However, the answer to all those questions is rather simple, once one understands that each time we say the word "dayenu" - it really implies that 'it would have been enough - **to say Hallel**'.

In other words, we say as follows:

- Had God only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea, but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel**...**

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"`al achat kama vekhama..."

- How much more so is it proper **to thank God** for He has performed **ALL** these acts of kindness ..

He took us out of Egypt, **and** punished them, **and** split the sea, **and** gave us the manna etc.

In essence, this beautiful poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating how each single act of God's kindness in that process would be reason enough to say Hallel, now even more so we must say Hallel, for God did all of these things for us.

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise]. and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel and building the Temple.

This takes on additional significance, as it concludes in the same manner as the final pasuk of "arami oved avi" - which for

some reason we do not include in our Seder (even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should)! Recall that according to Devarim 26:9, the proclamation should conclude with: "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh"

According to Chazal - he brought us to the Bet ha'Mikdash!

"va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot" he gave us the land of Israel

Even though we don't elaborate upon this pasuk in our version of Maggid, "dayenu" enables us to include it!

In this manner, the song of "dayneu" serves as both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

It is also interesting to note that we find 15 levels of praise in the Dayenu, that most probably correspond to the 15 steps leading to the Bet ha-Mikdash, better known as the 'shir ha-ma'a lot', i.e. the 15 psalms in Tehillim (120-134) / composed for each step.

Finally, note how Dayenu discusses fifteen 'stages' in the redemption process. This beautifully reflects the theme that we have discussed thus far - that we are thanking God for the entire **process** of redemption, and not just for a specific event!

[For a full shiur on the topic of Dayenu, see: www.tanach.org/special/dayenu.txt]

"RABBAN GAMLIEL"

Even though we have completed our story, before continuing with the Hallel, the Haggada wants to make sure that we also fulfill Rabban Gamliel's opinion (in Masechet Pesachim chapter 10) that we have not fulfilled our obligation of "v'higadta l'bincha" unless we have explained the connection between that story and the commandment to eat PESACH, MATZA & MAROR.

[It appears that Ramban Gamliel understands the word "zeh" (in Shmot 13:8) refers to the 'korban Pesach' - probably based on his understanding that the phrase "ha'avoda ha'zot" in 13:5 also relates to 'korban Pesach'. Hence, Raban Gamliel requires that we explain to our children (and whoever is gathered) why we are eating not only matza, but also pesach and maror.]

Rabban Gamliel's statement could also imply that our obligation of eating matza and maror is not complete unless we explain how they connect to the story that we just told. This would explain why it is added at the conclusion of the "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" section, as we are about to fulfill our obligation to eat matza, and maror.

[In our times, this section may also be considered a 'fill in' for the KORBAN PESACH itself. During the time of the Bet ha-Mikdash, MAGGID was said while eating the korban pesach. Nowadays, since the korban cannot be offered, we mention pesach, matza, and maror instead of eating the korban. Thus, this section forms an excellent introduction to the Hallel, which in ancient times was recited as the Korban Pesach was offered, and later when it was eaten.]

This section forms the conclusion of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim", and sets the stage for our reciting of Hallel - to praise God for our salvation. [See Rambam Hilchot chametz u'matza 7:5, where his concluding remark implies that "haggada" ends here.]

"BE-CHOL DOR VA-DOR"

Considering the integral connection between the events of the Exodus and "brit avot" (discussed above) the statement of:`"be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim..." takes on additional significance.

Before we say HALLEL, we conclude our story by stating that in every generation - each individual must feel as though HE himself was redeemed from Egypt. As the purpose of this entire historical process of redemption was to prepare Am Yisrael for their national destiny - it becomes imperative that every member of Am Yisrael feels as though they experienced that same 'training mission'.

One could suggest that this closing statement complements the opening statement of MAGGID (in the avadim hayinu paragraph) that had God had not taken us out of Egypt we would still enslaved until this very day. Now that we have told the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we are supposed to feel as though we ourselves were redeemed.

As stated in Devarim 6:20-25, the events of Yetziat Mitzrayim obligate Am Yisrael to keep not only the mitzvot of Pesach but ALL of the mitzvot of the Torah! [See Sefer Kuzari section 1.]

[Note how the phrase "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham" that we recite in this section of MAGGID is quoted from Devarim 6:23! Note as well how Chazal most probably arrived at this conclusion based on Moshe Rabeinu's statement in Devarim 5:2-3 (at the very beginning of his main speech) that God's covenant at Har Sinai was made with the new generation, even though they themselves were not born yet!]

LEFICHACH / HALLEL

As an introduction to the first two chapters of HALLEL, we recite 'lefichach...'. Note how this section contrasts 'suffering' with 'redemption' (note the numerous examples). This too may reflect our theme that we thank God for the process, and not just for the event.

The two chapters of Hallel that we recite at this time are also quite meaningful. The reason for 'be-tzeit Yisrael mi-Mitzrayim' is rather obvious. But note the opening words of the first chapter:

"hallelu **AVDEI** Hashem, hallelu et SHEM Hashem..."

In other words, as we are now God's servants ['avdei Hashem'] - and no longer slaves to Pharaoh, it is incumbent upon us to praise our new master.

THE 'SECOND CUP'

We conclude Maggid with the blessing of "ge'ula" [redemption] on the 2nd cup of wine.

As we recite this blessing, note how most fittingly we express our hope that we will become worthy of God's redemption speedily in our own time

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Even though much of our above discussion may seem 'technical', our analysis alludes to a deeper concept, that the Seder is not only about 'gratitude' - i.e. thanking God for what happened; but more so - it's about 'destiny' - i.e. recognizing why it happened!

. Let's explain.

Many of us are familiar with a concept called 'hakarat ha-tov' - recognition of gratitude. Simply translated, this means that people should express their gratitude for help (or assistance) provided by others. In relation the Seder, by telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim [the Exodus] and reciting afterward the Hallel [praise], we express our gratitude to God for our redemption from slavery in Egypt.

However, if "hakarat ha-tov" is the sole purpose of Maggid, then a very serious question arises when we pay attention to the details of the story that we have just told. Recall (from the paragraph "baruch shomer havtachato...") how we thank God in the Haggada for the fulfillment of His covenant with Avraham - that he would ultimately save Am Yisrael from their bondage. Yet in that very same covenant, God promised not only our redemption, but also our enslavement! [See Breishit 15:13-15.]

If there was a real teenager [or 'chutzpedik'] son at the table, he could ask a very good [but 'cynical'] question:

Why should we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, after all - it was He who put us there in the first place!

To answer this question, I'd like to introduce the concept of 'hakarat ha-ye'ud' [shoresh yod.ayin.daled] - the recognition of destiny [and/or purpose]; in contrast to "hakarat ha-tov".

