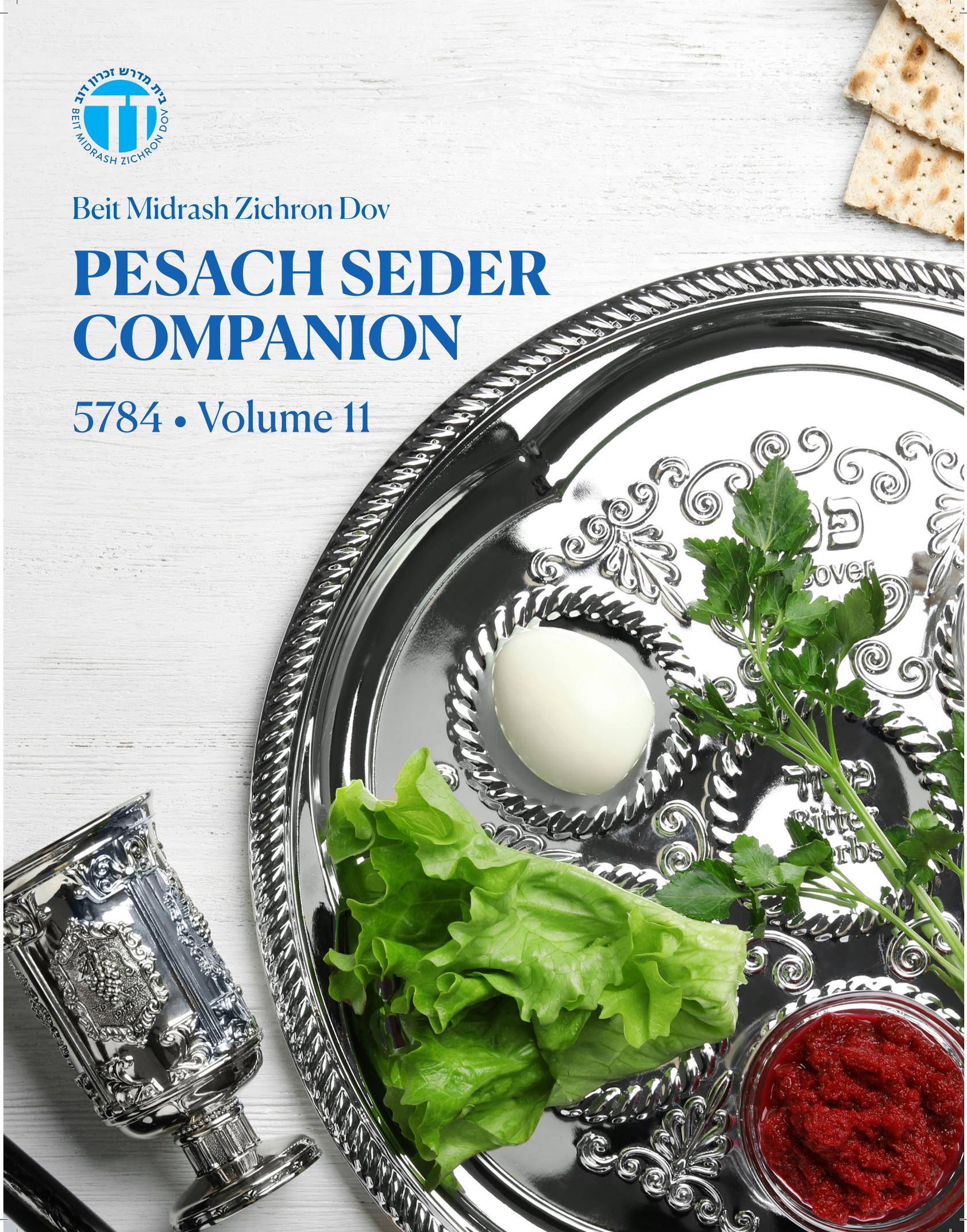




Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

PESACH SEDER COMPANION

5784 • Volume 11





Our Mission

To create a communal atmosphere of learning, engaging and inspiring the Jewish community of the Greater Toronto Area. We apply our Torah heritage to the daily lives of modern Jews in our home Beit Midrash at Yeshivat Or Chaim and in the synagogues, campuses and workplaces of the GTA.

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ורחץ: Preparing for the Future

RABBI JOSH GUTENBERG

MAGGID SHIUR, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

THE SECOND SECTION OF THE SEDER IS

Urchatz—washing one's hands before eating the *karpas*. The act of washing and the way in which it is done raises several questions:

1. People eat vegetables dipped in sauces all year, and generally do not wash their hands before eating. Why is the Seder night different than all other nights?
2. The *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 473:6) states that no blessing is recited when washing one's hands at this point. Why not?
3. Some families have the custom that only the head of the household washes his hands at this point. Why should there be a distinction between the head of the household and everyone else at the Seder?

For the first question, the sources for this custom indicate that washing should be the practice throughout the year as well. In the Talmud (*Pesachim* 115a), Rabbi Elazar says in the name of Rabbi Oshiya that one is required to wash his hands before eating foods exposed to liquid. This law is codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 158:4), where Rabbi Yosef Karo writes that when food is dipped in wine, honey, oil, milk, dew, blood, or water, and the food has not been dried, there is a requirement to wash one's hands without reciting a blessing prior to consumption. The *Mishneh Berurah* (158:20) explains that there is a debate among the medieval commentators as to whether Rabbi Elazar's ruling was meant to apply only when the Beit haMikdash stood and the Jewish people observed the laws of purity, or whether it was meant to

teach a practice to be observed forever. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules in accordance with the authorities who hold that this was a permanent decree. However, since there are dissenting opinions—and in cases of doubt regarding blessings we are lenient—no blessing is recited upon washing the hands. Therefore, the practice of washing hands before eating *karpas* (since the *karpas* is dipped in a liquid) is the practice the *Shulchan Aruch* endorses year-round.

Taz (Orach Chaim 473:6) also believes that the practice on the Seder night should be no different than any other day of the year. He employs the *Mah nishtanah* question rhetorically, asking, “What is different tonight from other days of the year?” and says washing before eating *karpas* at the Seder should act as a rebuke for everyone who is not meticulous with this practice in general.

Yet, despite the *Shulchan Aruch* and Taz's rulings that one must wash before eating food dipped in a liquid all year, the practice of many people is to be lenient. The *Mishneh Berurah* (158:20) justifies this practice based on the medieval commentators who believed that this law only applied during the times of the Beit haMikdash, when the Jewish people were careful with the laws of purity. If so, why are we stringent to wash on the Seder night?

- Shaar haTziyun (Orach Chaim 473:69) says that this practice is done so that the children will ask about the difference. Many practices during the Seder are geared toward sparking interest in the children. The Talmud (*Pesachim* 114b)

says the reason for *karpas* itself is in order for the children to ask questions. As such, *Urchatz* falls under the same category. This reason explains why some families have the custom that only the head of the household washes at this point. Since the practice is primarily to get the children to ask questions, distinguishing between the head of the household and everyone else is sure to pique their interest.

- Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (*Hagadah Imrei Shefer*) says that our actions during the Seder should mimic the actions that were performed when the Korban Pesach was sacrificed. We want to remember how Pesach should ideally be celebrated, and therefore, we wash our hands as we would have washed them in sacrificing the Korban Pesach.

These two explanations for why we wash our hands before eating *karpas* complement each other to provide a deeper meaning and appreciation for *Urchatz*. If the only goal of *Urchatz* was to change our routine in order to spark interest among the children, our rabbis could have instituted any number of actions that diverge from our normal routine. It is possible that this practice was specifically chosen to offer a means to educate our children about the traditions of Pesach when the Beit haMikdash stood. An integral part of Pesach is educating our children and passing on the practices and traditions to the next generation. *Urchatz* is a way to connect our children to the way Pesach was celebrated in the past, and the way it will hopefully be celebrated in the near future.

DID YOU KNOW?

We have held five Sunday morning Midreshet Yom Rishon programs for women this year!



הא לחמא עניא: Living in the Eternal

RABBI HILLEL HOROVITZ

MAGGID SHIUR, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE WALK into a bar; it was tense. It's a joke, but it's also our everyday life. One of the main reasons for anxiety and distress is our constant preoccupation with the future. We are continually busy with the question of making the correct decision in the present, and we constantly ponder our past actions and their outcomes.

Current psychological research emphasizes the importance of having a narrative to our lives and how different narratives affect our perspectives on past and future experiences. A narrative that starts poorly and ends positively is considered a redemption sequence. In such a narrative, through future success, we learn to better appreciate the troubles of the past. An example could be a person breaking their leg and later meeting their future spouse in the hospital. Stories starting positively and ending poorly are called contamination sequences. Research has shown that the way a person tells their own story can significantly shape their approach to life.

Stories are powerful tools for holding onto the meaning of our experiences. The objective facts of our lives are what they are, but the stories we tell are about where we draw connections, where we parse the chapter breaks of our lives. These are narrative acts, not historical acts, and the way we do that can have significant implications for our well-being. One of the most crucial choices we make in telling our stories, often unconsciously, is where we start and stop the different chapters of our life story. All lives have both good and bad aspects, so stories that start and end

poorly don't feel great, while stories that start and end well feel positive.

Ha Lachma Anya, our opening to the act of telling our story, Maggid, plays a significant role in shaping this narrative. It opens with a realization of where we were in Egypt. It continues with an invitation to all who are hungry to come and eat, to all who are in need to join in celebrating the Passover and ends with the hope for the future "Next year in Jerusalem".

The Haggadah itself is a carefully crafted narrative that guides us through the Exodus story, emphasizing the journey from slavery to freedom. It encourages us to reflect on our own narratives, both personal and collective, and to see the parallels between the nations' journey and our own. By retelling the story each year, we reinforce the idea that our past, present, and future are intertwined in a larger narrative of redemption and hope.

Ha Lachma Anya, translated as "This is the bread of affliction," serves as a symbolic centerpiece during the Seder. As we just finished breaking the middle Matzah in *Yachatz*, we are reminded of the brokenness in the world, the challenges we face, and the need for repair and redemption. This act becomes a pivotal moment in our narrative, a chapter break where we acknowledge the difficulties (the "bad" in our stories) but look forward to the possibility of healing and growth (the "good").

In a redemption sequence, *Ha Lachma Anya* becomes a powerful symbol of resilience and transformation. It symbolizes not only the physical bread of affliction but also the

spiritual nourishment that comes from overcoming challenges. By connecting the brokenness of the Matzah to the broader narrative of the Exodus, we consciously choose to see our struggles as part of a larger story of liberation and redemption.

On Pesach, we don't just remember the past; we actively shape our present and future narratives. We declare, "Next year in Jerusalem," expressing our collective hope for a future filled with peace, prosperity, and unity. This forward-looking perspective, rooted in the narrative of redemption, enables us to face the challenges of the present with optimism and to actively work towards a better future. This positive outlook to the future enables us in the present to extend an invitation to all who are hungry to come and eat, to all who are in need to join in celebrating the Passover. The words echo the sentiment of inclusivity and communal responsibility. This act of inviting guests into our homes on this special night is not just a tradition; it is a deliberate choice to shape our narrative positively in the present.

As we sit around the Seder table, sharing the *Ha Lachma Anya* and retelling the Exodus story, let us be mindful of the narrative choices we make. Let us embrace the redemption sequences in our own lives, drawing inspiration from the challenges we have overcome. By consciously shaping our narrative on Pesach, we invite positivity into our present and cultivate hope for the future, symbolized by the eternal promise of returning to Jerusalem. In doing so, we truly live in the eternal—a timeless story of liberation, resilience, and the enduring hope for a brighter tomorrow.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 100 people signed in at two CPD-approved ZOOM Legal Ethics programs so far this year.



מה נשתנה: Asking Questions—A Quick Look at the Quintessence of Query

RABBI NOAH SONENBERG
DEAN, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

STRUCTURED THE סדר IN A WAY THAT informs us how to effectively teach our children Jewish thought and values. We see that they intentionally organized the night in a manner which would seem strange to children who are used to regular שבת and יום טוב meals. The goal of this structure is to get the children to notice these peculiar practices. When the children are overcome with curiosity, they are expected to burst forth with their questions about this different routine. Only if the children didn't ask their own questions were they given a set of four questions to ask. This can be clearly seen in *Pesachim* 115 b:

Why does one remove the table? The school of Rabbi Yannai say: So that the children will notice and they will ask: Abaye was sitting before Rabba, he saw that they were removing the table from before him, and he asked, we have not yet eaten, and you are taking the table away from us? Rabba said to him: You have exempted us from reciting *ma nishtana*

This focus on encouraging questions is essential before we get to מגיד, the central educational piece of the סדר. Once we have achieved the goal of sparking the outward curiosity of our children, we must be careful to answer the questions in a way that helps us achieve the goal of education.

When the children ask, “Why do we dip כרפס before the meal?” we should respond in a way that demonstrates to them how much we value their questions. We can say that חז”ל wanted to encourage children to feel comfortable noticing practices and ideas that seem strange to them and then to ask for explanations. For children who couldn't formulate their own questions we provide four questions that while potentially profound can also be understood on a very simplistic level. This encourages them to ask “simple” questions knowing that they don't need to come up with a complex line of inquiry in order to impress their parents. This approach creates a feeling of safety that will then foster in them an understanding that questions within Judaism are expected and reasonable on any topic and on any level of complexity. חז”ל teach us in the actions of the סדר the principle of אין הביישן למד (a person easily embarrassed cannot learn). We must be sure to foster an environment for our children which accomplishes this goal.

As people get older, it is not only embarrassment that stops them from asking questions, but also a sense that they already know the answer or perhaps even a feeling that there really is no acceptable answer. As a result of this, questions must be asked even if the only people attending are already mature and wise.

