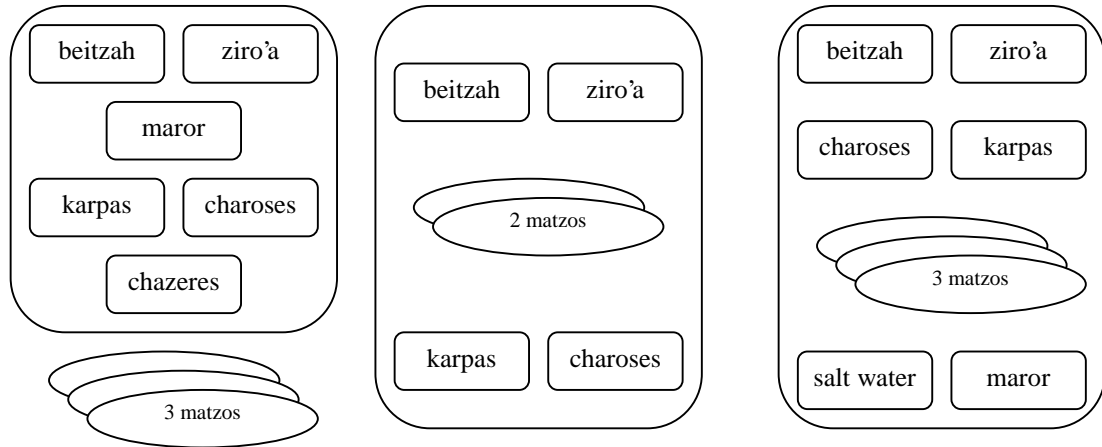


There are three opinions given for the proper arrangement of the seder table. (I have not found the source for the circular arrangement often portrayed on specially made plates.)



**According to the
Ar"i za"l**

**According to the
Gr"a**

**According to the
Ram"a**

The Ar"i za"l's seder plate is the most common custom. It is based on two triangular patterns, two images of the segol vowel mark. This is to invoke the notion that the Jewish people are the "Am segulah", the treasured nation. Also, the items on the ke'arah, the three matzos, and the cup of wine or the plate itself, make ten items. The Ar"i za"l's arrangement shows them in correspondence to the 10 sephiros of the Tree of Life.

The Gr"a's seder table stresses the memorial aspect of the beitzah (egg) and the z'roa (shank-bone). For this reason they are placed up front, so that you must pass them and think about them to perform any of the mitzvos of the seder.

The Ram"a bases his arrangement on the halachic principle of "ein ma'avirin al hamitzvos", one may not pass by a mitzvah. Therefore the items used first are closest, and those not used at all are in the back. (Aspaqlaria)



It is a custom in most of Israel to have, on the Seder table, three matzos under a cover. Why three? In the seuda (festive meal) we make "HaMotsi" over the matzos, and at any Shabbos or YomTov we need a second challa ("lechem mishne") when we make "HaMotsi" at the seuda. But why do we then need three matzos instead of two? Well, in the course of the seder, at "yachats" the middle matza is broken in two, and half removed (the "afikomen"). If we only had two matzos to begin with, we would end with one and a half, which is inadequate for the lechem mishne. Therefore we start with three. This is the opinion of Rashi, Tosfos, and the Rash, and it is the ruling in the Shulchan Aruch.

However not all commentators agree with this opinion. The Gemora, in Pesachim (115A), only says that one of the matzos must be broken (not necessarily the "middle one"), and the Rambam (Maimonides) and the Gr"a (Vilna Gaon) were of the opinion that there should only be two matzos. In fact, the Rambam thought it was incongruous that there should be two loaves of bread at Shabbos and all the other festive seudos, but a larger number (three) on Pesach, when the matza is supposed to be "lechem oni", the "bread of affliction"! Today the followers of the Gra in Jerusalem use only two matzos. So did Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (zatzal), and so does Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (zatzal).

I recommend that in this matter you follow whatever your family custom is.

Now I'd like to turn to another halachic issue. What is the shiur of matza, that is, the amount required to be eaten to fulfil the mitzvah of eating matza? Rashi, Tosfos, the Rash and the Shulchan Aruch say it is two "kezeisim". (A "kezais" is the equivalent of an olive in Biblical times, about one ounce or 27 grams. A shiur of two kezeisim corresponds roughly to almost all of a typical round shmura matza.) Why two kezeisim? Well, we make two brachos when we eat the matzo: "HaMotzi lechem min ha-aretz" and

"VeTzivanu al achilas matzos". So these commentators say we are doing two mitzvos here: the mitzvah of eating a seuda including bread, which we do at all festivals, and the special mitzvah of eating matza. Each mitzvah requires one kezais.

The Rambam and Gra disagree and require only one kezais. Now, I suggest that the reason for this is that they believe that there is only one mitzvah involved here. (Of the two brachos mentioned, only "al achilas matzos" would then be a "birkas ha-mitzvos", a bracha on a mitzvah. "HaMotsi" would be a "birkas ha-nehenin", a bracha on enjoyment.)

From this it would also follow that the two controversies are over the same issue! If (as Rashi and the Shulchan Aruch say) there are two brachos involved here, then it is only the mitzvah of eating matza that is associated with "lechem oni", and for the second mitzvah of eating a seuda including matza, the concept of "lechem oni" does not apply, so there is no need to restrict ourselves to two loaves. But if (as the Rambam and the Gra seem to imply) there is only one mitzvah involved here, then indeed the notion of "lechem oni" applies to the matza eaten for the seuda.

There remains the problem of justifying, according to the Rambam's and the Gra's understanding, the fact that there are only one and a half matzos for the bracha of "HaMotsi", instead of two complete ones according to the requirement of "lechem mishne", and I'd like to finish off by sneaking in a homiletic word to try and explain this. In Tehillim (Psalms) it says: "A broken heart is dear to G-d". And the Kotsker Rebbe has said: "A broken heart is the purest". This does not mean that G-d wants our hearts broken, but that when there is affliction in our lives, we are stripped of all our pretensions, and so purer. How does this relate to Pesach? Bread, remember, is puffed up mainly with air, and many people, when you meet them in normal times, have a front, a facade, that consists mainly of air. But when times are hard, when there is "oni" or affliction, then the air, the puffery, goes out of people, and they are flattened, like matza, to a purer state. In the seder, at yachatz, we take this concept of "oni" one step further, and break a matza in half. Normally, during the year, we need two complete challos at Shabbos or YomTov, and in fact if we use matzos for the challos, we must first check them carefully under the light to see that they are "lechem shalem", complete bread, without even any cracks. Now I suggest that at Pesach, at the Seder, this second matza is "shalem", complete, precisely because it is broken, and pure, like a broken heart. (R' Haber)



In addition to being a reminder of the Passover offering, the roasted egg is a symbol of the Jewish people.

The longer other foods are cooked, the softer and more tender they become, but the longer an egg is boiled, the harder it gets.

Similarly, the more painful and severe the hardships of the exile, the stronger and more resilient the Jewish people emerges. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The mishnah in Pesachim tells us that we are to "start with the troubles, and end in praise". We see this pattern not only in the phraseology of Maggid, but also here, in the seder as a whole. We can divide the seder into four sections, each part corresponding to what is done and said with each cup of wine before us.

The steps of the Seder are:

First cup: Slavery

1) Kadesh; 2) Ur'Chatz; 3) Karpas; 4) Yachatz;

Second cup: Telling of the transition from slavery to freedom

5) Maggid;

Third cup: Acting out the transition

6) Rochtzo; 7) Motzi; 8) Matzo; 9) Marror; 10) Korech; 11) Shulchan Aruch; 12) Tzafun; 13) Barech;

Fourth cup: Praising G-d from a position of freedom

14) Hallel; 15) Nirtzah.

Each cup presents a theme. The first cup, followed by washing for karpas, dipping a vegetable in salt-water, and breaking a matza in two, much as a poor person would not want to eat all he has at once, all are symbols of slavery – the troubles. The second cup is over Maggid, retelling the redemption, and the third is before us during the re-enactment of the redemption. Last we have hallel and nirtzah, praise to Hashem, positioning ourselves from a post-redemption viewpoint – the praise. (Aspaqlaria)

First Cup

Kaddesh

The first step of the Seder is Kadesh, in which we recite the Kiddush over wine, sanctifying the night and the holiday. What is the significance of beginning the night with this step?

The step of Kadesh, the sanctification of the holiday, is something that the nation of Israel can do only when they themselves are sanctified and holy. What is this sanctity and holiness?

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, the "Or Sameach" connects the sanctity of Israel and the holiday to a statement of our sages, Cha"zal. Cha"zal have told us that the four cups of wine we drink on the Seder night are representative of the four expressions of redemption, the "Arba L'Shonos shel Ge'ulah" that Hashem uttered regarding our redemption. R' Meir Simcha notes that we see a connection between Kedusha - holiness, and separation from illicit relationships - Arayot, from the Torah. This is true, as the portion dealing with Arayot is placed next to the portion known as "Kedoshim," which begins with a statement saying how the nation of Israel is to be holy and sanctified. As the B'nei Yisroel strictly adhered to the laws regarding these relationships while in Egypt, they were considered holy and sanctified. This "allowed" Hashem to utter the first expression of redemption - "V'hotzeisi", "and I will take you out", as only a nation of sanctified people could be taken out of Egypt to then receive the Torah and Mitzvot.

As we are holy on this night, we can therefore proceed with the sanctification of the night, a step which itself symbolizes our holiness and sanctification. This first cup which we drink is that of Kiddush. The first expression of redemption was uttered because of our holiness. As we, the nation of Israel are holy, we were taken out of Egypt, and given this night, this holiday to sanctify. After we perform this sanctification, we are set to perform the Mitzvos of the Torah that we were commanded to do on this night. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The concept of Zachor that is common to both Shabbos and Pesach expresses itself in Kiddush. What is Kiddush? The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 29:1) says that it is Zechiras Shevach V'kiddush. The Mitzvah of Shabbos is to express the uniqueness of the day of Shabbos: Mizmor Shir Lyom Hashabbos. What is so special about Shabbos: Mah Yom Miyomayim? There aren't seven days in a week: there are six days and Shabbos. The equation of Zachor Es Hayom Hazeh Asher Yetzasem Mmitzrayim and Zachor Es Yom Hashabbos Lkadsho relates to this aspect of uniqueness. Just like Shabbos is different than all other days, Pesach night is different than all other nights of the entire year. Kiddush on the night of Pesach establishes the uniqueness of the night.