As we explained above, our obligation to 'tell the story of the Exodus' stems not only from our need to remember **what** happened, but more so - from our need to remember **why** it happened. In other words, we are actually thanking God for both

putting us into slavery **and** for taking us out; or in essence - we thank God for our very relationship with Him, and its purpose - as we must recognize the goal of that process and the purpose of that relationship.

In our shiur, we have both discussed the biblical background that supported this approach, and shown how this understanding helped us appreciate both the content of structure of Maggid.

This point of "hakarat ha-ye'ud" is exactly that we emphasized in our introduction. As our 'ye'ud' - our destiny - is to become a nation that will serve Him, God found it necessary to send us down to Egypt in order that He could redeem us.

This could be the deeper meaning of Rashi's interpretation of the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-bincha ... ba'avur zeh" - that we must explain to our children that God took us of Egypt **in order** that we keep His mitzvot. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra 13:8.] Rashi understands that the primary purpose of "magid" is not simply to explain why we are eating matza, but rather to explain to our children why God took us out of Egypt - or in essence, why He has chosen us to become His nation and hence keep His mitzvot.

To complement this thought, we will show how this same theme may relate as well to the very purpose of God's first covenant with Avraham Avinu - "brit bein ha'btarim".

ETHICS & the EXODUS -

Recall that when God first chose Avraham Avinu in Parshat Lech Lecha (see Breishit 12:1-7), He informed him that he would become a great nation and that his offspring would inherit the land, However, only a short time later (in chapter 15), God qualifies that promise by informing Avraham Avinu (at brit bein ha'btraim) that there would be a need for his offspring to become enslaved by another nation BEFORE becoming (and possibly in order to become) God's special nation (see Breishit 15:1-18).

Even though some commentators understand this 'bondage' as a punishment for something that Avraham may have done wrong (see Maharal - Gevurot Hashem); nonetheless, the simple pshat of Breishit chapter 15 is that this covenant was part of God's original plan. This begs for an explanation concerning why this framework of 'slavery' was a necessary part of this process.

> [We should note that according to Seforno (based on Yechezkel 20:1-10), even though God forecasted our slavery, it didn't have to be so severe. Its severity, he explains, was in punishment for Bnei Yisrael's poor behavior in Egypt. (See Seforno's intro to Sefer Shmot and his commentary on Shmot 1:13.) .]

One could suggest that the answer lies in what we find in the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, immediately after they leave Egypt.

Recall the numerous commandments that include the special 'reminder' of "v'zacharta ki eved ha'yita b'eretz Mitzraim" - to Remember that you were once a SLAVE [or STRANGER] in Egypt. Just about every time we find this phrase, it is not a 'stand alone' mitzvah, but rather as an additional comment following a law concerning the proper treatment of the 'less-fortunate' - i.e. it serves as an extra incentive to keep some of the most very basic ethical laws of the Torah.

To prove this, simply review the following list of sources in your Chumash, paying careful attention to when and how this phrase is presented, noting both its topic and context:

- Shmot 22:20 & 23:9 (note the type of mitzvot found in numerous laws recorded between these two psukim). Note especially "v'atem y'datem et nefesh ha'ger" in 23:9, that phrase highlights our above assertion.
- Vayikra 19:33-36 (concluding "Kdoshim tihiyu"!)
- Vayikra 20:26! and 25:55! (note the context of Vayikra 25:35-55, noting especially 25:38.)
- Devarim 5:12-15 (shabbos is to allow our servants a chance to rest as well - v'zachrta ki eved hayita...")
- Devarim 16:11-12, in regard to "simchat yom tov"
- Devarim 24:17-18, noting context from 23:16 thru 24:18
- Devarim 24:19-22, continuing same point as above
- Note as well concluding psukim in Devarim 25:13-16

REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU

In light of these sources (a 'must read' for those not familiar with these psukim), it becomes clear that part of God's master plan (in the need for our enslavement to Egypt before becoming a nation) was to 'sensitize' us, both as individuals and as a nation, to care for the needs of the oppressed and downtrodden.

God is angered when any nation takes advantage of its vulnerable population (see story of Sedom in Breishit chapters 18-19, noting especially 18:17-21!). In our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we suggested that this may have been one of the underlying reasons for God's choice of a special nation, a nation that will 'make a Name for God', by setting an example in the eyes of there nations, of ideal manner of how a nation should treat its lower classes, and be sensitive to the needs of its strangers and downtrodden. [Note also Yeshayahu 42:5-6!]

Hence, after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must receive a special set of laws are Har Sinai that will facilitate their becoming that nation. As they are chosen to become God's model nation (see Devarim 4:5-8), these laws must set reflect a higher standard, to serve as a shining example for other nations to learn from. Note as well how the opening laws of Parshat Mishpatim (which immediately followed the Ten Commandments), begin with special laws for how to treat our own slaves, whether they be Jewish (see Shmot 21:1-11) on non Jewish (see 21:20 & 21:26-27). [Not to mention the laws that follow in 22:20 thru 23:9.]

With this background, one could suggest that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, i.e. their being taken advantage of by a tyrant etc., would help teach Bnei Yisrael what 'not to do' when they form their own nation, after leaving Egypt.

As anyone who is familiar with the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu (and just about all of the Neviim Acharonim) knows, it was this lack of this sensitivity to the poor and needy that becomes the primary reason behind God's decision to exile Israel from their land, and destroy the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

A YEARLY 'RE-SENSITIZER'

Let's return to the very pasuk from which we learn our obligation to tell the story at MAGID -"v'higadta l'bincha... ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li b'tzeiti m'Mitzraim". If we follow the interpretation of Rashi & Ibn Ezra, then this pasuk is commanding us that we explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt in order that we can fulfill His commandments. Or in essence, God orchestrated all the events forecasted in "brit bein ha'btarim" to help us become that nation. Certainly, this approach fits nicely with our explanation thus far.

Finally, the very pasuk that Chazal chose that we must recite twice a day to 'remember' the Exodus on a daily basis (see Bamidbar 15:41) may allude as well to this very same point: "I am the God who took you out of Egypt IN ORDER to be your God...". In other words, God took us out of an Egypt **in order** that He become our God. Our deeper understanding of the purpose of the events (of the Exodus) can serve as a guide and a reminder to assure that we act in the manner that we assure that we will indeed become God's model nation.

In summary, when we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, we must also remember that one of the reasons for why He put us there - was to sensitize us towards the needs of the oppressed. Should we not internalize that message, the numerous "tochachot" of the Bible warn that God may find it necessary to 'teach us the hard way' once again (see Devarim 28:58-68 and Yirmiyahu 34:8-22).