The Sages taught: If his son is wise, his son asks him. And if he is not wise, his wife asks him. And if not, he asks himself. And even two Torah scholars who know the halakhot of Passover ask each other. (*Pesachim* 116a)

חז”ל encourage us to ask so that we will be open to consider other perspectives on issues that we already have thought about. The principle of איזהו חכם, הלומד מכל אדם (who is wise? he who learns from everyone) is being taught in the סדר in a practical and meaningful way. In order to broaden our understanding, we are encouraged to ask others even when we think that we already know the answer.

As we approach the סדר night perhaps we should add to our focus of sharing profound דברי תורה and include an awareness of the value of questions. We should look to create an environment where questions are encouraged from every participant at our סדר. All of our children's questions should be valued in an environment that is created to provide a sense of safety and security for exploring thoughts that challenge them. Only by allowing our children to ask questions can we hope to have them search for answers from us and from all the תורה personalities and resources that are available in our community.

DID YOU KNOW?

We held 4 Medical Ethics ZOOM programs so far this year, with more than 200 participants!



ארבע בנים: Don't Ask—Do!

RABBI YEHUDA MANN

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS WRITES ABOUT the importance of asking questions in Judaism, citing the story of the Jewish scientist and Nobel Prize winner Isidor Rabi:

Isidor Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize for physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied: “My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, ‘What did you learn today?’ But my mother used to say, ‘Izzy, did you ask a good question today?’ That made the difference. Asking good questions made me into a scientist.”

Judaism is a religion of questions. The greatest prophets asked questions of G-d ... The earliest sermons usually began with a question asked of the rabbi by a member of the congregation. Most famously, the Passover Seder begins with four questions asked by the youngest child.

However, I have a question on Rabbi Sacks. Reading about Isidor Rabi’s life, one discovers that his questioning led him to bad places as well. I read on Wikipedia the following:

After reading about Copernican heliocentrism, he became an atheist. “It’s all very simple,” he told his parents, adding, “Who needs G-d?” As a compromise with his parents, for his Bar Mitzvah, which was held at home, he gave a speech in Yiddish about how an electric light works...

We see that Isidor Rabi’s curiosity also led him to reject belief in Hashem and to abandon the Jewish religion. So is it good to ask questions? On the one hand, it is indeed worthy to ask questions as Rabbi Sacks says, and that is the whole purpose of the Pesach Seder. But on the other hand, we see the great danger of

raising doubts and asking questions can lead to abandoning the Jewish heritage.

Perhaps it is possible to bridge between the two approaches with an idea about the Haggadah.

One of the most famous questions about the Passover Haggadah comes from a comparison of the question of the wise son to the question of the wicked son. The wicked son is considered wicked because he “takes himself out” of the group as he asks:

What does this service mean to you? To you—and not to himself. And since he excluded himself from the community, he rejected his Jewish belief.

But many wonder—doesn’t the wise son also sound like he’s excluding himself? His question is:

What are the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments which the Lord our G-d has commanded you?

What’s the difference between them?

Rabbi Ephraim Luntshitz, in his commentary *Kli Yakar* on the Torah, presents the following idea. According to him, the difference between the wise son and the wicked son does not depend on what they ask or how they ask. According to him, the difference between them depends on when they ask.

The Torah presents the question of the wise son as follows: “When your son asks you tomorrow [i.e. the future], saying, ‘What are the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments which the Lord our G-d has commanded you?’”

In contrast, the wicked son does not ask “tomorrow”, he asks now! “And it shall be,

when your children say to you, ‘What does this service mean to you?’”

Says the *Kli Yakar*: there is a big difference between the two. If the wicked son does not understand the reasons for the commandment, he will not fulfill the commandments. In contrast, the wise son, although he wants to learn, ask questions, and satisfy his curiosity, he will not refrain from fulfilling the commandment until he has an answer. He will fulfill G-d’s commandment, he will do what he is told by his parents and teachers even without fully understanding the reason. But after the act, after the time of fulfilling the commandment, indeed he wants to and should deepen, learn, ask, and investigate why he does so.

Judaism indeed encourages curiosity, asking questions, and striving to reach the truth. But we must do this with humility and the understanding that we do not understand everything, and even when things seem unclear to us—it stems from our lack of understanding, and we must still fulfill the commandment of G-d. First and foremost, we must fulfill the commandment of the Almighty, and only later on ask the questions.

This is expressed not only in fulfilling the commandments between man and Hashem but also between man and his friend. A person needs to act to do good for his fellow, and to act promptly, and wait to ask questions afterward. Because if we wait until we receive answers to our questions—we might miss the opportunity.

Jews are indeed commanded to ask questions, but in order to be more effective Jews, many times we must first act—and leave the questions for later.

DID YOU KNOW?

We have held 6 shabbatons in synagogues throughout Toronto, with 2 more scheduled for this year.



מתחלה: Unity through Difference

RABBI CHAIM METZGER

PAST AVREICH AND CURRENT WEEKLY AUTHOR IN THE BEIT MIDRASH

WHY MUST WE MENTION OUR SHAMEFUL

past as idolaters in the middle of our national story? Why not simply start from our forefather Avraham, a monotheist who believed in G-d?

This question must be turned toward our great prophet and leader Yehoshua. Yehoshua took over from Moshe Rabeinu, the miracle worker who took slaves out of Egypt, turned them into a nation, and brought them to G-d's promised land. The Haggadah is quoting Yehoshua 24, Yehoshua's farewell speech. Yehoshua faces a nation that has just conquered most of the land of Israel and is transitioning into a new era. These soldiers conquered the land of Canaan and transformed it into the land of Israel but almost none of them were alive for the Exodus, of the many miracles that Moshe performed as the Jews left Egypt. One could simply say that this was to remind the people of their humble and potentially shameful past and never forget their duty to G-d.

Only two paragraphs ago, we saw the four sons being described, each with a very different perspective on what happened during Yetziat Mizrayaim as well as what they hope to receive.

Yehoshua leads a nation of millions. He is well aware of the variability of opinions and expectations amongst the tribes of Israel. If you open up Yehoshua 24 and keep reading until the end, you will notice some distinctions between the way Yehoshua tells it versus the account in Shemot. Chief among these is verse 14:

וְעַתָּה יִרְאוּ אֶת־ה' וְעָבְדוּ אֹתוֹ בְּתַמִּים וּבְאֵמֶת וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּעֵבֶר הַנְּהַר וּבְמִצְרַיִם וְעָבְדוּ אֶת־ה'.

“Now, therefore, revere G-d and render service with undivided loyalty; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve G-d.”

Yehoshua appears to be providing eyewitness testimony that even in Egypt while miracles were being performed left and right, G-d's hand was in full force—and yet there were still those amongst Bnei Yisrael who worshiped foreign gods. This is in fact seconded prophetically by Yechezkel (20:3-8).