Tosfos in Pesachim says that there is no Tosfos Yom Tov for the night of Pesach and one may not recite Kiddush or eat Matzoh before nightfall. Many ask on Tosfos why doesn't the concept of Tosfos Yom Tov apply to Pesach as well? After all there is the well known Gemara that Rav would pray Tefilas Arvis Lshabbos and make Kiddush before sundown on Friday afternoon. Even if we do not permit the eating of Matzoh before the fifteenth of Nissan, which would require waiting till nightfall, why should we forbid the recitation of Kiddush before sundown? The answer is that we need 4 cups of wine on the night of Pesach. May someone recite Kiddush earlier and wait till nightfall to drink the cup of wine? Since Kiddush is a part of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim he must wait till nightfall to include it as part of the Seder. The text of the Kiddush on Pesach night proves this point, as it mentions the memorial to the exodus from Egypt. Also, Tosfos opinion is that the 4 cups of wine are the medium through which Chazal instituted the various

blessings and obligations related to the Seder. Drinking 4 cups of wine was not the main purpose of the Takannah. The Gemara say that 4 cups of wine were instituted and they associated a Mitzvah with each one. All 4 cups of wine include some reference to Yetzias Mitzrayim, including the third cup recited over Bircas Hamazon and the fourth cup recited over Hallel. Kiddush on Pesach night, like Kiddush on Shabbos night, proclaims the uniqueness of the night and is integrally connected with Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. If Kiddush was not part of the Mitzvas Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim, then according to Tosfos we would not have 4 cups associated with the Haggadah and Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim as required by the Takannas Chachamim for this night. (Rav JB Soloveitchik, notes by Dr. Israel Rivkin)



How we reconcile this with the famous teaching of the Sages that the nation of Israel had sunk to the 49th level of Tum'ah, impurity, before leaving Egypt. How can a "holy" nation be on such a low level of impurity?

The Sages, Chazal, tell us that there were some things that the Jews were careful about. For example, they did not change their clothing. They did not change their names. We also know that only one person in Egypt was involved in a forbidden relationship, Arayot. As we said that it is separation from Arayot that creates holiness, the Jews were indeed holy. However, the Jews did worship idols in Egypt. In fact, at the time of the splitting of the sea, the angles pointed this fact out to Hashem, wondering why the Jews were deserving of the treatment they were getting. It was because of the sin of idol worship that the nation of Israel sunk so low and became so impure. Hence, we see it is possible to be "holy" AND "impure" at the same time.

On this night, because we are holy, we can therefore sanctify the night. We do this sanctification first, because afterwards, we are set to perform the Mitzvos of the Torah that we were commanded to do this night.

The first cup of wine we drink this night is that of Kiddush. The first expression of redemption was uttered because of our holiness. The connection between the first cup and the first expression of redemption is through the holiness of the nation of Israel. As we, the nation of Israel, are holy, we therefore were taken out of Egypt, and given the holiday of Pesach to sanctify. This is how we begin our Seder night. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Why, if we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt on this night, do we not also bless Hashem for performing the accompanying miracles for "us," as we do on other occasions?

As part of Kadesh, we recite the blessing of She'hecheyanu" as done on all holidays. We do not, however, recite the blessing She'asa Nissim (said on Chanukah and Purim). It would seem appropriate to recite this blessing, as praise to Hashem for all the miracles performed in association with our departure. We do not say it because, as Reb Amram Gaon says, on the night of Pesach we have the Haggadah, in which we relate the miracles that occurred to us from the time of our bondage to the time of our redemption. This telling over of the miracles make a blessing thanking for them unnecessary. Only on Purim and Chanukah, when we do not have Kiddush, a sanctification of the day, and a Haggadah, containing a recitation of all the miracles, do we say this special blessing.

The Aruch HaShulchan in Orech Chaim, 473:2-3 asks as follows: "The Tur writes 'that we do not make the B'racha of She'asa Nissim by the Seder because we will say it later in the Haggadah...' meaning that just as we make the Bracha on Chanukah and Purim, its obvious that we should on Pesach as well, but because of the fact that in the Haggadah we discuss all the miracles and wonders and then we make the Bracha of "Asher Ge'alanu" at the end of Maggid, this is like making the Bracha of She'asa Nissim, and there is no need for two Brachot. However, this reason is not enough, as by the Megilla, we make the Bracha of Sheasa Nissim before reading the Megilla, and another Bracha after the Megilla, so if we can say two there, why can't we say two here? "

The Aruch HaShulchan first mentions an answer offered by the Maharil. The Maharil said one only makes the Bracha of She'asa Nissim on a Mitzvah D'rabanan, a mitzvah of Rabbinical origin, which means that we would make the B'racha on Purim and Chanukah, but not on Pesach which is D'Oraisa - Scriptural in origin. The Aruch HaShulchan writes that he does not understand this answer, so he offers

what he thinks is the true answer. The Rabanan, who instituted and formulated the Brachot, only established Brachot when we are blessing Hashem for commanding us to do THIS mitzvah, such as eating Matzo, sitting in the Sukkah, blowing Shofar. They did not make Brachot out of the mitzvah itself. As we are commanded in the Torah to tell about the miracles of the night, and THIS is the mitzvah of the night, if we had a Bracha which would in fact amount to fulfilling the same obligation (remembering and mentioning the miracles) it would be a Bracha composed of a Mitzvah D'Oraysa. The Rabanan did not make this type of Bracha. Only by a Mitzvah D'Rabanan could they formulate such a Bracha. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Urchatz, Karpas

The next three steps of the Seder all share a common goal: to inspire the children to ask questions.

How is the step of Karpas (and Urchatz, which is essentially a "Halachik" preparation of our hands for performing Karpas, and therefore, really a "part" of Karpas) supposed to inspire children to ask questions?

The Maharal of Prague explains that there is disagreement as to how the step of Karpas is to accomplish this. The fact all agree on is that it is unusual for a person to dip food on two different occasions during one sitting for a meal. The item of contention is which of the two dippings we do tonight is "unusual": the one before the main meal has begun, or the one during the course of the meal? { We know that during the Seder, we dip the Karpas in salt water before the meal (Shulchah Aruch) has begun, and the Maror in Charoses after we have already eaten the Matzo, which is considered during the meal.} If the dipping before the meal is unusual, when the child sees it he will then be inspired to ask "Why are we doing something out of the norm; We never do this by our meals at any other time during the year?". If the dipping during the meal is unusual, the child will ask the question then.

The Maharal feels that dipping during the meal must be the unusual one. Otherwise one could just dip before the meal, and accomplish the goal of piquing the child's curiosity. Another dipping would be superfluous. Yet, the Ma Nishtana contains the observation that what makes this night different is the two dippings. It must be the second of the two which is unusual and therefore inspires the child to ask. Therefore, we must dip as normal before the meal, so when during the meal we dip the Maror, the child will ask why we are doing so, to which we respond "Because of the special mitzvah of eating Maror which we have on this night, because we were slaves in Egypt..." (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Yachatz

Our breaking of the middle Matzo by Yachatz and placing it aside is another unusual action. Again, we perform this unusual action to pique the child's curiosity, to inspire the child to ask questions now and throughout the next section of Maggid, and to keep the child awake throughout the Seder, in anticipation of finding out what is done with this Matzo which we hide away.

Why do we hide this second piece of Matzo? If the goal of our breaking the Matzo was merely to pique the curiosity of the children etc., wouldn't breaking the Matzo and leaving both pieces untouched on the table until later be enough of a diversion from our normal course to accomplish the same goal?

The Vilna Gaon (a.k.a. the G"ra), gives a reason why we hide the piece of Matzo that will be used for the Afikoman and remove it from the table until after the meal. He says that the reason is very similar to the one given for why we cover the Challah when we say Kiddush, that being to prevent the "embarrassment" of the Challah which is being passed over in favor of the wine. {Normally, bread is considered the most distinguished food, and the blessing on it comes before anything else. On Shabbos, we need to make Kiddush over wine before we begin the meal. Therefore, we cover the Challah bread, so it will not be "ashamed" that a blessing is being made on another food before it.} Similarly, when we later make the Brachot on different pieces of Matzo, we cover and remove the Afikoman from the table, to prevent it from embarrassment as it is being looked over, as it is not eaten until after the meal. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Second Cup

Maggid

The main portion of the Seder is the portion of Maggid. The topics in Maggid range from the events dealing with our enslavement to those dealing with our departure, with many others in between. When looking through Maggid, one might notice that it is filled with passages from the Gemora, Medrash, as well as other Talmudic sources. A question that arises immediately upon reading through Maggid is concerning the order of all the passages: What was the rationale behind the placement of the passages in the order that we have them?

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, before beginning his Seder, used to explain the mitzvah of Maggid by asking the following question: It appears (from the Gemora in Brachot 12b) that there is a mitzvah of remembering our departure from Egypt every day. Therefore, it would seem that there is no less of an obligation on this Seder night than any other day. What makes the mitzvah of remembering our departure from Egypt different on the Seder night?

Reb Chaim would answer that there are three elements that distinguish the mitzvah of "Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim" - remembering our departure from Egypt, on Pesach from any other day. (These differences can be inferred from Rambam - Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Chometz U'Matzah, Chap. 7.) They are: A) the obligation to tell others; B) the obligation to relate the chain of events; and C) the obligation to explain the reasons behind the mitzvos. This is explained as follows:

A) On every other day during the year, a simple Zechira, or "reminding one's self" suffices. However, on the Seder night, not only is there a mitzvah to remind one's self, but there is also a mitzvah to tell others, in a question and answer format (See Sh'mos 13:8, 14). Furthermore, we see in the Gemora (Pesachim 117a) that if a person has no one to relate the story of our departure to, he should tell it to himself as if he was telling others. Remembering alone, even with a telling over does not suffice on this night, as it would the rest of the year.

B) On the Seder night, there is an obligation to tell about and explain the chain of events that began with our descent to Egypt and ended with our redemption.

C) We do many mitzvos on this night in commemoration of our experience in Egypt. On the Seder night, we are obligated to explain the reasons behind these mitzvos. This is clearly seen from the passage of Rabban Gamliel omer - Kol shelo amar shloscha devarim b'Pesach, lo yatza y'dei chovaso... -

Rabban Gamliel said "All who do not say about three things on Pesach do not discharge their obligation.... It is these three things that distinguish the mitzvah of remembering our departure from Egypt on this night from any other day during the year.