In this manner, the message of the Seder is not only particular -in relation to the obligations of the Jewish people; but also universal -in relation to their purpose - the betterment of all mankind. Or in the words of Chazal - "ein l'cha ben choriin ele mi sh'osek b'Torah" - 'Who is considered free - one who can dedicate his life to keeping God's laws

Freedom - to dedicate one's life to the service of God, both as an individual and a member of God's special nation - to internalize and eternalize God's message to mankind - that's what the Seder is all about!

chag sameiach, menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. V'ACHSHAV KIRVANU HA'MAKOM L'AVADATO

This key statement of the MAGID section (as discussed in our shiur on MAGID), that God chose the Jewish people in order that they could serve Him (by acting as His model nation) - is proven not only from our quote of Yehoshua 24:1-3, but more so from the remainder of that chapter - a 'must read' for anyone not familiar with that chapter!

For those of you familiar with Sefer Yehoshua, here's an observation that you may appreciate. One could suggest that the gathering, as described in Yehoshua 24:1-27, may have taken place at an earlier time, even though it is recorded in the final chapter of the book. Based on the content of this speech (and challenge) by Yehoshua for the entire nation to serve God - it would have made more sense for this gathering to have taken place soon after the original wave of conquest, and not at the end of his life.

In my opinion, the most logical time for this gathering to have taken place would have been at the same time when Bnei Yisrael first gathered at Har Eival to re-convene their covenant with God, in fulfillment the God's command in Devarim 27:1-8! This covenantal gathering, similar to the original covenantal gathering at Har Sinai (compare w/Shmot 24:3-11) is described in detail in Yehoshua 8:30-35. Note that the city of Shechem - where the events in chapter 24 take place, is located at the foot of Har Eival (where the events in chapter 8:30-35 take place!

Even though the events in chapter 24 should have been recorded after the events in 8:30-35, Sefer Yehoshua preferred to 'save' that speech for its concluding section, because of its thematic and everlasting significance.

If so, then Yehoshua chapter 23 would have been the last gathering of the people with Yehoshua prior to his death (as seems to be simple pshat of the opening psukim of that chapter), while the events described in chapter 24 were 'saved' for the conclusion of the book (even though they took place much earlier). [Note how the story of Yehoshua's death in 24:28-33 is not an integral part of the story in 24:1-27]

Hence, it may not be by chance that the Haggada quotes from this chapter to present its key point - that God chose us, and gave us the special Land, for the purpose that we would be able serve Him. Its thematic importance results in its special placement at the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, and similarly, at a key position in MAGID.

B. MAGID & SEFER DEVARIM

For those of you familiar with our Intro shiur to Sefer Devarim (i.e. in regard to the structure of the main speech), it will be easier to appreciate why the Haggada begins its answer to the "ma nishtana" with "avadim hayinu...". [Or basically, Shmuel's opinion for "matchilim b'gnut" in the tenth perek of Mesechet Psachim"/ see 116a.]

Recall how that speech began in chapter 5, where Moshe Rabeinu introduces the laws [the "chukim upmishpatim"] by explaining how they part of the covenant that God had made with Am Yisrael at Har Sinal; while the laws themselves began with the famous psukim of Shema Yisrael that begin in 6:4.

In that context, the question in 6:20 concerns the inevitable question of children relating to the very purpose for keeping all of these laws, while the phrase "avadim hayinu" (see 6:21) is only the first line of a four line answer to our children, that explains why God chose us, and why we are obligated to keep all of His laws (see 6:20-25).

Hence, it is not by chance that the Haggada uses specifically this pasuk to explain why we are obligated to 'tell the story of the Exodus' every year, as that very pasuk begins the Torah's explanation for why we are obligated to keep all of God's laws.

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **lmaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of this lengthy speech are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot".

In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15! This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

One could even suggest that reciting these psukim as well may be what the statement in the Mishna in Pesachim refers to when instructing us to read from Arami oved Avi (from Devarim 26:5) until we finish the ENTIRE Parsha. If we read the entire Parshia, the should certainly should include 26:11, and may even allude to 26:12-15 (|"vidduy maaser"), (and in my humble opinion even to the concluding psukim of the entire speech in 26:16-19!). ["v'akmal"]

AVADIM HAYINU & SEFER DEVARIM

To appreciate why MAGGID quotes specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to begin its discussion of our obligation to tell the story of the Exodus, we must study its source (and context) in Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our study of Sefer Devarim how Moshe Rabeinu delivers a lengthy speech (chapters 5 thru 26), in which he reviews the numerous laws that Bnei Yisrael must observe once they enter the land (see Devarim 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.). As part of his introductory remarks concerning those mitzvot - Moshe states as follows:

> "Should [or when] your child will ask - What [obligates us] to keep these laws and statutes and commandments that God our Lord has commanded? -
> And you shall tell him - AVADIM HAYINU le-Pharaoh be-Mitzrayim... - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but God brought us out with a mighty hand..."
> (See Devarim 6:20-21, and its context.)

In other words, Sefer Devarim used the phrase 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its explanation for why Bnei Yisrael are obligated to keep ALL of the mitzvot.

But when we continue to read that explanation in Sefer Devarim, we find the reason **WHY** God took them out:

> "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham, lema'an havi otanu el ha-aretz..."
> And God took us out **in order** to bring us to the Land that He swore unto our fathers [='brit avot].
> And the LORD commanded us to do all these laws, to fear the LORD our God, for our good...
> And it shall be the just thing to do, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He hath commanded us." [See Devarim 6:22-25.]

Here again, we find that the Torah states explicitly that God took us out of Egypt for a purpose - i.e. **in order** to inherit the

Land and to serve God by keeping His laws.

This statement supports Rashi & Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the pasuk 'ba'avur zeh...' (as we discussed earlier in this shiur), that we are to explain to our children that God took us out of (and put us into) Egypt, in order that we keep His mitzvot.

Therefore, it is very meaningful that the Haggada chose specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its discussion of WHY we are obligated to tell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim on this special evening.

In fact, one could suggest that this may have been the underlying reasoning behind Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a). By stating that we begin the story with the pasuk of 'avadim hayinu', Shmuel is simply stating that before we tell the story, we must explain the reason for this obligation - just as we do in MAGGID!

C. BCHOL DOR V'DOR & SEFER DEVARIM

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **lmaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot". In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15!

This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

D. "HA LACHMA ANYA"

This opening paragraph of MAGID is difficult to understand not only due to the Aramaic, but also due to its context and content. Let's begin by explaining the problems.

After breaking the middle matza for YACHATZ - we begin MAGGID with the following statement:

> "ha lachman anya..." - 'This [matza that we are now looking at] resembles the poor man's s bread that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'

First of all, it would make more sense to understand this statement as the completion of YACHATZ (since it refers to the matza that we just broke), and not necessarily the beginning of MAGGID (for it doesn't tell the story). However, even if this section is not an integral part of Maggid, it will form a significant transition between 'yachatz & maggid'- as we shall soon explain.

Secondly, this opening statement leaves us with the impression that we are eating matza at the Seder to remember how Bnei Yisrael ate matza during their slavery. However, Sefer Shmot leaves us with the impression that we eat matza in order to remember the hurried nature in which Bnei Yisrael left Egypt (see Shmot 12:33-40 and subsequently 13:3 & 13:8). In other words, should we be explaining at this time that matza on our table is to remind us of our slavery, or to remind us of our redemption?