On the other hand, the account in Shemot shows Bnei Yisrael following the commands of G-d, the omission of any verbal opposition, and the biblical description of Jews cooperating with Moshe (Shemot 12:27-28) in preparing the Korban Pesach. All of this suggests that the Jews did believe in G-d and were not idolaters.

There appears to have been a split among the Jews. Perhaps Bnei Yisrael was composed of many individual groups containing a wide range of reactions and perspectives. Some were certain of G-d's redemption, others vacillated due to doubts, and others were terrified of G-d and followed for fear of what could happen if they sinned.

But if that truly is the case, what made Bnei Yisrael worthy of being saved and becoming G-d's nation? What differentiated them from the Egyptians?

First, Bnei Yisrael are the descendants of ancestors who held a special connection to G-d, and with whom G-d made a covenant (ibid. 6:3). Second, Bnei Yisrael had called out to G-d while they were slaves (6:5). Third, G-d wished to send a message to the world with this Exodus (Yechezkel 20:9). Lastly, despite the differing levels of belief amongst Bnei Yisrael, all of them joined together in the first Korban Pesach in Egypt. Each and every one slaughtered sheep representing Egypt's god (Shemot Rabbah 16:2), spread its blood on the doorposts of their homes, roasted it over a fire, and sat down to eat it on that very night, exactly as G-d had commanded them (12:28).

We may not see a verbal reaction from the Jews while they were in Egypt, but the Jews, no matter their doubts, came together as one nation in service of G-d. This, despite all of the differences, is what defined Bnei Yisrael.

Every Seder night we retell the story of how we became a people. We cannot pretend to wash away differences between us overnight and act as if everything is hunky dory. We have feuded, bickered, and offended many of those around us in addition to testing G-d's patience and benevolence. Even those idolaters in Egypt fought brilliantly and courageously to conquer Israel and protect their brethren. Each unique individual has their backstory, motives, and challenges. We must not gloss over these differentiating factors. Instead, we must emphasize that no matter how many individual facets to our prism, united we make a nation whose celebration of G-d and our salvation at His Hands overcomes all boundaries.

DID YOU KNOW?

We publish Toronto Torah to over 200 e-recipients and 20 synagogues weekly!



ברוך שומר: A Blessing on a Mixed Reality

RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING

SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH EMERITUS, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

AFTER SINGING THAT DESPITE ALL THE travails the Jewish people have faced, it is the covenant between God and His people that has sustained them (*Ve-Hi She-Amda*—it is [the covenant] that stood), we thank God for safeguarding the covenant that He forged with Avraham. Surprisingly, however, the Haggadah cites a verse from the *Berit Bein Ha-Betarim*, the Covenant of the Parts, that includes elements for which we may not be thankful, namely the promise that the Jews would suffer in a foreign land.

He said to Avram, ‘Know well that your offspring will be foreigners in a land not theirs, and they will enslave them and afflict them for four hundred years. But also the nation whom they will serve, I will judge, and afterwards they will come out with great wealth. (Bereishit 15:13-4)

While we express our appreciation for God saving us, why celebrate His commitment to requiring us to suffer?

Several commentaries (Kol Bo, Ritva) dodge the question and interpret the thanks as applying only to the latter verse, namely God’s promise to judge our enemy and exact justice. Maharal focuses on the fact that God put a time-limit in the original promise. As such, no matter how badly we were treated, our enemies would not be able to destroy us, as the period in a foreign land had to end with our Exodus. Yet others (Shibbolei HaLeket, Maasei Hashem) focus on the tradition that God shortened the period in Egypt from the promised 400 years to 210, deducting the numerical value of *Ketz* (Kuf+Tzadi=100+90=190). The common

denominator between these approaches is that we only thank God for the good.

A contrasting tradition is cited from the Beit Midrash of Rashi that includes the negative in our thanks. Rashi invokes a general principle, that one must bless God for the good and ill. As it appears in the Mishnah (*Berachot* 9:5, Koren translation): “**One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad** that befalls him **just as he recites a blessing for the good** that befalls him, **as it is stated: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might”** (Deuteronomy 6:5)”

The Talmud offers two perspectives on this. First, it suggests that we should not differentiate between good and bad. However, this is rejected as we recite different blessings for the two. The Talmud thus concludes that while we articulate different blessings that acknowledge the divergent experiences, our attitude should be similar:

We learned in the Mishnah: **One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad** that befalls him just as he recites a blessing for the good that befalls him. The Gemara asks: **What** does it mean: **One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad just as for the good? If we say** this means that **just as one recites a blessing for a positive event** with the formula: **Who is good and does good, so too one recites a blessing for a calamity** with the formula: **Who is good and does good, didn’t we learn** in our mishna that **over good tidings one recites: Who is good and does good**, while **over bad tidings one recites: Blessed ... the true Judge?** Rather, **Rava said:** The mishna’s

statement **was only necessary** to instruct us **to accept** bad tidings **with** the same **joy** with which we accept good tidings, not to instruct with regard to which blessing to recite. (*Berachot* 60a, Koren translation)

Interestingly, however, in the Haggadah, we seem to follow the rejected initial suggestion, as we simply bless God for keeping his covenant, in both its positive and negative aspects. However, one understands the general principle (denying that evil exists, believing that all ill is for a purpose, that all will be good in the end, etc.) the application in the Haggadah is unique. We are thanking God for His covenant. We appreciate that our story as a people is part of a plan, where the relationship that we have with God determines the contours of the narrative. In this sense, the good and the bad, insofar as they are captured by the covenant cannot be split.

At the Seder, we note that in every generation we have enemies who try to destroy us and it is God, and His covenant, that ensures our survival. We are commanded to imagine that we have left Egypt so that we can integrate the lessons of that formative experience and find the strength to believe we will survive our current troubles. As we enter Pesach in the middle of a war, started by a tragedy that highlighted our continued vulnerability, as well as the desire of our enemies to destroy us, the Seder reminds us to place our story in the context of Jewish history. We acknowledge God’s covenant, with the good and bad that it entails, and place our faith in His promise that we will survive. As the Haggadah reminds us, it is that alone which is constant.

DID YOU KNOW?

We offer approximately 25 public or private classes for adults in person and via ZOOM each week.



והיא שעמדה: Collective Responsibility

RABBI SETH GRAUER

ROSH YESHIVA & HEAD OF SCHOOL, BNEI AKIVA SCHOOLS

HAVE WE EVER IN OUR LIFETIMES SAT AT

a Pesach Seder in which the paragraph of *Vehi SheAmda* has come to life like this year? That is the question so many of us are likely thinking. We may be sitting safely around our Seder table, but we are unfortunately watching while so many around the world continue to build their plans “to annihilate us.”

This passage helps us recognize and appreciate Hashem’s salvation of the Jewish people, not only from Egypt, but throughout the centuries. Throughout our long exile, whenever the Jewish people were in dire need of help, Hashem has been there to rescue and save us.

The mitzvah of Maggid is not just for the purpose of reminding us of Am Yisrael’s history, but to help us recognize and appreciate the special relationship between us and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, i.e. an eternal bond that will never be broken, no matter how much our enemies seek to destroy it.