According to Harav Avrohom Pam, shlita, this answer of Reb Chaim sheds some light as to the placement of the passages contained in Maggid. Maggid begins with an introduction. This introduction consists of an invitation to join in the Seder, and the posing of the Four Questions, whose answer sets the theme for the evening. After this introduction, the Haggadah mentions in the passage of Rabi Elazar ben Azarya that there is an obligation of remembrance throughout the year. Then, the Haggadah begins to demonstrate the uniqueness of the mitzvah on this night.

A) We see from the "Four Sons" that the Haggadah should be told to others, in question and answer form.

B) Beginning with the passage of "M'tchila", the Haggadah relates the chain of events which culminated in our redemption.

C) After we have finished relating the history, we explain the reasons behind the mitzvos of the evening, starting with "Rabban Gamliel Omer."

Once we have completed demonstrating how the mitzvah of remembering our departure differs tonight, we are then prepared to sing praises to Hashem, a Hallel, which begins with "L'fikach," which concludes the section of Maggid.

The first section is Maggid part I: Introduction. The second is Maggid part II: The Obligation of Telling to Others. The third section is Maggid part III: The Chain of Events. The fourth section is Maggid part IV: The Reasons Behind the Mitzvos. The fifth and final section is Maggid part V: Expressions of Thanks and Praise to Hashem. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Maggid Part I: Introduction

Why do we begin the step of Maggid talking about Matzo (In "Ha Lachma Anya?")

In order to understand the answer to our question, we have to look at what we are saying carefully. The Haggadah begins with a declaration about the Matzo which we have before us. "This is the bread of affliction..." the Haggadah tells us, "that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt". This passage is somewhat puzzling. If one looks in the Torah, the only mention of Matzo that will be found is in conjunction with our departure from Egypt. The reason why that Matzo was eaten was because our departure from Egypt was in such haste, that our dough did not have enough time to rise. So, what is this Matzo "that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt"?

The Vilna Gaon answers that our forefathers most definitely ate Matzo during the time of their bondage in Egypt. However, the Torah only mentions Matzo in conjunction with our departure, which was a Simcha, a joyous occasion. Matzo, and particularly that which we are referring to now, symbolizes as well the hardship we, as slaves, suffered in Egypt.

It is clear that Matzo has a dual symbolism, representing both slavery and freedom. These two themes of slavery and freedom, although contradictory, appear throughout the course of the Seder. We begin Maggid by mentioning the Matzo, which epitomizes the contradictory themes of the evening, thereby setting a certain tone for the evening. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The matza we eat on Passover must be made solely of special flour and water. Matza made of flour and fruit juice is called "rich matza," and is not acceptable for the celebration of the seder. Matza, the "bread of affliction," symbolizes our acceptance of the yoke of Heaven and our willingness to perform mitzvot solely for G-d's sake, even if we derive no pleasure from their performance.

We thereby emulate our ancestors' unquestioning obedience to G-d's command when they left Egypt with only their matza to sustain them, in perfect faith that G-d would provide for them in the desert. We must always approach the performance of a mitzvah with the same acceptance of our Heavenly yoke, even before we seek any intellectual rationale. (Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l)



After we make the declaration about Matzo and its dual symbolism, we extend an invitation to all those who are in need of food or a Korbon Pesach. The Ya'avetz, Rav Yaakov Emden, writes that the invitation that we are extending to all those who are in need of food is directed towards non-Jews. This must be the case, Rav Emden says, as there is a custom to take care of the sustenance of the Jewish needy before Pesach (Maos Chittim/Kimcha D'Pischa). We extend this invitation to the non-Jews not because they have any mitzvah relating to Pesach. We do this in accordance with the Gemora in Gittin -" Mefarn'sin Aniyay Acu"m Im Aniyay Yisroel Mipnei Darchei Shalom," that we are to sustain the non-Jewish poor with the Jewish poor in order for there to be peace (between the Jews and non-Jews).

Once we have provided sustenance for our own poor before Pesach, we offer assistance to the non-Jewish poor. At the same time, we invite all Jews who are unable to perform the MITZVAH of Pesach by themselves to come join us at our Seder.

The Vilna Gaon adds that it is due to this very fact, that we are inviting the poor, that we conclude this paragraph with "Hoshata Hacha, L'shana Ha'ba'ah...." Our poor brethren are not self reliant, and are depending on us for their meal. This may cause the poor and needy to feel bad about their situation on this night of celebration. We therefore try to comfort them by showing how we are all equal, in reality. Right now, "hoshata hacha, hoshata avdei" - we are all here and we are all slaves. Next year, we will all be in Jerusalem as free men. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



"All who are hungry let them come and eat. All who are needy let them come and celebrate the Passover with us..."

A powerful theme, but first we should understand why this reiteration. Apparently what hungry people need is one thing, and what needy people need is another. The invitation is not just a call to those who can't afford the wine and the matzot, but it's a call to all those whose needs go beyond food. The Seder provides a way to celebrate with other people. But it's a two-way street. The needy and the hungry on one side, and across the table, those who've managed to create a home, a family, and all the basic requirements of human existence. The fortunate can't simply sit back and say 'Thanks for the bounty, O Lord,' and then turn over and go to sleep. On Passover, the key is how to share this bounty. Without sharing, there is no authentic religious experience. And children know this. Despite all the ritual foods and Hebrew words, the Maimonidean concept that a festival meal without guests is nothing more than a celebration of the stomach, is even truer on Passover when the dining room table becomes the center of a religious evocation.

Of the thousand or so meals we eat each year, the Seder serves as the best model for teaching a philosophy of eating. When we start with the karpas, the vegetable dipped into salt water, but don't proceed to a next course, it re-enforces the idea of self-control. An animal hunts, kills, chews and sleeps, not unlike Esau who "...ate, drank, got up and left..." [Genesis 25:34] The Torah teaches that a Jew isn't supposed to sit down and attack his food. First the ritual washing of hands, then the blessings to remind one that food can be a way to serve the Creator. The importance of restraint is expressed in our dietary laws. By resisting our strongest urges, we learn to serve a master far greater than our bellies. On Passover, the carefully laid out order of the meal is significant. Rushing things is a profound mistake. (R' Shlomo Riskin)



This declaration is, in fact, in accordance with a law in the Shulchan Aruch, that we should be willing to share all our festive meals with the hungry. The invitation is even made in Aramaic, the spoken language at the time of the composition of the Haggadah, so that a hungry person passing by could understand it.

But there is a problem with this explanation: why do we make such an invitation only at Pesach, and not at the other festivals, when there is the same obligation of hospitality?

In order to try and answer this, I would like to quote from the Gra (Vilna Gaon). In his book "Aderes Eliahu" he lists the three greatest events in world history: the Creation of the World, the Redemption from Egypt, and the Giving of the Torah. Why these events? Not necessarily because they were the most spectacular as miracles, but because, firstly, each of these is an ongoing processes, and secondly, we are partners in this process! Let us explain this by considering each in turn.

First, the Creation. G-d is continually active in the Creative process. Furthermore, whenever we have children in fulfilment of the Biblical commandment to "be fruitful and multiply", or whenever (for example) we plant trees, we are ourselves involved in this process.

Consider, next, the Giving of the Torah. This is also a continuing process. Moreover, whenever we learn, or teach, Torah, or find chidushim (new insights), we are involving ourselves in the Giving of the Torah.

Finally, let us consider the Redemption. This is also a continuing process, starting with the Redemption from Egypt, and culminating in the coming of the Messiah. Here too we have our part to play. How do we do this? It need not be on a grand scale. Think about the other two events. With Creation, we are not required to populate half the earth! We fulfil our part by having our own children. Similarly, we don't have to plant forests everywhere. It's enough to plant trees in our own backyards, or in the JFK Forest in Israel. As far as the Giving of the Torah is concerned, we cannot spread it to everyone. We do what we can, on a personal level.

So it is with Redemption. Every time we redeem a single person, we are involved with Redemption. If you know someone who is hungry, feed him! If you know someone who needs a sympathetic ear, listen to his problems! If you know someone who needs a job, get on the phone and find one for him! In this way, you do your share in the continuing process of Redemption.

Now let us return to the question: If it is always a mitzvah to invite the hungry to our table, why is this only stated explicitly at the Pesach Seder? We can now give an answer. Feeding the hungry is, as I have said, the part we play in Redemption, and Pesach is the one festival where Redemption is the central theme. (R' Haber)



"Now we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free men." (from the Passover Haggadah)

These are two separate requests: First, may we be in the Land of Israel by this time next year, and second, may we be free men at that time. For it is indeed possible to live in the Holy Land and remain enslaved. (Bait David)



How do the three parts of Ha Lachma Anya connect to each other: 1) The declaration about the Matzo being poor man's bread; 2) Extending an invitation to the needy; 3) Declaring our present status as being in exile, and that next year we will be free in Jerusalem?

The Aruch HaShulcha, Rabbi Yechiel Epstein, in his Haggadah Leil Shimurim, offers an explanation. He notes that our departure from Egypt occurred in a "super-natural" way, "L'ma'ala min hateva." We were slaves who had to eat a poor man's bread, yet because of the miracles of Hashem, we are now free. At this point in the Seder, before we truly begin, the compiler of the Haggadah wanted to comfort the destitute and poor, as well as strengthen their trust in the divine intervention of Hashem. He wanted to stress that the poor (as well as those who are not) should trust in Hashem, that he will provide, even though at this moment in time it seems so far from likely that the status of the poor person will change. However, as we know that Hashem is the one who dictates what is to occur, and is not bound by what we may call the laws of nature, the salvation of the poor can occur at any time. We therefore say to the poor "See this bread that we ate in Egypt. We were destitute, we were downtrodden! Yet we were STILL freed from the enslavement because Hashem performed miracles for us. Hashem will perform miracles for you, too. Go ahead, all those who are needy, eat from other people's table and do not be depressed about your situation. Go share in someone else's Pesach, and do not feel bad that you have to turn to others for help at this time. Just lift your eyes to Hashem in prayer, so that he will save you personally as well in a way that may seem super-natural, not according to what we call nature. Hopefully, out of the kindness of Hashem, your prayers will find you in a better situation, and will result in all of Israel being in a better situation, as free men, in Jerusalem!" (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



If we do unusual things on the Seder night to inspire the children to ask questions, why do we have a Mah Nishtana, which appears to spoonfeed the children these questions?