The simplest answer would be to explain that 'this is the matza that our forefathers ate in Egypt - **when they brought the very first korban Pesach'**! In other words, we are not stating that this poor man's bread was the 'staple' of the daily diet of our forefathers in Egypt - rather, it is the special bread that God commanded us to eat with the original Korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:8).

Furthermore, the reason for calling this bread "lechem oni" [lit. either bread of affliction or bread of poverty] is obviously based on Devarim 16:3 ["shivat yamim tochal alav matzot lechem oni - ki b'chipazon...."]. However, when studying the context of those psukim (see Devarim 16:1-4), the phrase "lechem oni" can be understood as a description of what matza is, and not necessarily as the reason for the commandment to eat it. [The question is whether 'lechem oni' defines for us WHAT matza is, or explains WHY we eat matza.]

This returns us to our discussion of the two reasons for matza (see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo) - where we explained that the reason for eating matza with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with the fact that we later rushed out on the next day. Rather, there had to be some intrinsic reason for eating matza (and not chametz) with that korban; either to remind us of our slavery, or to symbolize our need to reject Egyptian culture to be worthy of redemption.

If we continue with our understanding that this is the'matza' that our forefathers ate together with the first Korban Pesach, then the next statement of "kol dichfin" - which otherwise is very difficult to understand - begins to make sense. Let's explain why.

The next statement (right after explaining that this matza used to be eaten by our forefathers) - at first sounds like an invitation:

> "Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who is in need, let him come and join in the Pesach, this year 'here', next year in the Land of Israel; this year - slaves, next year - free men"

It can be understood in one of two ways, either:

- an open invitation for others to join us. - or
- a quote of what our forefathers once said.

These two possibilities are a result of how one understand s the word "v'yifsach" in the phrase "kol ditzrich yete v'yifsach" [anyone who needs, let him come and join our Pesach].

If we take the word "va'yifsach" literally, then this must be an invitation to join in the korban Pesach - and hence, it must be a quote from an earlier time period.

If "va'yifsach" is not translated literally, and hence it refers to the Seder, then this section was composed to be recited as an invitation (to the Seder). But this wouldn't make much sense at this time, since everyone is already sitting down, and considering that we've already made Kiddush and eaten "karpas" - isn't it a bit late to be inviting people!

Let's return therefore to the possibility that "va'yifsach" refers to the actual 'korban Pesach' (which seems to be the simple meaning of this word). If so, then we can easily pinpoint exactly who we are quoting - as it must be from a time when the korban Pesach was offered, but also when we were not yet living in Israel, and still in slavery!. There answer is simple - this must be a quote of what our forefathers said to one another (translated into Aramaic) in preparation for the very first korban Pesach (i.e. the one in Egypt, as described in Shmot 12:1-23).

It can only refer to that very first korban Pesach, for that was the only time in Jewish history when the korban Pesach was offered when we were both (1) in slavery (hoping next year to be free) - and (2) living outside the Land of Israel (hoping be next year in the Land of Israel)! If this interpretation is correct, then the flow of topic makes perfect sense. We break the matza, and explain that this was the same type of bread that our forefathers ate with the first korban Pesach in Egypt, and then we quote what they said to one another in preparation for that special evening - fulfilling what God instructed them in Parshat ha'Chodesh (see Shmot 12:3-8!).

This quote of our forefathers, from the very first Seder in Jewish History, is quite meaningful - for we begin MAGGID by emphasizing the connection between our own Seder and the very first Seder that Am Yisrael kept thousands of years ago (and its purpose). By quoting from the special atmosphere of that very first korban Pesach family gathering, we highlight the continuity of our tradition and our hope for the fulfillment of its goals.

[Note how this would conform to Shmot 12:14, in its context!]

"DA'YENU" -
shiur for Pesach & for Yom Atzmaut

How could an observant Jew say, let alone sing, that -'it

would have been enough'- even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a Zionist say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

Nevertheless, every year at the Seder, we all sing the popular song of "dayenu", which seems to convey precisely that message!

In the following shiur, we attempt to answer this question.

INTRODUCTION

"Dayenu" is a very simple, yet beautiful poem - containing fifteen stanzas describing acts of God's kindness - each stanza stating that it would have been 'enough' had God only helped us in one way.

For example, we begin by saying it would have been enough had He only taken us out of Egypt, and not punished the Egyptians. The poem continues stage by stage through the process of redemption from Egypt (until we arrive in the Land of Israel and build the Temple), saying how each stage would have been 'enough', even had God not helped us with the next stage.

However, some of those statements appear very strange, for they include that it 'would have been enough had we not received the Torah', which simply doesn't make sense!

To understand what we are 'really saying' in "dayneu", we must consider its context, as well as it content.

A PREP FOR HALLEL

In the Haggadah, "dayenu" does not 'stand alone'. Rather, we recite (or sing) "dayenu" towards the conclusion of Maggid; after we tell the story of the Exodus, but before we sing the Hallel.

Following the guidelines of the Mishna (in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim), in Maggid - we tell the story of the Exodus by quoting (and then elaborating upon) the psukim of "arami oved avi" (see Devarim 26:5-8). But that very same Mishna also instructs us to begin the story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise ["matchilin b'gnut - u'msaaymim v'shevach"/ see Pesachim 10:4).

Taking this Mishna into consideration, we find that "dayenu" is recited in Maggid - precisely when we finish telling the story of the Exodus (with the discussion of the Plagues) - and right at the spot where we are supposed to begin our "shevach" [praise].

Therefore, "dayenu" should be understood as a poem that was written as a form of praise, to conform with the guidelines set by the Mishna. This consideration will allow us to explain its full meaning - in a very simple manner:

Within this context, the refrain of "dayenu" has an implicit suffix. In other words, - "dayenu" should not be translated simply as 'it would have been enough'; rather, "dayenu" means '**it would have been enough - to PRAISE God**, i.e. to say Hallel - even if God had only taken us out of Egypt, or only if He had split the Sea, etc.

In this manner, the poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating that each single act of God's kindness in that process obligates us to praise Him: e.g.

- Had He only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea,but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel**...**

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"`al achat kama vekhama," - How much more so is it proper to thank God for performing ALL these acts of kindness, as He took us out of Egypt, and punished them, and split the sea, and gave us the manna etc.

"Dayenu" relates a total of fifteen acts of divine kindness, each act alone worthy of praise - even more so we must praise God, for He had performed all of them!

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise]. and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

SIPPUR & SHEVACH

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel. This is also congruent with the last pasuk of "arami oved avi", that includes arriving in Israel (see Devarim 26:9! - "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh, va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot"), which we don't elaborate upon in our version of Maggid, even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should!