Many of our commentators explain the opening word, “*Vehi*” (And it is this...) to refer to the previous paragraph, the theme of which is “*Brit Bein HaBetarim*” (The Covenant between the Parts). In this Brit, Hashem tells Avraham Avinu that our bond with Hashem will continue for all future generations.

The Sfat Emet has a beautiful thought and points out that our enemies always want to annihilate us, however, they often try hardest—“*Shelo echad bilvad*” when they see that we are fragmented and at war with each other. When we are not united we are at our weakest.

It is so sad to look at Jewish history and recognize that all too often it was our enemies who united us and that when the Jewish people experienced periods of tranquility, peace, prosperity and great success—we fought amongst ourselves in some of the worst ways.

Tonight is the time to remember that what unites us must remain greater than that which divides us. We will get past our current enemies and we will once again persevere, but we need to somehow find a way to stop the cycle and not resort to internal fighting, acrimony and hatred as soon as this immediate crisis is behind us.

We must all pray for our brothers and sisters in Israel to be able to live securely in their homes and that Judaism should continue to thrive and flourish in the world.

On this Seder night in particular, let us remember that *Kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh*. We will always remain responsible for each other.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks reminded us that

World Jewry is small, but the invisible strands of mutual responsibility mean that even the smallest Jewish community can turn to the Jewish people worldwide for help and achieve things that would be exceptional for a nation many times its size. When the Jewish people join hands in collective responsibility, they become a formidable force for good. (Rabbi Sacks, *Lessons in Leadership*, p. 180)

As we now raise our wine glass and thank Hashem for His divine protection—then, now and *IY”H* until Mashiach and beyond—let us each contemplate where we can improve and act in relation to Jewish unity. Can we speak more positively about certain types of Jews? Can we speak up more when people attack Israel? What can we do to encourage more unity in our families? In our community? In the world?

We saw the greatest *Chilul Hashem* on October 7th, but we have seen the great examples of *Kiddush Hashem* ever since and we must work very hard together to ensure that these examples of unity, love and togetherness continue and grow even stronger.

Chag Sameach.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hundreds of people attended “Tishrei in a Day” and “Haggada Night” in the north and south communities.



צא ולמד: A Surprising Destiny

RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH EMERITUS, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

“AND HE SOJOURNED THERE (DEVARIM 26:5)” — *This teaches that Yaakov did not descend to settle in Egypt, but to sojourn there, as it says: And he said to Pharaoh, we have come to sojourn in the land...*

In the Hebrew of Tanach, the verb for living in a place is often *shochein*. In Bereishit 14:13, Avraham was *shochein* in Elonei Mamrei; in Bereishit 26:2, Hashem told Yitzchak, “*sh’chon* in the land.” In Shemot 25:8, Hashem said He would be *shochein* in our midst, granting the name *Mishkan* to the Tabernacle where Hashem would be manifest among us. And so on.

On the other hand, the word *gar* often connotes transient residence. In Bereishit 23:4, Avraham tells the people of Chet that he is both *ger* and resident and their midst. In Bereishit 32:5, Yaakov describes his stay with Lavan with the word *garti*. And so the Torah’s word for a foreigner is *ger*.

Admittedly, there is some linguistic flexibility here; In Bereishit 26:3, right after telling Yitzchak “*sh’chon* in the land,” Hashem told him “*Gur* in this land.” But it is still striking that Tanach tells us in three separate passages that Yaakov’s family descended to Egypt not *lishkon* but *lagur*. In Bereishit 47:4, Yaakov’s sons tell Pharaoh, “We have arrived *lagur* in the land.” In Yeshayahu 52:4, Hashem states, “My nation descended to Egypt at first, *lagur* there.” And the passage recited by the Israeli who brings his first produce to the Beit HaMikdash reiterates that Yaakov only sojourned in Egypt, remaining a *ger*—a stranger. And so our Haggadah, quoting a midrash, observes that Yaakov did not intend to settle in Egypt, but only to sojourn there (*Sifri Devarim* 301).

The lesson in Hebrew and the insight into Yaakov’s thinking are interesting. But why does Yaakov’s change in plans matter for our Seder? What role is there in the Seder for Yaakov’s thwarted expectations?

One might read it as a warning against association with Egypt; even “sojourning” there is unsafe. Avraham descended to Egypt “to sojourn there (Bereishit 12:10)”, and Sarah was kidnapped. At the end of the first Beit HaMikdash, many Jews wished to side with Egypt against the invading Babylonians, and to find temporary shelter there. See Yirmiyahu 42-44, which includes repeated warnings not to descend to Egypt “to sojourn there.” And Yaakov thought he would sojourn in Egypt, and his family became enslaved there.

But we could also read Yaakov’s unexpected reversal as a more optimistic message, part of a set of unexpected and happy reversals in the Maggid portion of the Haggadah:

- Lavan meant “to uproot everything,” and yet we grew in number and gained wealth while in Aram.
- Our ancestors descended to Egypt as just 70 souls, and we became many like the stars at the sea.
- Pharaoh said, “Let us be wise with him, lest he become many,” but his plot was in vain as we continued to thrive.

The collective message of the Haggadah’s thwarted expectations is that Hashem has a plan for us, a destiny which we will fulfill regardless of anyone’s thoughts to the contrary. Avraham asked Hashem, “How can I know” that my descendants will receive the

Land of Israel? And Hashem responded with a promise that his children would endure slavery in Egypt, and would emerge with wealth. This is your destiny; it will happen, and Hashem will shape it. The plan does not need our cooperation; it will happen, regardless of what we do.

Beyond the story we tell in Maggid, we act out the theme of surprise in other aspects of the Seder:

- We perform rituals in unexpected ways—multiple dippings, leaning, hiding the afikoman, etc.—to inspire surprise and questions.
- We proclaim, “How unusual this night is!” (*Mah nishtanah*, as translated in *Aruch HaShulchan*, Orach Chaim 473:21)
- At the original Seder in Egypt we were instructed to eat “in haste” (Shemot 12:11), as though our exodus was a sudden surprise, even though we knew two weeks earlier precisely when we were leaving.
- We eat matzah on Pesach in part because Devarim 16:3 says we left in a rush, so that our matzah did not rise. But again—we knew we were leaving!

Hashem has established a great destiny for us. All our plans, like those of Yaakov, Lavan, Pharaoh, and the Jews who left Egypt, are subject to change toward that end. May we soon see the fulfillment of one more reversal predicted in the Haggadah: “This year we are here; next year we will be in the Land of Israel. This year we are here; next year we will be free people.”

DID YOU KNOW?

We ran our annual Tanach in a Day program that was attended by over 75 people from a broad section of the community.



עשר מכות: A Message for Us in the Makkot

RABBI JARED ANSTANDIG

MAGGID SHIUR, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

WHO IS THE TARGET OF THE 10 MAKKOT?