The Malbim suggests that the Ma Nishtana does not contain the questions we expect the children to ask later on. Each child, according to his or her level of comprehension, will ask questions when unusual events crop up during the Seder. What the Ma Nishtana does do is present a clear contrast of the two themes running throughout the Seder - slavery and freedom. The first two questions deal with the symbols of slavery on this night - Matzo and Maror, and the second two deal with symbols of freedom - dipping and reclining. This contrast allows us to realize how much we owe Hashem for allowing the latter part - our freedom - to occur. Hence, with this feeling of gratitude now swelling up inside us, we are now fully aroused and prepared to continue with the telling of the story of our departure with the proper feeling and emotion. This is why one must say the Mah Nishtana even when alone at the Seder. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The different items on the Seder plate are intended to arouse the curiosity of the children by indicating the Korban Pesach (shank bone), Maror, Charoses and the Matzoh. These are the topics around which the 4 questions revolve. The Rambam mentions that at this point the second cup of wine is poured and here the child asks and then (the Rambam adds) the leader (Koray) recites the 4 questions (Mah Nishtana). What does the child ask at this point if not the 4 questions? If the child has asked these questions, why does the leader recite the 4 questions as well? Why is the term Mah Nishtana used in

reference to the leader and not the son? At the Seder of Reb Chaim Brisker ZT”L the children would recite the 4 questions in reverse age order and then Reb Chaim would recite the 4 questions prior to Avadim Hayinu. Reb Chaim’s opinion was that Maggid had to be recited in question and answer format. That is why we say “This Pesach (sacrifice) that we are partaking of, for what reason do we do so (Al Shum Moh)”.

Based on this, the Rav offered the following new interpretation of the 4 questions. If the questions only related to the eating of Matzoh and Maror, the text of the questions should have simply been: Why do we eat Matzoh on this evening? Why do we eat Maror? Why do we introduce the questions with the Mah Nishtanah framework? Apparently, Mah Nishtanah is part of the Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim, part of the obligation to single out the night of Pesach, just like Kiddush. Again the comparison to Shabbos is important: Shabbos is unique in the prohibition of engaging in work. Pesach is unique in the 3 Mitzvos that apply only on this night, Pesach, Matzoh and Maror and Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. These 3 Mitzvos taken together with the questions regarding dipping the vegetables in salt water and the obligation to eat in a reclining position (that will be answered through Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim) represent the distinguishing characteristics of this night that are discussed as part of Maggid and Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. We introduce the questions with the unique structure of Mah Nishtanah in order to underscore this uniqueness. (Rav JB Soloveitchik, notes by Dr. Israel Rivkin)



After we conclude the invitation contained in Ha Lachma, the Mah Nishtana, the Four Questions, are asked. The Aruch HaShulchan, Rav Yechezkel Epstein writes that these four "questions" should not be asked, or intoned in an inquisitive manner. Rather they are to be said in a tone of wonderment (as we see in the Pasuk of "Mah Gadlu Ma'asecha Hashem - How great are your works, Hashem!). We are saying "Look how different tonight is from other nights: We eat only matzo, we dip our food twice, we eat maror, and we recline!" (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The Abarbanel comments that the Ma Nishtana is drawing our attention to a very important point. Tonight, we act in ways that represent both slavery and freedom. Our eating of the matzo and the maror commemorates the harsh and bitter slavery, from which we suffered greatly. Only moments after performing these commemorative actions, we dip our foods and recline while eating. These are signs of nobility and dignity. These are actions that represent our status as free men, servants only to Hashem. The resulting question of "Why on this night do we act in ways which are contradictory" yells out, begging for an answer.

The answer to this question is Avadim Hayinu L'Pharaoh B'Mitzrayim, we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. However, on the same night that we began as slaves, Hotzi'ainu Hashem Elokienu Misham, Hashem took us out from there, and we became a nation of free men. One one night in history, we were both slaves, and free men. Contradictory actions on this night are very appropriate. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Shimuel's Haggadah

The mishnah in Pesachim requires that in telling of the Pesach story at the seder, "we begin with troubles, and end with praise. There is a debate between Rav and Shimuel over what this applies to. According to Shimuel, the focus of the haggadah is the physical slavery and physical redemption. Rav instead stresses the spiritual side of the holiday.

Our haggadah contains both. First, we say "We were slaves to Par'o in Egypt, and G-d took us out". This fulfills the notion of beginning with troubles and ending with praise according to the notion of Shimuel. We speak of **slavery** to Par'o. Later, we will say "From the start, our ancestors were idol worshippers", beginning the portion of the haggadah according to Rav, addressing the spiritual redemption.

It would appear, though, that this debate isn't only over the proper way to conduct a seder, but part of a larger debate about redemption in general. In describing the messianic era, Shimuel holds, "There is no difference between now and the messianic era except the subjection to foreign dictators alone. To Shimuel, the messianic redemption as well is about Jewish autonomy, a physical freedom. Perhaps, Shimuel insists that only man can save himself spiritually. (Aspaqlaria)



Rav Yaakov Emden notes that there are two contradictory elements contained in our enslavement. We were Avadim L'Pharaoh, slaves to a king. A certain level of dignity existed as our enslavement was to a king, and not the Egyptians themselves. In fact, we see that the tribe of Levi was accorded respect, in their not having to perform labor. This is cause for a remembrance of our enslavement which is positive.

However, we were also slaves B'Mitzrayim, in Egypt. Mitzrayim was descended from Cham, one of the sons of Noach. Because of the lack of respect and disgrace that Cham showed towards Noach, he was cursed. This curse was that Cham and his descendants were to be eternal slaves. This meant that the B'nai Yisroel, by being slaves in Egypt, were slaves of slaves. This is a great level of lowliness and degradation. For this, we also have a remembrance. Because of these two aspects, it is fitting to have contradictory symbols during the Seder. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Rav Eliyahu Dessler in Michtav Me'Eliyahu explains that there were two dimensions to our liberation from Egypt. On one hand, it was a physical liberation. We were no longer in Egypt as slaves. This liberation could have occurred through the workings of politics rather than with the outwardly supernatural and miraculous rescue by Hashem. Yet, if that had occurred, the results could have been devastating. We could have been forever indebted to those who released us. We could become overconfident in our own prowess and forget that it is Hashem that controls all. We would become blinded by that which is seemingly natural in the workings of the world. We would become enslaved to these false notions which have always misled mankind. Only the openly divine intervention of Hashem could make us truly free from the impurity of Egypt. Only the openly divine intervention of Hashem could make us capable of seeing the truth: Hashem controls all, and only Hashem can help us. Only because of that are we free. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Towards the end of Avadim Hayinu, we say that even if we were all wise and understanding, the obligation to engage in the mitzvah of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim, telling about our departure from Egypt, remains. This implies that even if you are not arriving at any new insights or interpretations from that which you have said previously, there is a mitzvah to increase your telling. Rav Avrohom Trop was puzzled by this. What is so special about repeating what was said previously; what is the gain; why is this so important that it is called a mitzvah?

He answers by quoting the Gemora in Pesachim which says "Bechol dor vador, chayav adam...", "In every generation, a person is required to view himself as if he went out of Egypt." If a person truly felt that he was taken out of Egypt, Hashem performed miracles for him, that he was released from bondage and brought to freedom by Hashem, he would definitely want to repeat the story. The nature of man is such that he enjoys recounting those adventures and miraculous happenings in which he was involved. Telling the story over would give the person pleasure. Therefore, in order for us to demonstrate that we truly feel as if we were taken out of Egypt, we increase our telling over of the story. This demonstration is so important that there is a mitzvah in increasing our telling over about our departure from Egypt. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The last line of Avadim Hayinu and the passage of Ma'aseh b'Rabi Elazar which follows it stress the same point: the telling about our departure from Egypt on this night is the mitzvah we are to be focusing upon. The Haggadah tells us that all who increase their telling about our departure above and beyond that contained in the Haggadah are praiseworthy. The Vilna Gaon says that this is true no matter the intellectual capacity of the person. We see from the incident with Rabi Elazar that the sages we so engrossed in their discussion about our departure that a student had to summon them in the morning and inform them that it was time to recite the morning Shma. These sages were on a very high level of intellect and comprehension. Therefore, their discussion continued throughout the night and into the morning. However, any person who, according to his own capacity, continues his discussion, is praiseworthy. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The introduction concludes with the source for the Biblical commandment of Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim, remembering our departure from Egypt, year round. Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah tells us that he did not merit knowing the allusion made to this mitzvah until Ben Zoma spoke about it. The Rambam explains that in reality, Rabi Elozor was a youngster. However, due to his increased diligence in learning, he physically weakened and signs of old age set in. It is for this reason he said, "I am like seventy years old." Rabi Elozor is telling us that although he joined himself in the company of sages and toiled and exerted great effort in learning to the point that he aged, he still did not merit knowing this allusion until Ben Zoma said it. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



We say in the haggadah: "Even if we all were sages, even if we all were understanding... it still would be incumbent upon us to retell the story of the Exodus."

Rav Azaryah Berzon shlita explains this in light of the gemara (Menachot 99b) which relates that a man named Ben Damah asked his uncle Rabbi Yishmael, "Since I have learned the entire Torah, may I study Greek wisdom?"

Rabbi Yishmael responded, "One is commanded to speak Torah day and night (Yehoshua 1:8). Find a time which is neither day nor night and study Greek wisdom." What was the logic behind the question and what was the answer?

Ben Damah thought that the purpose of Torah study is to know the Torah. Rabbi Yishmael responded that that is only one aspect. There is another mitzvah, which is to occupy oneself with Torah.

Similarly, the haggadah is teaching us that the purpose of retelling the story of the Exodus is not (only) to know the story. Rather, telling the story is an end and a mitzvah in and of itself. (Printed in Hadarom, No. 53, Nissan 5754)



"All the days of your life' as including the Era of Moshiach."

Le'havei translated as "including" literally means "to bring."

Thus, this Talmudic passage, quoted in the Haggadah, can be interpreted as a directive: All the days of your life should be permeated by a single intention: to bring about the coming of the Era of Moshiach. (Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt"l)



With this explanation of the Mitzvah of Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Haggadah concludes its introduction. The Haggadah continues with the demonstration of how the Mitzvah tonight is different. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Maggid Part II: The Obligation of Telling to Others

Why, before we start with the four sons, which illustrates our obligation of telling to others, do we bless Hashem in the passage of Baruch HaMakom?