In this manner, "dayneu" is both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

The 'HASHKAFA' of DAYENU

According to our explanation thus far, "dayenu" sets the stage for Hallel, as we will now praise God [by singing Hallel] not only in gratitude for taking us out of Egypt, but also in appreciation for each significant stage of the redemptive process. We thank God not only for the Exodus, but also for the 'manna', for shabbat, for coming close to Har Sinai, for the Torah, for the Land of Israel..., and finally for the building of the Bet HaMikdash.

From a certain perspective, this poem may allude to a very profound 'hashkafa' [outlook on life], and a message that is very applicable to our own generation.

Today, there are those who focus at the Seder only on the first stanza of "dayenu," viewing 'freedom from slavery' as the final goal, and hence the ultimate goal of redemption. For them, this first stanza of "dayenu" is 'enough' - and to them, that is the entire meaning of Passover - a holiday of Freedom.

Others focus only upon the last stanza, that without the entire land of Israel in our possession, and without the re-building of the bet-ha'Mikdash, the entire redemptive process is meaningless. In their eyes, Hallel should only be sung when the entire redemption process is complete, and Am Yisrael reaches its final goal.

The beautiful poem of "dayenu" seems to disagree with both approaches. Instead, each significant stage in the process of redemption deserves our recognition and for requires that we praise God for it, even though it is 'not enough'!

It is this hashkafic message, i.e., the understanding and appreciation of each step of the redemptive process, which "dayenu" can teach us. "Ge'ulat Yisra'el" - the redemption of Israel - even in our time, is a process which is comprised of many stages. Every significant step in this process, be it simply sovereignty, or partial borders, or victory in battle; or freedom to study Torah, even without complete redemption, requires our gratitude and praise to Hashem.

For each stage in that process, it is incumbent upon Am Yisrael to recognize that stage and thank Hashem accordingly, while at the same time recognizing that many more stages remain yet unfulfilled - and reminding ourselves of how we need act -to be deserving of that next stage.

"Dayenu" challenges us to find the proper balance.

chag samayach,
menachem

[P.S. - Save this shiur! You can 're-use' it for Yom Atzmaut.

OUR JOURNEY IN THE HAGGADAH: HOW ITS NARRATIVES AND OBSERVANCES ENABLE US TO EXPERIENCE THE EXODUS*

by Rabbi Hayyim Angel *

INTRODUCTION

The Haggadah is a compilation of biblical, talmudic and midrashic texts, with several other passages that were added over the centuries.1 Despite its composite nature, the Haggadah in its current form may be understood as containing a fairly coherent structure. It creates a collective effect that enables us to experience the journey of our ancestors. As the Haggadah exhorts us, we must consider ourselves as though we left Egypt, actively identifying with our forebears rather than merely recounting ancient history. The exodus lies at the root of our eternal covenantal relationship with God.

The Haggadah merges laws with narrative. Its text and symbols take us on a journey that begins with freedom, then a descent into slavery, to the exodus, and on into the messianic era. Although we may feel free today, we are in exile as long as the Temple is not rebuilt. Many of our Seder observances remind us of the Temple and we pray for its rebuilding.

The Haggadah also presents an educational agenda. Although most traditions are passed from the older generation to the younger, the older generation must be open to learning from the younger. Often it is their questions that remind us of how much we still must learn and explore.

This essay will use these axioms to outline the journey of the Haggadah, using the text and translation of Rabbi Marc D. Angel's *A Sephardic Passover Haggadah* (Ktav, 1988). This study is not an attempt to uncover the original historical meaning of the Passover symbols or to explain why certain passages were incorporated into the Haggadah. However, perhaps we will approach the inner logic of our current version of the Haggadah and its symbols as they came to be traditionally understood.

THE FIRST FOUR STAGES: FROM FREEDOM INTO SLAVERY

Kaddesh: Wine symbolizes festivity and happiness. Kiddush represents our sanctification of time, another sign of freedom. We recline as we drink the wine, a sign of freedom dating back to Greco-Roman times, when the core observances of the Seder were codified by the rabbis of the Mishnah. Some also have the custom of having others pour the wine for them, which serves as another symbol of luxury and freedom. The Haggadah begins by making us feel free and noble.

Rehatz (or Urhatz): We ritually wash our hands before dipping the *karpas* vegetable into salt water or vinegar. As with the pouring of the wine, some have the custom for others to wash their hands, symbolizing luxury and freedom. Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (Netziv, 1817–1893, Lithuania) observes that many Jews no longer follow this talmudic practice of washing hands before dipping any food into a liquid. Doing so at the Seder serves as a reminder of the practice in Temple times. We remain in freedom mode for *rehatz*, but we begin to think about the absence of the Temple.

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel, National Scholar of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, teaches Tanakh at Yeshiva University. He is the author of many books and articles. Rabbi Angel generously permitted me to modify the font, margins, and spacing to reduce the number of pages and size of the file.

Karpas: Dipping an appetizer is another sign of freedom and nobility that dates back to Greco-Roman times. However, we dip the vegetable into either salt water or vinegar, which came to be interpreted as symbolic of the tears of slavery. In addition, the technical ritual reason behind eating *karpas* resolves a halakhic debate over whether we are required to make a blessing of *Borei peri ha-adamah* over the maror later. On the one hand, we eat maror after matzah and therefore have already washed and recited the blessing of *ha-motzi*. On the other hand, it is unclear whether the maror should be subsumed under the meal covered by the matzah, since it is its own independent mitzvah. Consequently, the *ha-adamah* we recite over the *karpas* absolves us of this doubt, and we are required to keep the maror in mind for this blessing.2 Interpreting this halakhic discussion into symbolic terms: while we are dipping an appetizer as a sign of freedom and luxury, we experience the tears of slavery, and we think about the maror, which the Haggadah explains as a symbol of the bitterness of slavery.3 We are beginning our descent into slavery.

Yahatz: The Haggadah identifies two reasons for eating matzah. One is explicit in the Torah, that our ancestors had to rush out of Egypt during the exodus (Exodus 12:39). However, the Haggadah introduces another element: The Israelites ate matzah while they were yet slaves in Egypt. The Torah's expression *lehem oni*, bread of affliction (Deuteronomy 16:3) lends itself to this midrashic interpretation.

Yahatz focuses exclusively on this slavery aspect of matzah—poor people break their bread and save some for later, not knowing when they will next receive more food (*Berakhot* 39b). By this point, then, we have descended into slavery. At the same time, the other half of this matzah is saved for the *tzafun-afikoman*, which represents the Passover offering and is part of the freedom section of the Seder. Even as we descend into slavery with our ancestors, then. the Haggadah provides a glimpse of the redemption.

To summarize, *kaddesh* begins with our experiencing freedom and luxury. *Rehatz* also is a sign of freedom but raises the specter of there no longer being a Temple. *Karpas* continues the trend of freedom but more overtly gives us a taste of slavery by reminding us of tears and bitterness. *Yahatz* completes the descent into slavery. Even before we begin the *maggid*, then, the Haggadah has enabled us to experience the freedom and nobility of the Patriarchs, the descent to Egypt with Joseph and his brothers, and the enslavement of their descendants.