At first glance, this question is borderline ridiculous. Isn't it obvious that the Egyptians are the ones who suffer? Consider what Hashem says to Moshe at the burning bush, "I will send forth My hand and I will strike Egypt with all My wonders" (Shemot 3:20). Hashem explicitly states that His target will be Egypt.

Indeed, Radbaz in a responsa (II:813) remarks that in order for Pharaoh to learn his lesson, it must be that the Egyptians, and only the Egyptians, are targeted by the plagues. After all, "If the plagues were on Israel then what proof is there to Pharaoh that he should release Israel from his land?" If Israel suffers alongside Egypt, Pharaoh will fail to realize that his obstinance leads to the plagues.

Curiously, though, when the plagues actually play out, some of them mention that a particular plague does not impact Bnei Yisrael. For instance, concerning the plague of wild beasts the Torah states (Shemot 8:18) "On that day I will separate the land of Goshen, on which My people remain, so that there will not be any swarms of beasts there, so that you know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land." And again with pestilence, Moshe tells Pharaoh (Shemot 9:4), "And Hashem will separate between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and nothing will die from all that belongs to the Children of Israel." Such differentiation is not stated explicitly for earlier plagues such as of blood or frogs.

Commentaries are bothered by this incongruity. If some plagues stress that Bnei Yisrael

are spared, does that not indicate that they are not spared for the other plagues? Some commentaries, such as Ramban, explain that all plagues spare Bnei Yisrael. Yet, for some of them it is necessary to note this outright. Regarding the plague of wild beasts, for example, Ramban writes (Shemot 8:18),

Due to the fact that the first plagues were stationary, it was no wonder that they were confined to the land of Egypt and not in Goshen, [Israel's residence]. But this plague was a moving plague... It was natural that [the wild beasts] also come into the land of Goshen.... Therefore it was necessary for Him to say, "And I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen."

According to Ramban, all the plagues impacted the Egyptians exclusively. However, regarding a plague that, by its nature, *could have* harmed Bnei Yisrael, the Torah highlights that it struck only the Egyptians.

Ibn Ezra, however, differs in his understanding of these plagues. When discussing the first plagues Ibn Ezra argues, "In my opinion, the plagues of blood, frogs, and lice included both Egyptians and Hebrews ... And these three plagues were mildly harmful. But the plague of wild beasts was severely harmful. And there it distinguishes between Egyptians and Hebrews." According to Ibn Ezra, for the relatively minor plagues, Bnei Yisrael suffers alongside the Egyptians. Only for the more destructive plagues are Bnei Yisrael spared. And regarding these plagues the Torah states as such.

While Ibn Ezra's read is ardently faithful to the language of the text, it is philosophically and theologically puzzling. As Radbaz observed above, it would appear to be counter-productive to afflict Bnei Yisrael alongside Egyptians. What could be Hashem's motivation in doing this?

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, rabbi emeritus of Congregation Ahavath Torah in Englewood, NJ writes in *Unlocking the Haggada* that Hashem has a particular goal in mind in having some of the plagues target His people, too. He writes (page 118),

God does not want the Jewish nation to become a people so callous that they are capable of ignoring the pain of others, even their sworn enemies... The Israelites cannot remain untouched while surrounded by a sea of agony, They must endure a number of the plagues together with their taskmasters in order to feel a measure of their pain.

According to Rabbi Goldin, Hashem desires Bnei Yisrael to suffer along with the Egyptians so that they do not become dulled to their enemies' pain. Though the plagues are absolutely necessary, Hashem needs Bnei Yisrael to develop the attribute of empathy. Even against their brutal enslavers, Bnei Yisrael feel the pain of their suffering.

As we read the makkot and of Hashem's salvation, we recall that according to Ibn Ezra we too suffered from the plagues. A stark reminder of our duty of empathy towards others.

DID YOU KNOW?

We brought in 4 distinguished scholars to learn with and inspire the community.



רבי יהודה: The Makkot as Education

RABBI ADAM FRIEDMANN

AVREICH; RABBINIC ASSISTANT, CLANTON PARK SYNAGOGUE; 5776-5777

THE INTERJECTION OF RABBI YEHUDAH'S acrostic is jarring. Yes, it is true that one can represent the plagues in this way, but why do so? What is the meaning of Rabbi Yehudah's acrostic grouping? What message is it intended to convey?

The commentators on the Haggadah suggest several interpretations. However, I would like to focus on an approach which emerges directly from the Torah's description of the plagues themselves. A careful reading of the verses reveals that Rabbi Yehudah's groupings, and the messages behind them, are already spelled out in the text.

During the plagues three encounters between Moshe and Pharaoh are repetitive:

- “Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is coming out to the water... And say to him, “The Lord, the G-d of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say, “Let My people go that they may worship Me in the wilderness.” But you have paid no heed until now. Thus says the Lord, “By this you shall know that I am the Lord.” See, I shall strike the water in the Nile with the rod that is in my hand, and it will be turned into blood. (Shemot 7:14-17, JPS translation)
- “Early in the morning present yourself to Pharaoh, as he is coming out to the water, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord: Let My people go that they may worship Me. For if you do not let My people go, I will let loose swarms of wild beasts...But on that day, I will set apart the region of Goshen, where My people dwell, so that no swarms of wild beasts shall be there, that you may know that I the Lord am in the midst of the land. And I will make a distinction between My people and your people.” (Shemot 8:16-19)
- “Early in the morning present yourself to Pharaoh and say to him, “Thus says the Lord, the G-d of the Hebrews: Let My people go to worship Me. For

this time I will send all My plagues to your heart, and your courtiers, and your people, in order that you may know that there is none like Me in all the world. (Shemot 9:13-16, JPS translation)

In each of the descriptions, Moshe is instructed to meet Pharaoh in the morning, and in two of them, the meeting specifically occurs as Pharaoh goes out to the water. Each encounter occurs at the outset of the three sets of plagues that Rabbi Yehudah defines. Each confrontation also indicates an educational goal for the coming set of plagues. The plagues are not only punishments; they carry distinct messages for Pharaoh, his nation, and ultimately the world. These goals change with each set and require explanation. The Kli Yakar, expanding upon an interpretation of Abarbanel, explains each phrase. Here is his commentary, paraphrased:

- By this you shall know that I am the Lord: First, G-d showed His dominance within the domain of beliefs. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile god as their lifesource and creator. By striking the Nile, Hashem showed His power over that god and staked His claim as the true Creator.
- That you may know that I the Lord am in the midst of the land: Next, G-d showed the Egyptians that He does not only interact with humanity generally, without concern for the actions of individuals. Rather, He is “in the midst of the land” and recognizes the ethical character of man's actions. He differentiates between His people, the Jewish slaves, and their Egyptian masters.
- That you may know that there is none like Me in all the world: Abarbanel interprets this as a statement of the boundless extent of G-d's power. Not only is He greater than the Egyptian gods, He is more powerful than can possibly be imagined.

The Kli Yakar (Shemot 7:17) disputes this reading, arguing that even at this late point, Pharaoh believed that though G-d was great, there were domains which He did not control. Therefore, G-d shows Pharaoh that there is none like him in “all the world.” There is no place beyond His reach.