This section really begins with the Four Sons. Before we discuss the four sons, the Haggadah blesses Hashem and his Torah in Baruch Hamakom. The reason for this, the Ritva explains, is because all that we know about the four sons does not come from one location in the Torah. It comes from three different verses, Pesukim, which are located in different parts of the Torah. Yet, we see that the Torah does contain all that is to be said on this subject, and therefore we bless Hashem for giving us a complete Torah, Torah Shelaimah, which contains all these lessons. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The second son mentioned is the Rasha, the wicked son. When asking his question, the Rasha excludes himself from being part of the nation of Israel. Therefore, our response to him is that if he had

been in Egypt at the time of the redemption, he would not have been redeemed for this very reason. If one looks closely at the verses used to answer the four sons, one would notice that the same verse is used to answer both the Rasha and the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol - the one who does not know how to ask. However, by the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol, the negative and exclusionary implications are not present. Why is this so?

The Sifsei Chachamim notes that in Egypt, Hashem only performed miracles for the righteous, who knew and observed the Torah. The ignorant were saved and redeemed only in the merit of the righteous. The wicked, however, were not to be taken out at all. The merit of the righteous could not save them. Therefore, the response to the Rasha and the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol are the same: The miracles were performed for me -Li- and not for you. For the Rasha, this meant dying in Egypt. For the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol, this meant redemption in the merit of the righteous. It is for this reason the exclusionary implications of the verse are only mentioned by the Rasha. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Often the young don't really 'ask' the old, they 'tell' the old. Indeed, this is the first blunder of the 'wicked' child. The question, "what is the meaning of this service to you?" (the words of the wicked child in the Haggadah) is a quote from a verse in the Torah, but the word 'tell' which immediately precedes it, "...and it shall come to pass when they will tell you..." (Exodus 2:26) stands in contrast to the verb used in a verse in the next chapter concerning a similar situation wherein the child asks about the service. "Your child will later ask you what is this..." [Exodus 3:26]

The wicked 'tells', the others 'ask'.

In substance, there is very little that differs between the question of the wicked child and the question of the wise child. The wise child asks: "What is the meaning of the testimonies, statutes, and judgments which the Eternal our G-d has commanded us?" And the wicked child asks, "What is the meaning of this service to you."

In the above example, everything hangs on a pronoun: us vs. you. By saying 'you' the wicked child removes himself from the community. Neither child knows the answers, nonetheless the text reveals that pronouns matter, and the correct use of one is the beginning of wisdom. (R' Shlomo Riskin)



The third son that is mentioned is the Tam, the simple son. The Abarbanel comments that if one examines the context of Parshas Bo, from where the answer to the Tam was taken, one can tell what motivated the question. The verse says V'haya ki yish'alcha bincha..., "and it will be when your son asks you by saying 'What is this?' and you will say to him 'Hashem took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'" The Tam was asking his question with a pure heart, innocently, without any evil implications. He wanted to know "What is this?" The only thing holding the Tam back from understanding the mitzvah is his simplemindedness. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The verse quoted as the answer to the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol is "Ba'avur Zeh...". Rashi says the meaning of the verse is "Because I will keep the mitzvos such as Pesach and matzo, Hashem took me out of Egypt." This understanding seems odd. One would think we do the mitzvos of Pesach, matzo, and maror because we were taken out of Egypt. Rashi, however, seems to say that we were taken out of Egypt because of the mitzvos. How can this be?

Reb Yerucham Levovitz answered this question. He explained that one must truly understand why miracles are performed. In the case here, Hashem performed miracles for us so that we would be able to fulfill the mitzvos of Hashem. The fact is not that we were taken out and therefore we perform mitzvos. We were taken out of Egypt because and in order for us to do mitzvos. Hence, we were taken out of Egypt because of the mitzvos of matzo and maror. Our departure was a means to an end. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



This section of Maggid concludes with the source of the obligation of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim, telling about our departure from Egypt, in conjunction with V'higadita L'vincha, telling your son. Rashi explains that one might think he has to speak to his sons about the departure at least by Rosh Chodesh

Nissan. This is because of the fact that in reality, we have an obligation to discuss the laws of Pesach, Sho'alin V'Dorshin, 30 days beforehand. This would hold true if the verse had only said V'higadita L'vincha. With the addition of the words Bayom Hahu, on that day, we might say that from the time on that day we become obligated to bring the Korbon Pesach, the Pesach sacrifice, we also have an obligation of telling to our children. Therefore, the Torah adds the words Ba'avur ZEH...: you are not obligated to tell your son the Haggadah until you are visibly able to show him Matzo ZU, Maror ZU, THIS matzo and THIS maror. This is only when they are sitting before you at the Seder. Hence, this is the only time the mitzvah of V'higadita L'vincha applies. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



"It could have been that the mitzvah would begin on Rosh Chodesh..." The Vilna Gaon wonders why the sequence begins with Rosh Chodesh and then skips right to erev Pesach. Why doesn't the mishnah entertain the possibility that the mitzvah of telling the Pesach story begins on Shabbos Hagadol? Isn't **it** a major component of the process of Exodus?

Perhaps we can offer an answer to this question using an idea we spoke of earlier on the paragraph "We were slaves...". This portion is taken from Shimuel's haggadah. Shimuel holds that the focus of the mitzvah of Maggid is the physical, not the spiritual, aspect of the redemption. Therefore, we have to view this paragraph from that perspective as well.

In terms of the spiritual exodus, Shabbos Hagadol is a major component. Jews who were assimilating into Egyptian culture and religion set aside an offering to G-d. Not just any offering, but an Egyptian idol. (According to the Alshich, the sheep was not an idol in and of itself. Rather, it represented the zodiac, as Pesach is in the month of the ram.) Its role in the physical redemption, though, was minimal. Therefore in Shimuel's discussion of when the mitzvah ought begin, Shabbos Hagadol wasn't suggested. (Aspaqlaria)

Maggid Part III: Relating the Chain of Events

Rav's Haggadah

As we said earlier, Rav differs from Shimuel over the issue to be stressed in telling the story of Pesach. According to Shimuel, one should speak of the physical redemption. Rav, on the other hand, opines that a person satisfies the obligation to "start with troubles and end with praise", by speaking of spiritual troubles and praising G-d for bringing us closer to Him.

This portion of the haggadah, starting with "From the start, our ancestors were idol worshippers", is from Rav's haggadah. Here we speak of the transition from Terach the idol maker to the people who stood at the foot of Sinai. (Aspaqlaria)



The Kol Bo writes that starting with the passage of "Mitchila," "From the beginning,"... we begin the true telling, the true Haggadah of the evening. This telling, as we will see, begins with our disgrace, G'nai, and ends with praise, sh'vach.

The Haggadah starts the chain with the fact that our forefathers started out as idol worshippers. Only later did Hashem bring us close to him and his service. The nation of Israel was told this fact by Yehoshua, Joshua, in a statement which the Haggadah brings down:

"Originally, Avraham, his father, and brother worshipped idols. However, Hashem took Avraham and led him through Cana'an. He was given Yitzchak as a son, who in turn had Yaakov and Esav. Har Seir was given to Esav as an inheritance, and Yaakov and his family went down to Egypt."

After we mention this initial stage in our history, we thank and bless Hashem for keeping his promise made with Avraham, that being of releasing us from Egypt at the proper time. Hashem told Avraham that his children will be strangers in a land which is not theirs, and they will be oppressed for 400 years. However, the nation that oppressed them will be judged. Afterwards, the nation of Israel will depart with great wealth.

The Rambam explained why Pharaoh and his nation were deserving of the great punishment on the account they enslaved B'nai Yisroel. As Hashem made a decree of "Ger Yihyeh Zaracha...", "Your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs...", it would seem that Hashem wanted the B'nai Yisroel to be enslaved to a nation. All the Egyptians did was take the role of that nation. Why, therefore, were they punished?

The Rambam answered that it was because of this very point that they were punished. All that was decreed was that the B'nai Yisroel would be in a land "that was not theirs." Never was Egypt mentioned as being this land. Any nation was able to fill the role. Therefore Egypt did not have to enslave the B'nai Yisroel. It was a task that was "Efshar al yedai acher", possible for someone else to do. But, as Pharaoh chose himself and his nation to be the ones who would fulfill the decree and enslave the B'nai Yisroel with back breaking labor, he and his nation got their just reward. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Before we continue relating our history, we make a declaration, of Vehi Sheamda. We declare that the promise that Hashem made to our forefathers, to redeem them, holds true even for us. In every generation there have been those who have sought to destroy us. However, Hashem always rescues us from their hands. Rashi comments that this declaration of Vehi Sheamda is the reiteration of the promise that Hashem made to Avraham of "V'gam as hagai asher ya'avdu, dan anochi..." The nation that enslaves you will also be judged by Me..." This promise, which has stood for our forefathers, stands for us as well. Anyone who comes upon us, Hashem judges them and saves us from their hands.

We now continue with the forefather whom with our exile in Egypt began, Yaakov. The Haggadah tells us that Yaakov's father-in-law Lavan was unlike Pharaoh. Lavan attempted to destroy Yaakov and all of the B'nai Yisroel, while Pharaoh only wanted to destroy the males of the B'nai Yisroel. Yaakov's dealings with Lavan not only led to our eventual descent to Egypt (as will be explained), but, according to the Shevilai Leket stresses the point of "B'chol dor va'dor..." "In every generation, they arise against us to destroy us..." just mentioned in Vehi She'amda. The Vilna Gaon carries this point further by saying that from Yaakov, we also see Matzilainu Miyadam - that Hashem saves us from the hands of those who attempt to destroy us, as after Yaakov left the house of Lavan, he did not realize that Lavan pursued him with evil intentions. However, Hashem came to Lavan and told him to stop.

The Haggadah then quotes Devarim 26:5, which is the verse that connects the actions of Lavan to our descent to Egypt. The Alshich explains the connection between Lavan's dealings with Yaakov and Yaakov and his family going down to Egypt in the following manner: Rachel, not Leah, was supposed to be wed to Yaakov first. If this had happened, Yosef would have been the B'chor, the firstborn. This did not happen because Lavan tricked Yaakov by giving him Leah to marry first. As Yosef was not the firstborn, the other brothers resented the special treatment he received. This resulted in the sale of Yosef, and ultimately the descent of Yaakov's family to Egypt. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



When the Pasuk says "Vayagar sham", "and he sojourned there", the Haggadah tells us that this teaches us that Yaakov did not intend to settle down in Egypt. Rather, his stay was to be temporary. The Pasuk in Bereshis 47:4' demonstrates this to us. The sons of Yaakov requested permission from Pharaoh to stay in Goshen, as they needed a place to let their flocks pasture, only because there was a hunger in Cana'an.