MAGGID: FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

A. EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

At this point in our journey, we are slaves. We begin the primary component of the Haggadah—*maggid*—from this state of slavery.

Ha Lahma Anya: We employ the "bread of affliction" imagery of the matzah, since we are slaves now. This opening passage of *maggid* also connects us to our ancestors: "This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.…Now we are here enslaved." The passage begins our experience by identifying with the slavery of our ancestors, then moves into our own exile and desire for redemption.

Mah Nishtanah–The Four Children: Before continuing our journey, we shift our focus to education. The Haggadah prizes the spirit of questioning. The wisdom of the wise child is found in questioning, not in knowledge: "What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws which the Lord our God has commanded you?" To create a society of wise children, the Haggadah challenges us to explore and live our traditions.

Avadim Hayinu: We are not simply recounting ancient history. We are a living part of that memory and connect to our ancestors through an acknowledgement that all later generations are indebted to God for the original exodus: "If the Holy One blessed be He had not brought out our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and grandchildren would yet be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt."

Ma'aseh Be-Ribbi Eliezer: The five rabbis who stayed up all night in B'nei B'rak teach that the more knowledgeable one is, the more exciting this learning becomes. These rabbis allowed their conversation to take flight, losing track of time as they experienced the exodus and actively connected to our texts and traditions.4 This passage venerates our teachers.

Amar Ribbi Elazar: As a complement to the previous paragraph, the lesser scholar Ben Zoma had something valuable to teach the greatest Sages of his generation. Learning moves in both directions, and everyone has something important to contribute to the conversation.

Yakhol Me-Rosh Hodesh: The Haggadah stresses the value of combining education and experience. "The commandment [to discuss the exodus from Egypt] applies specifically to the time when matzah and maror are set before you."

B. THE JOURNEY RESUMES

Now that we have established a proper educational framework, we return to our journey. At the last checkpoint, we were slaves pointing to our bread of affliction, longing for redemption. Each passage in the next section of the Haggadah moves us further ahead in the journey.

Mi-Tehillah Ovedei Avodah Zarah: We quote from the Book of Joshua:

> In olden times, your forefathers—Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his offspring. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir as his possession, while Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. (Joshua 24:2–4)

To experience the full redemption, halakhah requires us to begin the narrative with negative elements and then move to the redemption (see *Pesahim* 116a). However, the Haggadah surprisingly cuts the story line of this narrative in the middle of the Passover story. The very next verses read:

> Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with [the wonders] that I wrought in their midst, after which I freed you—I freed your fathers—from Egypt, and you came to the Sea. But the Egyptians pursued your fathers to the Sea of Reeds with chariots and horsemen. They cried out to the Lord, and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians; then He brought the Sea upon them, and it covered them. Your own eyes saw what I did to the Egyptians. (Joshua 24:5–7)

Given the direct relevance of these verses to the Passover story, why are they not included in the Haggadah? It appears that the Haggadah does not cite these verses because we are not yet up to that stage in our journey. The Haggadah thus far has brought us only to Egypt.

Hi She-Amedah: The Haggadah again affirms the connection between our ancestors and our contemporary lives. "This promise has held true for our ancestors and for us. Not only one enemy has risen against us; but in every generation enemies rise against us to destroy us. And the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand." The slavery and exodus are a paradigm for all later history.

Tzei Ve-Lammed: The midrashic expansion is based on Deuteronomy 26, the confession that a farmer would make upon bringing his first fruits:

> My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. The Lord freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. (Deuteronomy 26:5–8)

We continue our journey from our arrival in Egypt, where the passage in Joshua had left off. Through a midrashic discussion of the biblical verses, we move from Jacob's descent into Egypt, to the growth of the family into a nation, to the slavery, and then on through the plagues and exodus. By the end of this passage we have been redeemed from Egypt.

Like the passage from Joshua 24, the Haggadah once again cuts off this biblical passage before the end of its story. The next verse reads:

> He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:9)

In Temple times, Jews evidently did read that next verse (see Mishnah *Pesahim* 10:4).5 However, the conceptual value of stopping the story is consistent with our experience in the Haggadah. This biblical passage as employed by the Haggadah takes us through our ancestors' exodus from Egypt, so we have not yet arrived in the land of Israel.

Ribbi Yosei Ha-Gelili Omer—Dayyenu: After enumerating the plagues, the Haggadah quotes from *Midrash Psalms* 78, where Sages successively suggest that there were 50, 200, or even 250 plagues at the Red Sea. Psalm 78 is concerned primarily with God's benevolent acts toward Israel, coupled with Israel's ingratitude. Psalm 78 attempts to inspire later generations not to emulate their ancestors with this ingratitude:

> He established a decree in Jacob, ordained a teaching in Israel, charging our fathers to make them known to their children, that a future generation might know—children yet to be born—and in turn tell their children that they might put their confidence in God, and not forget God's great deeds, but observe His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a wayward and defiant generation, a generation whose heart was inconstant, whose spirit was not true to God. (Psalm 78:5–8)

Several midrashim on this Psalm magnify God's miracles even more than in the accounts in Tanakh, including the passage incorporated in the Haggadah that multiplies the plagues at the Red Sea. From this vantage point, our ancestors were even more ungrateful to God. The Haggadah then follows this excerpt with *Dayyenu* to express gratitude over every step of the exodus process. The juxtaposition of these passages conveys the lesson that the psalmist and the midrashic expansions wanted us to learn.

In addition to expressing proper gratitude for God's goodness, *Dayyenu* carries our journey forward. It picks up with the plagues and exodus—precisely where the passage we read from Deuteronomy 26 had left off. It then takes us ahead to the reception of the Torah at Sinai, to the land of Israel, and finally to the Temple: "He gave us the Torah, He led us into the land of Israel, and He built for us the chosen Temple to atone for our sins."

Rabban Gamliel Hayah Omer: Now that we are in the land of Israel and standing at the Temple, we can observe the laws of Passover! We describe the Passover offering during Temple times, matzah and maror, and their significance. It also is noteworthy that the reason given for eating matzah is freedom—unlike the slavery section earlier that focused on bread of affliction (*yahatz-ha lahma anya*). "This matzah which we eat is…because the dough of our ancestors did not have time to leaven before the Holy One blessed be He…redeemed them suddenly."