Taking a markedly different approach, Midrash Sechel Tov (9:14) interprets the final educational message as adding quality, not quantity, to the previous ones:

“For this time I will send all My plagues to your heart”: What does this teach us? Couldn't He destroy them with one plague? Rather, He is saying that this time I will send the recollection of all the plagues and punishments that I have struck you with [thus far] to your heart. Because with this plague all of them will arise in your consciousness and you will remember them. [It will be] as though they are all sent to you now [at once].

Often, we understand something intellectually but fail to internalize it. The first two rounds of plagues forced Pharaoh to admit, at a rational level, that G-d exists and to recognize His power. In the final round, Hashem reached into the hearts of Pharaoh and his countrymen, and compelled them to internalize the meaning of the entire saga of the plagues. Unable to hide behind rationalizations any longer, they were forced not only to accept, but to deeply believe the reality of Hashem and begin to look upon the world from that perspective.

We can now answer our initial questions. Rabbi Yehudah's acrostic is, in fact, an interpretation of the sequence of the plagues. They embodied a distinct educational program intended to instill within the Egyptians a knowledge of G-d. This message was not for the Egyptians alone. It was for us and, ultimately, the whole world to internalize as part of the message of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

DID YOU KNOW?

We held an uplifting Tehillim night of learning and praying attended by 200 people.



מצה: Achieving Goals in the Face of Adversity

RABBI NOAH SONENBERG
DEAN, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

WHEN DESCRIBING THE MITZVAH OF matza, the Haggadah tells us that the reason we eat it is

That our ancestors' dough was not yet able to rise, before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed [Himself] to them and redeemed them, as it is stated (Exodus 12:39); "And they baked the dough which they brought out of Egypt into matza cakes, since it did not rise; because they were expelled from Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they made for themselves provisions."

The suggested reason seems strange for several reasons.

1. We know that the commandment to eat matza preceded their rushed departure from Egypt. We see that the Jewish people were commanded to eat matza with the Paschal Lamb (Shemot 12:8) and that they were also commanded to eat matza for seven days (12:15). These commandments were given to them as they prepared for the final plague of the killing of the first born while still slaves and there was no way for them to know in advance about the rush they would experience when they departed.
2. According to the opinion that our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov kept the mitzvot in advance of the revelation at Sinai we see specifically that Lot who was raised in the home of Avraham served the angels matza since it was Pesach when they arrived (Bereishit, Rashi 19:3). If the only reason to eat

matza was to commemorate the rush of the Jewish people as they left Egypt then it would be odd that centuries in advance of this exodus that there would be a need to eat matza.

3. We see that the flour offerings in the temple service needed to be matza and not leavened bread (with the only exception being the showbreads on Shavuot). If matza only has religious significance due to the historical events there doesn't seem to be any need to have it used in the temple service.
4. Anyone who has made matza knows that it takes extreme focus and attention to make sure that the dough doesn't accidentally rise and become leavened. If the Jewish people took dough with them when they left, the fact that they were rushing and likely distracted with concern to take all their family and belongings would likely have resulted in them eating bread and not matza.

It seems clear then that matza has religious significance that is beyond the commemoration of an historical event. The Rabbis see matza as a spiritual food and bread as a food that represents our evil inclination. This is seen in the Gemara in masechet *Brachot* 17a:

After Rabbi Alexandri prayed, he would say the following: Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that our will is to perform Your will, and what prevents us? The yeast in the dough.

Rashi comments and explains that the yeast in the dough is a euphemism for our evil

inclination that is within our hearts and over inflates us.

While there is a compelling reason to argue that the reason for matza is due to its spiritual significance, the text of the Torah seems to be clear that it is based on historical events. A possible resolution to this conflict requires a different translation of the text in 12:39. The word 'ki' in Hebrew has many meanings and the classic translation brought above uses the meanings 'since' and 'because'. However, other possible translations of the word are 'that' (Devarim 8:3) and 'even though' (Chizkuni's explanation of Bereishit 48:14). With these alternate translations the text reads as:

And they baked the dough which they brought out of Egypt into matza cakes, that did not rise; **even though** they were expelled from Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they made for themselves provisions.

The meaning of the text now is telling us that despite the challenges of being rushed the Jewish people made an extra effort to make sure that they had matza and no leavened bread. This would be due to their desire to fulfill the command that preceded their exodus. The Torah is telling us of their love of mitzvot that they worked to fulfill even in challenging situations.

Matza has spiritual significance that is independent of the historical events of the exodus. Perhaps the historical event that we commemorate and try to replicate is the passion they had for following the will of Hashem and the effort they were prepared to invest in order to achieve their goal.

DID YOU KNOW?

We have chavrutot with community members both in person in our Beit Midrash as well as on zoom.



בכל דור ודור: Remembering Our Struggles

KINNERET WITTY
WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH

THE PESACH SEDER IS A TIME THAT JEW-ish people around the world gather together with their families, friends, and community to tell a story that has been retold by generations of Jewish people. The miracles that were done for Bnei Yisrael at the time of the Exodus are unlike anything else to have ever been experienced, and the redemption itself was so momentous that we are told to remember it every single day in our prayers.

Of course, Pesach itself is a time set aside for us as a people to remember the redemption from Egypt and all that was done for us from the Ten Plagues to the splitting of the sea and everything in between. In fact, one of the focal points in the Pesach Seder is the moment in the Maggid section where we read the following:

In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt.

There is a lot of ink spilled by the various commentators about what this means to the modern day Jew. Obviously we were not there to personally experience the Exodus from Egypt, so how are we supposed to take this lesson into our modern day world? How can we, living in the world we live in today, follow through on this sentiment and truly feel this way to the fullest?

To better understand the implications of this on us today we have to look further into the verse. It would seem upon first glance, that the verse itself is referring to the generation that would immediately follow the generations of the exodus from Egypt. However they too, did not experience the redemption themselves. In addition, the Haggadah uses the words "When I went forth from Egypt" but those that would be saying it in generations following the

miracles would not have been the ones that actually went forth from Egypt.

Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein (1860-1941), in his commentary on the Haggadah known as the *Baruch She'amar* (also known for his commentary on the Torah known as the *Torah Temima*), gives a particularly interesting insight into this verse. He suggests that yes, the Haggadah does use the phrase "when I went forth from Egypt..." However, the text also uses the phrasing "You shall tell your children saying..." There is the seemingly extra word of "saying" in this sentence. Rabbi Epstein teaches us that the wording might be there to indicate that these stories should specifically be told to all of those that did not experience the Exodus themselves, all the future generations of the Jewish people to come, forever.

In addition to this, the Gemara, in the tractate of *Brachot* (54a) tells us of a mishna where we learn of a blessing, to recite when we come to a place where a miracle was previously performed for the people of Israel. "One who sees a place where miracles occurred on Israel's behalf recites: Blessed... Who performed miracles for our forefathers in this place". This mishna serves as an indicator for us that it is important to continue to give thanks for miraculous occurrences that our ancestors experienced.