The request of the brothers seems a bit odd. Hashem's main decree of hunger was issued on Egypt. It would seem highly unlikely that there would be any grazing land in Egypt, especially if there was none in Cana'an. So, why were the children of Yaakov asking permission to graze their flocks in Egypt?

The Rambam gives two possible explanations for the request. It is possible that there was grazing land in Egypt, as in Cana'an people had to resort to eating grass due to the hunger. Therefore there was nothing left for the animals. However, in Egypt, there was produce stockpiled for the people to eat, and therefore grazing land was left. It is also possible to say that there was grazing land in Egypt due to the many fertile areas there, such as swamps and areas near the rivers. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The B'nai Yisroel were distinguishable from the Egyptians by the fact that they had many children. Previous to the bondage in Egypt, women had one child at a time. However, the Jewish women in Egypt had six children at one time. This was a factor which made the Jewish women unique. This factor of multiple births led to them being great in size and number, Atzum. The Haggadah brings a Pasuk to show this: "U'vnei Yisroel paru va'yishritzu vayirbu vaya'atzmu b'm'od mi'od, vatimalei ha'artez osam," "And the children of Israel were fruitful and numerous, and they increased and they became very strong, and the land was filled with them."

The Haggadah compares the great number of people in the nation of Israel ("Va'rav") to blades of grass. The Leil Shimurim explains that this comparison is alluding to the importance of Achdus, unity. Individual blades of grass have no value. Only with the combination of countless blades is there any significance to the grass. The same is true with the nation of Israel. The greatness of the nation of Israel is their unity. No one individual can equal the importance and level of the group working together.

The Ritva explains the comparison in a different manner. The B'nai Yisroel were like the grass in the manner of their growth. Just as the more frequently grass is cut, the more it grows than previously, so too by the Jews. The more people tried to "cut them down", the larger and stronger they grew. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The next Pasuk that the Haggadah analyzes in the chain of events is "Va'yareinu osanu haMitzrim yayi'anunu, vayitnu aleinu avoda kasha"- that the Egyptians treated us badly, afflicted us, and placed upon us hard labor.

The Pasuk that the Haggadah cites in reference to "Va'yareinu osanu" is "Hava nischachma lo, " the verse which discusses the advice given to Pharaoh about enslaving the Jews. The Gemora in Sotah tells us that Pharaoh had three advisors: Yisro (Jethro), Bilam and Iyov (Job). Bilam, because he gave the above advice, was punished with death. Iyov, who did not respond to the advice but kept quiet, was punished with suffering. Yisro, who fled in protest of the advice was rewarded by having his descendants serve in the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. The Gemora where this is brought down was discussing the concept of reward and punishment being Mida K'neged Mida, that the reward or punishment fits the deed. Rav Y. Z. Soloveitchik (aka the Gri"z) was puzzled by this. One can understand why Bilam, who advised persecution, was punished with death. But why was Iyov, who remained silent punished with suffering, and Yisro who fled was rewarded with his descendants serving in the Sanhedrin?

HaRav Soloveitchik answers that the reason why Iyov was silent was because he thought any protest which he may voice would not be listened to, and therefore not help. This may have been the case, but Iyov still had a responsibility to protest against this evil plan. Because he didn't, he was punished with suffering, as one who suffers cries out, even though he knows that the cries will not remove the suffering. As Yisro protested, he was forced to flee from the palace life (which he had by virtue of the fact he was a royal advisor). Because of this, his children merited serving in the Sanhedrin, which met in the Lishkat HaGazit, part of the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple complex, the "ultimate palace life." We now see how all three of Pharaoh's advisors were dealt with Mida K'neged Mida. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The next Pasuk the Haggadah cites is: "Vanitzak el Hashem Elokei avoseinu." "We cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our forefathers and Hashem heard our cry, and saw our affliction, our burden, and our oppression."

The Pasuk that the Haggadah brings down in reference to "Vanitzak" is "Vayehi bayamim horabim haheim..." "And it was in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died and the children of Israel groaned because of the servitude and cried; their cry because of the servitude rose up to G-d."

The Haggadah cites that the cries because of the servitude rose up to Hashem. Rabeinu Bachaya comments on this verse that we learn from here that there is no "tefila shelaima," complete prayer, like that of a person who is praying out of pain and suffering. This prayer is more readily accepted before Hashem than others. However, we see from the Sages that in regards to teshuva, repentance, the repentance that

comes out of pain is not as accepted as that which stems from love. A person should not be "forced" in to repenting. What is the difference between the two?

Harav Henoch Leibowitz explains that prayer has an intrinsic difference from repentance. Prayer is Avoda Sheb'leiv, service from the heart, as we pour out our hearts to our Father in heaven. The essential factor to prayer is Kavana, concentrative intent. The prayer which stems from suffering tends to be said with more Kavana, as the dire situation forces the person to pour out his heart with full concentration. Therefore, as there is more Kavana, the prayer is more readily accepted before Hashem, even more than prayer out of love. However, as sincerity is the essential factor to repentance, repentance is more readily accepted when it is self inspired sincerity, not motivated by dire circumstances.

One infliction which the Haggadah relates to the Pasuk is the killing of the male new-born children. Rashi writes that on the day Moshe was born, Pharaoh's astrologers told him that the redeemer of the Jews was to be born on that day. They did not know if this child was a Jew or an Egyptian. They did know, however, that the savior's demise was to come through water. Therefore, Pharaoh decreed that ALL males born, "KOL habein hayilud", and not just the Jewish born, were to be cast in the river. However, they did not know that Moshe's demise was because of the incident by Mei Merivah, when Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it, and not their efforts. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



"G-d, our L-rd brought us out from there."

The redemption from Egypt came as an act of Divine beneficence, and not as a result of the Divine service of the Jewish people.

To compensate for this lack of service, there were subsequent exiles in which the redemption depended on the Jews' efforts. (Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt"l)



The next Pasuk the Haggadah cites is: "Vayotzi'ainu Hashem Mi'Mitzrayim...", "Hashem brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great awe, with signs and wonders:"

The Vilna Gaon asks a question on the explanation of the Haggadah on this Pasuk. The Haggadah writes that in the Pasuk of "Vayotziainu", the stress is on the word "Hashem" - that Hashem took us out of Egypt himself, "Bichvodo Uv'atzmo" and not through an angel, "malach, saraph, shaliach". If that is the case, the Vilna Gaon asks, what was Hashem referring to when he told Moshe that he would not send the "Destroyer", the "Mash'chis", to kill the Jews during the tenth plague, Makas Be'choros. This implies that Hashem himself did not carry out the plague, but rather the Destroyer did, and that this is what the Jews were protected from.

The Vilna Gaon answers that during the course of the plague, there would have been two types of death: the death of the first-born, due to the plague; and the normal death which the Angel of Death takes care of when a person reaches the end of his years. In a nation of 600,000 men, there were most certainly people destined to die that night.

However, if even one of the Jews had died, the Egyptians might have said that the deaths were due to the same plague that was affecting them. Therefore, the Torah tells us that Hashem said that he would not send the "Destroyer" - that even the Angel of Death was forbidden by Hashem from making his normal rounds that night.

The Haggadah continues in its explanation of the Pasuk and explains that the Yad Hachazaka, the mighty hand mentioned is the fifth plague, Dever (death of cattle). Rav Moshe Feinstein points out that nowhere in this Pasuk is Makas Bechoros, the final plague, alluded to as being a contributing factor to our departure from Egypt. Yet, Dever is. The reason why Dever was considered a contributing cause to our departure is because the main fear of death which fell upon Egypt arrived with the plague of Dever, and the warning of Hashem beforehand (Shmos 9:15). The Egyptians vividly saw that Hashem did have power over life and death at this point. However, they mistakenly concluded that this power was restricted to animals (as demonstrated by Dever). However, when the last plague occurred and the Egyptians saw the first born dying They now knew that Hashem had the power of life and death over man as well. At this

point, the fear of Hashem's power of death which had set in at Dever, prompted the Egyptians to release the Jews.

The Haggadah brings down another allusion from the Pasuk. It says that each attribute that Hashem associated with the departure alludes to ten plagues, thereby alluding to the ten plagues which Hashem brought on Egypt. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



During the plague of locust, Pharaoh hurried to call Moshe and Aharon, and to repent. Then Pharaoh changed his mind. What happened?

Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin zatz"l explains that each of the previous plagues had lasted seven days. Therefore, Pharaoh thought that if he "repented" quickly, he could save his crops. However, after the locust departed, Pharaoh learned how much damage actually had been done, and he decided that there was nothing to gain from repentance. (Hama'ayan)



Immediately following the enumeration of the Ten Plagues, the Haggadah brings down a disagreement amongst the sages as to the exact number of plagues that occurred. The Vilna Gaon asks why the sages found it necessary to expound the exact number of plagues that occurred, and to dispute regarding how large that number was.

The Vilna Gaon explains that we see in Parshas B'shalach that Hashem promised the Jews a great good: "Kol Hamachala asher samti B'Mitzrayim lo asim alecha", any affliction brought upon the Egyptians will not be brought upon the Jews. (A similar statement can be found in Parshas Ekev). The reason the Sages wanted to know the number of plagues is so that they would be included in "all of the plagues which I brought on Egypt." Therefore, as Hashem will save us from that which afflicted Egypt, those plagues will not be brought on us. The reason for the increase in number follows the same reasoning: the more plagues that affected Egypt, the less that will affect us. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The Haggadah continues with the enumeration of all the kindnesses Hashem bestowed upon us, starting from our departure from Egypt to the building of the Bais HaMikdash, the Holy Temple. Rashi tells us that the reason why we thank Hashem for giving us Shabbos is because Shabbos is a sign between Hashem and the Jews. This sign was given to the Jews before they went to Har Sinai and received the Torah, and therefore shows the closeness that existed between Hashem and the nation of Israel even before the Torah was given. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The Hadaga has now concluded relating the chain of events, the second factor which makes the Mitzvah of telling about our departure from Egypt unique tonight. The Haggadah now continues with the third difference - explaining the reasons behind the Mitzvos of the evening. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Maggid Part IV: The Reasons Behind The Mitzvos

The third section of the Haggadah begins with an introduction. This introduction stresses the seriousness of our requirement of telling about the Mitzvos. Rabban Gamliel tells us that we must mention the Korbon Pesach, the Matzo, and the Maror. If we do not, we have not fulfilled our obligation of "remembering" our departure from Egypt.