Be-Khol Dor Va-Dor—Hallel: The primary purpose of the Haggadah is completely spelled out by now. "In each generation a person is obligated to see himself as though he went out of Egypt.…For not only did the

Holy One blessed be He redeem our ancestors, but He also redeemed us along with them.…" Since we have been redeemed along with our ancestors, we recite the first two chapters of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–114). These Psalms likewise take us from the exodus to entry into Israel. R. Judah Loew of Prague (Maharal, c. 1520–1609) explains that we save the other half of *Hallel* (Psalms 115–118) for after the Grace after Meals, when we pray for our own redemption. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik adds that Psalms 113–114 consist of pure praise, befitting an account of the exodus from Egypt which already has occurred. Psalms 115–118 contain both praise and petition, relevant to our future redemption, for which we long.6

Asher Ge'alanu: Now that we have completed our journey and have chanted the *Hallel* thanking God for redeeming us, we conclude *maggid* with a blessing: "You are blessed, Lord our God…Who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt and has brought us to this night to eat matzah and maror." For the first time in the Haggadah, we place ourselves before our ancestors, since our experience has become primary. As we express gratitude to God for bringing us to this point and for giving us the commandments, we also petition for the rebuilding of the Temple and ultimate redemption.

THE REMAINDER OF THE SEDER: CELEBRATORY OBSERVANCE IN FREEDOM AND YEARNING FOR THE MESSIANIC REDEMPTION

At this point we observe the laws of Passover. Although there is no Passover offering, we eat the matzah and maror and then the festive meal (*shulhan orekh*). Our eating of the *korekh*, Hillel's wrap of matzah, maror, and haroset together, reenacts a Temple observance (*Pesahim* 115a). Similarly, we use the final piece of matzah (*tzafun*) to symbolize the Passover offering, the last taste we should have in our mouths (*Pesahim* 119b).7 By consuming the second half of the matzah from *yahatz*, we take from the slavery matzah and transform its other half into a symbol of freedom.

After the Grace after Meals (*barekh*), we pray for salvation from our enemies and for the messianic era. By reading the verses "*shefokh hamatekha*, pour out Your wrath" (Psalm 79:6–7), we express the truism that we cannot fully praise God in Hallel until we sigh from enemy oppression and recognize contemporary suffering.8 Many communities customarily open the door at this point for Elijah the Prophet, also expressing hope for redemption. We then recite the remainder of the Hallel which focuses on our redemption, as discussed above. Some of the later songs added to *nirtzah* likewise express these themes of festive singing and redemption.

CONCLUSION

The Haggadah is a composite text that expanded and evolved over the centuries. The symbols, along with traditional explanations for their meanings, similarly developed over time. Our Haggadah—with its core over 1,000 years old—takes us on a remarkable journey that combines narrative and observance into an intellectual and experiential event for people of all ages and backgrounds. In this manner, we travel alongside our ancestors from freedom to slavery to redemption. We are left with a conscious recognition that although we are free and we bless God for that fact, we long for the Temple in Jerusalem. *La-shanah ha-ba'ah be-Yerushalayim*, *Amen*.

NOTES

[1] Shemuel and Ze'ev Safrai write that most of the core of our Haggadah, including the *Kiddush*, the Four Questions, the Four Children, the midrashic readings, Rabban Gamliel, and the blessing at the end of *maggid* originated in the time of the Mishnah and were set by the ninth century. "This is the bread of affliction" (*ha lahma anya*) and "In each generation" (*be-khol dor va-dor*) hail from the ninth to tenth centuries. Components such as

the story of the five rabbis at B'nei B'rak and Rabbi Elazar; the Midrash about the number of plagues at the Red Sea; *Hallel HaGadol* and *Nishmat*; all existed as earlier texts before their incorporation into the Haggadah. "Pour out Your wrath" (*shefokh hamatekha*) and the custom of hiding the *afikoman* are later additions. All of the above was set by the eleventh century. The only significant additions after the eleventh century are the songs at the end (*Haggadat Hazal* [Jerusalem: Karta, 1998], pp. 70–71).

[2] See *Pesahim* 114b; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 473:6; 475:2.

[3] The symbol of the maror underwent an evolution. Joseph Tabory notes that during the Roman meal, the dipping of lettuce as a first course was the most common appetizer. By the fourth century, the Talmud ruled that the appetizer must be a different vegetable (*karpas*) so that the maror could be eaten for the first time as a mitzvah with a blessing (*The JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008], pp. 23–24).

In *Pesahim* 39a, one Sage explains that we use *hasa* (romaine lettuce, the talmudically preferred maror, even though five different vegetables are suitable) since God pitied (*has*) our ancestors. Another Sage derives additional meaning from the fact that romaine lettuce begins by tasting sweet but then leaves a bitter aftertaste. This sensory process parallels our ancestors' coming to Egypt as nobles and their subsequent enslavement.

[4] Unlike most other rabbinic passages in the Haggadah which are excerpted from the Talmud and midrashic collections, this paragraph is unattested in rabbinic literature outside the Haggadah. See Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 38, for discussion of a parallel in the Tosefta.

[5] Cf. Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 33.

[6] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Passover and the Haggadah*, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2006), p. 105.

[7] The word *afikoman* derives from the Greek, referring to anything done at the end of a meal, such as eating dessert or playing music or revelry. This was a common after-dinner feature at Greco-Roman meals (cf. J. T. *Pesahim* 37d). The Sages of the Talmud understood that people needed to retain the taste of the Passover offering in their mouths. It was only in the thirteenth century that the matzah we eat at the end of the meal was called the *afikoman* (Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 15).

[8] Shemuel and Ze'ev Safrai enumerate longer lists of related verses that some medieval communities added (*Haggadat Hazal*, pp. 174–175).

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My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. The Lord freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. (Deuteronomy 26:5–8)

We continue our journey from our arrival in Egypt, where the passage in Joshua had left off. Through a midrashic discussion of the biblical verses, we move from Jacob’s descent into Egypt, to the growth of the family into a nation, to the slavery, and then on through the plagues and exodus. By the end of this passage we have been redeemed from Egypt.

Like the passage from Joshua 24, the Haggadah once again cuts off this biblical passage before the end of its story. The next verse reads:

He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:9)

In Temple times, Jews evidently did read that next verse (see Mishnah *Pesahim* 10:4).[5] However, the conceptual value of stopping the story is consistent with our experience in the Haggadah. This biblical passage as employed by the Haggadah takes us through our ancestors’ exodus from Egypt, so we have not yet arrived in the land of Israel.

Ribbi Yosei Ha-Gelili Omer—Dayyenu: After enumerating the plagues, the Haggadah quotes from *Midrash Psalms* 78, where Sages successively suggest that there were 50, 200, or even 250 plagues at the Red Sea. Psalm 78 is concerned primarily with God's benevolent acts toward Israel, coupled with Israel's ingratitude. Psalm 78 attempts to inspire later generations not to emulate their ancestors with this ingratitude:

He established a decree in Jacob, ordained a teaching in Israel, charging our fathers to make them known to their children, that a future generation might know—children yet to be born—and in turn tell their children that they might put their confidence in God, and not forget God's great deeds, but observe His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a wayward and defiant generation, a generation whose heart was inconstant, whose spirit was not true to God. (Psalm 78:5–8)

Several midrashim on this Psalm magnify God's miracles even more than in the accounts in Tanakh, including the passage incorporated in the Haggadah that multiplies the plagues at the Red Sea. From this vantage point, our ancestors were even more ungrateful to God. The Haggadah then follows this excerpt with *Dayyenu* to express gratitude over every step of the exodus process. The juxtaposition of these passages conveys the lesson that the psalmist and the midrashic expansions wanted us to learn.

In addition to expressing proper gratitude for God's goodness, *Dayyenu* carries our journey forward. It picks up with the plagues and exodus—precisely where the passage we read from Deuteronomy 26 had left off. It then takes us ahead to the reception of the Torah at Sinai, to the land of Israel, and finally to the Temple: "He gave us the Torah, He led us into the land of Israel, and He built for us the chosen Temple to atone for our sins."

Rabban Gamliel Hayah Omer: Now that we are in the land of Israel and standing at the Temple, we can observe the laws of Passover! We describe the Passover offering during Temple times, matzah and maror, and their significance. It also is noteworthy that the reason given for eating matzah is freedom—unlike the slavery section earlier that focused on bread of affliction (*yahatz-ha lahma anya*). "This matzah which we eat is…because the dough of our ancestors did not

have time to leaven before the Holy One blessed be He…redeemed them suddenly."

Be-Khol Dor Va-Dor—Hallel: The primary purpose of the Haggadah is completely spelled out by now. "In each generation a person is obligated to see himself as though he went out of Egypt.…For not only did the Holy One blessed be He redeem our ancestors, but He also redeemed us along with them.…" Since we have been redeemed along with our ancestors, we recite the first two chapters of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–114). These Psalms likewise take us from the exodus to entry into Israel. R. Judah Loew of Prague (Maharal, c. 1520–1609) explains that we save the other half of *Hallel* (Psalms 115–118) for after the Grace after Meals, when we pray for our own redemption. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik adds that Psalms 113–114 consist of pure praise, befitting an account of the exodus from Egypt which already has occurred. Psalms 115–118 contain both praise and petition, relevant to our future redemption, for which we long.[6]

Asher Ge'alanu: Now that we have completed our journey and have chanted the *Hallel* thanking God for redeeming us, we conclude *maggid* with a blessing: "You are blessed, Lord our God…Who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt and has brought us to this night to eat matzah and maror." For the first time in the Haggadah, we place ourselves before our ancestors, since our experience has become primary. As we express gratitude to God for bringing us to this point and for giving us the commandments, we also petition for the rebuilding of the Temple and ultimate redemption.

THE REMAINDER OF THE SEDER: CELEBRATORY OBSERVANCE IN FREEDOM AND YEARNING FOR THE MESSIANIC REDEMPTION

At this point we observe the laws of Passover. Although there is no Passover offering, we eat the matzah and maror and then the festive meal (*shulhan orekh*). Our eating of the *korekh*, Hillel's wrap of matzah, maror, and haroset together, reenacts a Temple observance (*Pesahim* 115a). Similarly, we use the final piece of matzah (*tzafun*) to symbolize the Passover offering, the last taste we should have in our mouths (*Pesahim* 119b).[7] By consuming the second half of the matzah from *yahatz*, we take from the slavery matzah and transform its other half into a

symbol of freedom.

After the Grace after Meals (*barekh*), we pray for salvation from our enemies and for the messianic era. By reading the verses "*shefokh hamatekha*, pour out Your wrath" (Psalm 79:6–7), we express the truism that we cannot fully praise God in Hallel until we sigh from enemy oppression and recognize contemporary suffering.[8] Many communities customarily open the door at this point for Elijah the Prophet, also expressing hope for redemption. We then recite the remainder of the Hallel which focuses on our redemption, as discussed above. Some of the later songs added to *nirtzah* likewise express these themes of festive singing and redemption.

CONCLUSION

The Haggadah is a composite text that expanded and evolved over the centuries. The symbols, along with traditional explanations for their meanings, similarly developed over time. Our Haggadah—with its core over 1,000 years old—takes us on a remarkable journey that combines narrative and observance into an intellectual and experiential event for people of all ages and backgrounds. In this manner, we travel alongside our ancestors from freedom to slavery to redemption. We are left with a conscious recognition that although we are free and we bless God for that fact, we long for the Temple in Jerusalem. *La-shanah ha-ba'ah be?Yerushalayim*, *Amen*.

NOTES

[1] Shemuel and Ze'ev Safrai write that most of the core of our Haggadah, including the *Kiddush*, the Four Questions, the Four Children, the midrashic readings, Rabban Gamliel, and the blessing at the end of *maggid* originated in the time of the Mishnah and were set by the ninth century. "This is the bread of affliction" (*ha lahma anya*) and "In each generation" (*be-khol dor va-dor*) hail from the ninth to tenth centuries. Components such as the story of the five rabbis at B'nei B'rak and Rabbi Elazar; the Midrash about the number of plagues at the Red Sea; *Hallel HaGadol* and *Nishmat*; all existed as earlier texts before their incorporation

into the Haggadah. “Pour out Your wrath” (*shefokh hamatekha*) and the custom of hiding the *afikoman* are later additions. All of the above was set by the eleventh century. The only significant additions after the eleventh century are the songs at the end (*Haggadat Hazal* [Jerusalem: Karta, 1998], pp. 70–71).

[2] See *Pesahim* 114b; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 473:6; 475:2.

[3] The symbol of the maror underwent an evolution. Joseph Tabory notes that during the Roman meal, the dipping of lettuce as a first course was the most common appetizer. By the fourth century, the Talmud ruled that the appetizer must be a different vegetable (*karpas*) so that the maror could be eaten for the first time as a mitzvah with a blessing (*The JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008], pp. 23–24).
In *Pesahim* 39a, one Sage explains that we use *hasa* (romaine lettuce, the talmudically preferred maror, even though five different vegetables are suitable) since God pitied (*has*) our ancestors. Another Sage derives additional meaning from the fact that romaine lettuce begins by tasting sweet but then leaves a bitter aftertaste. This sensory process parallels our ancestors’ coming to Egypt as nobles and their subsequent enslavement.

[4] Unlike most other rabbinic passages in the Haggadah which are excerpted from the Talmud and midrashic collections, this paragraph is unattested in rabbinic literature outside the Haggadah. See Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 38, for discussion of a parallel in the Tosefta.

[5] Cf. Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 33.

[6] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Passover and the Haggadah*, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2006), p. 105.

[7] The word *afikoman* derives from the Greek, referring to anything done at the end of a meal, such as eating dessert or playing music or revelry. This was a common after-dinner feature at Greco-Roman meals (cf. J. T. *Pesahim* 37d). The Sages of the Talmud understood that people needed to retain the taste of the Passover offering in their mouths. It was only in the thirteenth century that the matzah we eat at the end of the meal was called the *afikoman* (Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 15).

[8] Shemuel and Ze’ev Safrai enumerate longer lists of related verses that some medieval communities added (*Haggadat Hazal*, pp. 174–175).