The Kol Bo explains that Rabban Gamliel is telling us that even though a person may have eaten the Korbon Pesach, Matzo, and Maror, he still has not fulfilled his obligation without an Amira V'Haggadah, a telling, about these Mitzvos.

The Beis HaLevi wondered what we are accomplishing when we ask what the reason is for the Mitzvos of Pesach, Matzo, and Maror. Why are we trying to explain the Mitzvos of the Torah?

He answers that we must understand that the world was created using the Torah as a blueprint. Because the Torah tells us to do or not to do a certain action, when the proper action is done, it sustains the world's existence. The world works in accordance with the Torah.

In reality, we are not giving the true reason for the mitzvah, as that is impossible. There is no way that a person could understand or fathom the true reason for the mitzvah which Hashem established, and created the world in accordance with. However, when we are giving the reasons now, we are giving a reason for the mitzvah on our level of understanding, so we can "relate" to the mitzvah on a very superficial level. We must realize that this in no way is the true and absolute reason for the mitzvah. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

We learn from Rav Shim'on Hatzadik in the second mishnah of Pirkei Avos that the world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah (worship of G-d) and Gemillus Chassadim (acts of kindness). The Maharal (Derech Hachaim ad loc.) that these three pillars represent the basic relationships each person is capable of. Torah allows a person to perfect himself. Avodah is the means of maintaining a relationship with Hashem. Chessed is the proper relationship with other people.

We could view the three symbolic foods that Rabban Gamliel requires we discuss in the same light. Matzah, teaches the importance of haste, of modesty (as poor man's bread), and upon it we ask many questions. It represents the Pesach story in relation to the pillar of Torah and self-perfection. The Pesach offering was a *korban*, from the root /k-r-v/ to come close. The Pesach was Avodah, a way of coming close to G-d. Maror represents the third pillar, Chessed. Maror is a reenactment of the bitterness of servitude, a way to empathize with the pain of the generations in Egypt. (Aspaqlaria)



The first mitzvah the Haggadah mentions in that of the Korban Pesach, the Paschal sacrifice. There are eleven separate mitzvos regarding the Korban Pesach: 1) To slaughter the Korban is its proper time. 2) Not to slaughter it while any Chametz is in one's possession. 3) Not to allow the night to pass without offering up the specified parts of the animal on the altar 4) To eat the sacrifice with matzo and maror on the eve of the 15th of Nisan. 5) Not to eat the sacrifice partially roasted or cooked in liquid; it must be totally Tzli Aish, roasted over fire. 6) Not to remove the meat of the sacrifice from the group of people who joined together to eat that particular animal. 7) The sacrifice should not be eaten by a Mumar, one who knowing acts against the ways of the Torah. 8) The sacrifice should not be eaten by a non-Jew, a Toshav V'sachir 9) The sacrifice should not be eaten by an Arel, one who is uncircumcised. 10) The bones of the sacrifice should not be broken. 11) Remnants of the sacrifice should not be left over until morning. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The next mitzvah that the Haggadah discusses is that of Matza. The Tiferes Yisroel explains that just as the B'nai Yisroel were redeemed before the actual set time, (as we should have been in Egypt for 400 years, yet we were redeemed after 210 years) similarly, we are commanded to eat matzo, which the B'nai Yisroel ate before its fitting time (meaning that the bread was eaten before it was "bread"). (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The third and final mitzvah that the Haggadah discusses is that of Maror. The Baruch She'amar is bothered by this mitzvah. Seemingly, the reason behind eating Maror is not comparable to the reasons behind the eating of the Korban Pesach or the eating of the Matzo. The eating of the Korban Pesach and the matzo are in remembrance of our salvation: Korban Pesach - because Hashem passed over the houses of the B'nai Yisroel at the time of Macas Bechoros, the final plague ; Matzo - because this symbolizes the speediness of our departure. But Maror does not symbolize salvation, but rather it symbolizes the worry and pain and bitterness of life in Egypt. So, why then do we have this remembrance, and feel thanks because of this, as we say next in the upcoming paragraph of L'ficach?

Truthfully, there is a reason to have feelings of thanks. As we see in Parshas Lech Lecha, the exile was set at 400 years, and the Medrash explains that the hardship and the bitterness of life in Egypt caused

the Jew's freedom 190 years early. Therefore, Hoda'ah, thanks, also applies by the Maror, which quickened our departure from Egypt. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



We conclude this section by saying that in every generation, we are required to view ourselves as if we actually left Egypt. Therefore, we are obligated to sing praise to Hashem for taking us out. Rav Y. Z. Soloveitchik explains that there are two types of Hallel - The Hallel which we are required to read on the 18 established days (such as on Shavuot, Succot, etc); and the Hallel which is said as Shira, songs of praise, which one says when rescued from a tzara, a peril. The difference between the two is that the latter may only be said by the individual who experienced the salvation, while the former is said by all. The Hallel which we are about to say at this point in the Haggadah we are saying as Shira. Therefore, we must preface this by saying B'chol dor va'dor..., that we are obligated to view ourselves as if we were saved from Egypt, and if that is the case,...L'fichach anachnu chayavim, we are obligated to say Hallel on our salvation. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The third section of the Haggadah, and hence our minimal obligation of telling about our departure from Egypt, has ended. In conclusion, we now express our thanks to Hashem for taking us out of slavery in Egypt, to now serve Him, our sole master. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Maggid Part V: Expressions of Thanks and Praise to Hashem

The purpose of this section is explained by the Kol Bo. After we have just finished saying that we feel like we ourselves were redeemed from Egypt, we have an obligation to sing Shira to Hashem, just as our forefathers did.

The Meam Loetz explains that once we have arrived at the point of praise, the Haggadah then clarifies four points regarding praise: Who is to praise Hashem, as not all are fit to do so; Who are we to praise; When are we to praise; and where is He praised. The answers are shown to us through the selection of Psalms that we say at this point in the Haggadah: We say "Halelu avdai Hashem" - only those who cling to Hashem like a slave to his master are worthy to praise Hashem; We must realize that we cannot praise Hashem and his greatness like we would a human king, as we cannot comprehend His greatness. Therefore, we can only praise His name "Halelu as shaim Hashem"; Until the generation of the Jews in Egypt, no person said Hallel or Shira to Hashem, as nobody recognized the ability of Hashem to perform miracles contrary to nature. With Makas Bechorot this ability was demonstrated and therefore we now are able to praise Hashem from now and forever - Yehi shem Hashem Mevorach me'ata v'ad olam; Hashem rules and has control everywhere and over everything, and therefore we see Hashem has control over all nations, can raise the poor to riches, make the barren have children, etc. - "ram al kol goyim... mi'kimi me'afar dal...moshivi akeros habayis...". (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



We conclude our praise of Hashem with a blessing. In it we make the request that we should be able to eat from the sacrifices, whose blood is placed on the walls of the altar. Reb Y. Z. Soloveitchik asks why we make such an unusual request, one which we do not see elsewhere.

In Zevachim 26b, we learn that if the blood of a sacrifice was not sprinkled on its proper place on the altar, one may not eat the sacrifice, but one does achieve atonement. In regards to normal sacrifices, atonement can be achieved without proper blood sprinkling, and atonement is not affected by the fact that one can not eat the animal. However, by the Korban Pesach, the sacrifice had to be eaten "L'sova", with satisfaction. This is accomplished by the eating of the Korban Chagiga, also. Both of these sacrifices NEED to be eaten to fulfill their purpose. Therefore, we ask Hashem that we should merit to have the Holy Temple returned to us. As the Holy Temple is absolutely necessary for the bringing of the Korban Pesach, as the altar is needed for the sprinkling of the blood, the ending of our exile is not enough. We need the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, so we can bring the sacrifice in a way we will be able to eat it. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Third Cup

Rachtza, Motzei, Matza

During the following steps in the Seder, until we reach Shulchan Orech, the meal, we perform the Mitzvos of the evening. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Seder was organized so that we would perform most all of the Mitzvos of the evening before the meal with good reason. By delaying the meal, we are demonstrating to the youngsters, our children, how we are to perform the service of Hashem and how we are to desire the redemption. We show that the service of Hashem comes first, before our needs. We further show that we wait patiently for our redemption, that we are patient while waiting for the end to come. This is unlike the B'nei Ephraim, a group of Jews who the Medrash tells us, who left Egypt on their own, as they became impatient waiting for Hashem to release us. For this lack of patience, they met with their death. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The Chasam Sofer points out that the prohibition of eating Chametz on Pesach differs from many other prohibitions. By Chametz, there is no minimal size that must be consumed in order for one to have transgressed the prohibition, as is the case by other prohibitions. Rather, any amount consumed, no matter how small, will result in transgressing the prohibition. The reason for this difference lies with a feeling we are supposed to have on Pesach. We have said in Maggid that we are supposed to feel as if we, ourselves, were in Egypt and then redeemed. In Egypt, the Jews had not yet received the Torah; they had to keep all laws like a Ben Noach, a gentile, would. The concept of measurements in Jewish law was not introduced until after the Torah was received. If we are to truly be like the Jews in Egypt, we cannot eat any amount of Chametz, as that would have been the standard in Egypt. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Charoses poses a paradox. On the one hand, the Rambam writes, “The charoses is a mitzvah from the Sofrim, as a commemoration of the mortar that they worked in in Egypt.” (Laws of Chomeitz and Matza 7:11). Charoses represents mortar, slavery.

On the other hand, charoses is sweet. Sephardic, Ashkenazic and Yemenite recipes have few ingredients in common, yet they all use a sweet mixture (see also Pesachim 115b, which warns against losing the bitterness of the maror under the sweetness of the charoses).

So which is it—a symbol of slavery, or of the sweetness of freedom?

Matza presents a similar ambiguity. We open Maggid by describing matza as “the bread of suffering which we ate in Egypt”. Yet, later on, when we repeat Rabban Gamliel’s three things that must be said to fulfill the obligation of the seder, we say we eat matza “because there was not enough [time] for our ancestors dough to rise”.

Again, which is it—a symbol of slavery, or of a hasty redemption?

What is interesting is that we see the same duality in the concept of mitzvah. On the one hand, the root of the word is tzadi-vuv-hei, to command. This is the idea we convey before taking out the Torah, in “Brich Sh’mei” (from the Zohar). “I am a servant of the Holy One, blessed be He”. We keep mitzvos for a simple reason. G-d told us to.

However, the word for “commandment” is “tzivui”. Mitzvah is built from the passive form, a less probable conjugation. The late Lubavitcher Rebbe zt”l opined that this is an allusion to a second root, mem-tzadi-vuv, to connect or aim. Mitzvah can be read as the feminization of this root. Which gives us a second definition of “mitzvah”—not only are they “what G-d commanded” but also they provide a focus to our lives, a way to connect to Him.

Mitzvah too operates on two levels. Servitude, simple obedience to G-d. Freedom, doing what is in our best interest. And here is where the two ideas converge.

“You will guard the matzos” that they shall not come to leaven. ...

R. Avohu says, "It should not be read 'matzos' but rather 'mitzvos'. Just as we don't let matzos leaven, we similarly don't let mitzvos 'leaven'. Rather, if one comes to your hands, do it immediately."

Rashi, Sh'mos 12:17

Matzos, in the guise of "there was not enough time", teaches us about the proper way to do mitzvos. They parallel because they both share the same dual nature. On the first level, one would assume they are unpleasant, something one would want to avoid. But once experienced, you can feel how they are the path to freedom.

The mitzvah is a yoke we accept upon ourselves because we know that Hashem commanded (tzadi-vuv-hei) it to nourish us (mem-tzadi-vuv). On the surface layer, it is "the bread of affliction" but we eat it by choice, because we trust the G-d gave them to us to help us.

This is a major theme in the Exodus story in general. As we say in Sh'ma "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt to be for you a G-d/Legislator."

We also have a key to understanding the apparently oxymoronic symbolism of charoses. It doesn't represent the bitter servitude of Par'oh, but the sweet, voluntary yoke of heaven. We eat it with maror, which does represent the bitter slavery, and give it the appearance of that servitude to bring to mind the contrast.

Charoses, like being a "servant of the Holy One" has a surface layer, an appearance of the mortar of slavery. But experientially, it's very different. "Na'aseh viNishmah"—only by doing can we hear the beauty, the depth, of the Torah. (Aspaqlaria)

Maror, Korech

We have the step of Korech so we can fulfill our obligation of Matzo and Maror according to all sides in a dispute regarding the performance of the Mitzvos at the time when we had the Holy Temple. The Maharal explains that Hillel held that we should eat the Pesach, Matzo, and Maror all together as the Pasuk says "Al Matzos U'mrorim yochlu'hu," "you should eat it (the sacrifice) on Matzo and Maror." The Sages, however, held that each one was to be eaten, but separately. Therefore, we do both. However, lest one say that the Halacha is in accordance with neither opinion, as we do both, we make sure to proclaim "Zecher L'mikdash", that this that we are doing like Hillel is only a remembrance of how Hillel used to perform the mitzvah. We make sure that we eat the Matzo and Maror separately first because Matzo is a mitzva of scriptural origin, a D'raisa, and Maror, nowadays, is only a mitzvah of Rabbinic origin, D'rabanan. If, we were going to perform these mitzvos for the first time together, the taste of the maror would cancel out the taste of the matzo, the more important of the two. Therefore, first we eat the matzo and maror separately, and then we eat them together. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Shulchan Orech

The Ma'ainah Shel Torah says in the name of the Admor M'Gur that one may wonder how we can split the Hallel we say into two parts (one part at the end of Maggid, and one part as the step of Hallel), with a meal in the middle. Isn't the meal considered a "hefsek", an impermissible interruption? The answer lies in how we conduct ourselves during this meal. As our eating of the meal is to be made into a spiritual as well as a physical experience, the meal can be considered further praise to Hashem. Hence, there is no interruption in our "saying" of Hallel. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The Chasam Sofer points out that by other festivals mentioned in the Torah, there is an explicit commandment of Simcha, rejoicing. However, one will not find such a commandment by Pesach. The reason for this lies with the meaning of Simcha. In Moed Katan 9b we are told that "Ain simcha ela b'achila ushitiya", there is no rejoicing without eating and drinking. On the other holidays, the main mitzvos are purely spiritual, leaving a person with a spiritual high. However, we see that for rejoicing, one needs physical pleasure as well. Therefore, the Torah adds a special commandment of Simcha, so that the

rejoicing will be complete, on both physical and spiritual planes. However, Pesach is different. Pesach by nature is a time of happiness and rejoicing, as we were released from slavery. Furthermore, eating and drinking, the essentials of rejoicing, are themselves the mitzvos we are to perform. Therefore, no special directive of Simcha is needed for Pesach. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Tzafun

The splitting of the matzo, and the time of each piece's use, have important significance. The Chasam Sofer tells us that each piece alludes to half of the Seder. The half that we ate already alludes to the first half of the Seder. In the first half of the Seder, we thanked Hashem for our redemption from Egypt. However, we are still in exile now, and further redemption is needed. In the second half of the Seder, we ask Hashem for this redemption. The piece of matzo we eat now symbolizes this. Just as this piece of matzo was hidden away, so is the date of our final redemption. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Barech

When there are three or more men over the age of thirteen who participated in the same meal, they are obligated to say Birchat HaMazon, Grace after Meals with Zimun, a special invitation to say Birchat HaMazon. Rashi explains that this means that all are invited to together say a blessing to Hashem. On this, both the Abudraham and the Kol Bo say that the reason we have this invitation and unified blessing is to increase the praise and greatness of Hashem. We announce together, after we have finished our meal, how we praise Hashem, and to thank him for the abundance of goodness he has bestowed upon us. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

Fourth Cup

Hallel, Nirtza

The Maharal explains that Hallel and Nirtza are not two distinct steps of the Seder. Rather, it is one step, known as Hallel Nirtza. He explains that those who say Nirtza is a step of itself explain the meaning of the step as being "if one conducted his Seder this way, it is desired (nirtza) before Hashem. However, if this were the meaning of Nirtza, it would not be explaining what we are doing in this step, but rather it would be referring to what we did in all previous steps. This is unlike the title of every other step, which refers to what we do in that step. Therefore, the true name of the step is Hallel Nirtza, referring to the second time we are saying Hallel tonight. The first time we said Hallel tonight, it was a plain Hallel. We were thanking Hashem for all the miracles of Egypt. Now, we are praying to Hashem that we should have a complete redemption. We request in this Hallel that it should be pleasing (nirtza) before Hashem to perform wonders and miracles for us as well. Hence, this is a Hallel Nirtza. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



Before we actually begin saying the Hallel Nirtza, we begin by opening the door and saying Sh'foch Chamascha. The Maharal explains that purpose of this Hallel Nirtza is to arouse the mercy of Hashem so that we should merit pleasing him and that He should find favor in us so that we are granted complete redemption. Therefore, we are obligated to make known to our children and publicize a principal belief which we have received from the prophets. This belief is that Eliyahu HaNavi will arrive right before our redemption to announce the impending arrival of Moshiach. As we are now praying for this redemption to occur, we open the door for Eliyahu, the one who will announce our redemption, and pour him a special cup of wine, a Kos Yeshuos, a cup of salvation for the future redemption.

The opening of the door at this point is solely because we want to welcome Eliyahu, the announcer of the redemption that we are about to pray for. It is not connected to the saying of Sh'foch Chamascha. We precede our Hallel with this request because it is a fitting preface to the first passage of the Hallel we are about to say, Lo Lanu. The Maharal says that we are familiar with the fact that Chazal

have told us we are to make sure to pray before tzaros, troubles, happen. We know that the war between Gog and Magog will occur before Moshiach and our redemption comes. As the gates of heaven are now open and we are praying for our redemption, we say first that Shfoch Chamascha- Hashem should take His wrath out on the nations that don't recognize Him, for they have persecuted us. Then, in Lo Lanu, we continue and say that none of this wrath should be taken out on us - Lo Lanu - even though we may not be worthy to this on our own merit. Even so, we ask that Hashem should do it for the honor of his name - Kavod shimcha. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The custom of filling a fifth cup of wine for Elijah the Prophet at the seder table is relatively recent, first mentioned by our Rabbis in the 16th century. Although always practiced by some, it has become more widespread only in the last few generations. One explanation for this is that this practice is intimately connected to our faith in the coming of Moshiach, for Elijah the Prophet will be the one to herald the redemption and the Messianic era. As the time for our redemption grows near, it is reflected in our religious practices. (Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l)



The Leil Shimurim also connects the saying of Shfoch to Lo Lanu, which follows. We ask Hashem to pour out his wrath on those who do not know Him and who do not call in His name. This is because those nations did two evil deeds - they devoured Ya'akov (the nation of Israel) and laid waste to his dwelling place (the holy temple). The decree that Hashem issued on the Jews was only that the Holy Temple would be destroyed. The murder of the nation of Israel was not in that decree. This is something the nations took upon themselves to do. We therefore, in Lo Lanu, ask Hashem to spare us, as we give His name reverence.

The Abarbanel adds that this nation that "did not know Hashem" are the nations that are like Egypt, who saw the greatness of Hashem, but still refused to acknowledge him. We ask that if Hashem poured out his wrath on Egypt, he should pour out his wrath on nations that do worse to us, that consume us, and destroy the Holy Temple. Even though we may not be deserving of this special treatment, we ask that Hashem do it so that the nations of the world will know His true power and recognize Him. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



If we say Hallel as part of the Seder, why do we also say it during Ma'ariv before the Seder (as is the custom in many places)?

The Ta'amei HaMinhagim quotes the Chok Ya'akov 487:8 who gives the following reason: Because we do not make a blessing on the Hallel we say at the time of the Haggadah, we therefore say Hallel in the synagogue, with a blessing, so that we would not need to make blessing on the Hallel we say later in the evening (during the Seder). In fact, the Ta'amei HaMinhagim further quotes the Orchot Chaim 487:6 who says that even in a place where the custom is NOT to say Hallel, it is a MITZVAH to change that custom, and to impress upon the congregation that they should say Hallel, and that is what many Rabbis have done. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)



The Ma'ainah shel Torah writes that the Avnei Ezel explained the reason we say Hallel now by means of a parable. A father was greatly angered by his son to the point where forgiveness was unlikely. The son greatly wanted to get back on his father's good side. Therefore, when a large group of people were gathered around, the son began singing the praises of the father extensively, in front of everyone. When the father saw that his son, who could very well have been upset at him as well for not forgiving him, not only sang praises, but in front of a large group, he weakened and found favor with his son. Similarly by us, we, who may have upset Hashem, will not hold back in our singing of praises to Hashem until we reach the point of Nirtza - that Hashem finds favor in us. (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

The Toras Aish Haggadah

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