The Haggadah compiled by the Marbeh Lisaper, otherwise known as Yedidiah Tiah Weil (1721-1805), reads this mishna and applies it to this section of the Pesach Seder. He says, when we read here that it is important for descendants to give thanks for miracles that their forefathers experienced, this knows no end. This means that forever and ever, Jewish people will be singing praises to thank Hashem for the miracles he performed for

Bnei Yisrael in Egypt and on their journey through the desert. In addition, he states that really in this case, it is not just a way of showing thanks for the kindness done for our forefathers, but we too are direct beneficiaries of this mighty kindness. As it says in the Haggadah, without the kindness done for the generation of Jewish people that left Egypt, we might have still been slaves in Egypt.

The Maaseh Nissim, Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum (from Kalush, Ukraine, 1760-1832), adds to this idea. He mentions that while we may not have personally experienced the Exodus, we are still able to say that because our ancestors were redeemed, we have the ability and privilege to be Jewish and to continue living our lives in accordance with the Torah and Jewish Values.

Many people like to discuss and debate what it means for one to be able to feel as though they themselves have left Egypt. There are many avenues of thought, many mindfulness exercises suggested for people to attempt to get into the mindset of one who has experienced redemption. However, if I may, I believe that the above offers a simple and accessible interpretation for us all.

We, thank G-d, cannot relate to being slaves in Egypt but it is possible for us all to understand the richness of our history. We can all know what it means to be thankful for the rituals and traditions that we learned from those before us and will, with G-ds help, have the honour of passing on to those that come after us. We have to remember the struggles and sacrifices of those that came before us to better appreciate the privilege that we have to live proudly as Jewish people. We have to take this time of reflection with us and use it as a reminder that it is, without a shadow of a doubt, geshmack to be a yid.

DID YOU KNOW?

We offer a monthly class on Bay Street.



הלל: The Revelation of Life

LILY SMOLACK
STUDENT, ULPANAT OROT

DURING THE SEDER, TEHILLIM 114 IS recited—the chapter that addresses the journey of Yetziat Mitzrayim, the “unnatural” miracle of *Kriyat Yam Suf*, and acts as the fundamental principle by which Hashem runs our world, through the use of nature. This word, *nature*, encompasses the metaphysical truth, allowing humanity and our limited minds to process the gift of life we were given. Yet, there is more that lies beneath the surface of nature, as it is written, “Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob ... who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flinty rock into a fountain” (Tehillim 114:8). Beyond the known—the physicality of our world—lays a deeper truth, the truth of Hashem and how He causes the earth to tremble with his divineness, how He accomplishes the miraculous, influencing the laws of nature to perform the unperformable—turning stone to water and parting seas. Performing the unperformable, the surface of nature was bent during the significant event of *Kriyat Yam Suf*—the location of which was a complete detour in Bnei Yisrael’s route towards Israel. Herein lies a question: what was the purpose of *Kriyat Yam Suf*? In this miracle, we see the juxtaposition of the natural and the spiritual, which encompasses the miracle’s significance, its purpose.

The water cycle is essential for the life of every living organism. The process of evaporating water condensing into clouds as it is moved by wind in order to rain and refill the streams and rivers that flow towards the ocean is remarkable and has enormous power. Revisiting the miracle of *Kriyat Yam Suf*, the use of wind and water is prominent. “Moshe held his arm over the sea, and Hashem drove back the sea with a strong east wind all that night, and turned

the sea into dry ground ... The waters were split” (Exodus 14:21). Similar to the incorporation of wind in the water cycle, Hashem found it necessary to incorporate wind into His miracle—wind, which influenced the form of water. Starting with the tangible aspect of this idea, the use of wind caught the attention of many great scholars whose interpretations allude to the physicality of the “wind.” Sforno accords that the mud on the bottom of the sea had been frozen by the “east wind”. The Ibn Ezra comments that, “Even while Israel was crossing, the wind did not cease.” Rashbam suggests, “Hashem used natural means, i.e. an east wind which always brings dryness and on occasions dries out ponds and rivers.” These scholars further add to the concept of the miracle’s tangibility—the wind’s natural, yet miraculous, job of assisting the miracle of the water and allowing the Jewish people to walk across the sea. Yet, why is it that the wind’s physicality is so prevalent? This event is known as one of the most nature-defying miracles! The following explains this very question.

There is a significance in the term “an east wind.” As mentioned earlier, various commentators focus on the physical job of this “east wind,” the way in which it performed through, “natural” means. In contrast, in Bereshit at the very beginning of creation, wind is referred to as “רוח אֱלֹהִים”, a wind from G-d, or the spirit of G-d. It appears that in Bereshit, the focus was the spirituality of the wind, rather than the physical nature of wind. Perhaps, a deeper understanding exists. “the earth was a vacant void, darkness was on the surface of the deep ... and a Heavenly wind was moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). The Rashbam begins to say that this wind was *blowing* on the surface of the

water, and this wind is needed for what is written: “God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be collected to one place and let the dry land be seen’; and so it was” (Genesis 1:9). Rashbam continues “the water was gathered by the force of wind, just as the Red Sea split and dry ground appeared.” It is revealed when reading this commentary of the Rashbam that the job of the “east wind” was identical to the job of the “Divine wind”; the two winds, the physical and the spiritual, are the same. Connecting the two commentaries of Rashbam, perhaps it is through this reasoning that “Hashem used natural means” to assist the water to perform a miraculous revelation for the people, to reveal that there are indeed no limits to nature and life. It is written in the Tehillim 114, “The sea saw them and fled, Jordan ran backward.” Rashi comments: “the Jordan turned backward because all the water of Creation split.” Bnei Yisrael had a spiritual awakening as it is revealed that the miracle of *Kriyat Yam Suf* was not simply a miracle of convenience for the Jews; rather, it was the working of Hashem’s hand splitting apart the natural order of the world, the seas of wonders, to display the *truth* of existence. Once we left Egypt, once we underwent the revelation of a lifetime during the splitting of the sea; we gained the spiritual role as the Jewish nation, the role of understanding the *truth* of life—as it is written, “When Israel went forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech ... Judah became His holy one; Israel, His dominion” (Tehillim 114:1-2). Let us remember that the root of our survival, of our existence, is from Hashem. Let us head into this Pesach with the mindset of accepting the fact that nature, under the control of Hashem, indeed can defy its limits, and so can we.

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כורך: Yocheleohoo! What We Can Learn from Hillel's Sandwich

R' EZER DIANA

MAGGID SHIUR, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

GROWING UP, THE SECTION OF KORECH

was always fascinating to me, especially when we had our Seder together with my paternal grandfather and namesake, Joel Diana ז"ל. The Italian custom is to recite the following passage prior to *Korech*:

זכר למקדש כהלל הזקן שהיה כורכן ואוכלן בבת אחת לקיים מה שנאמר על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו

A commemoration for the Temple, like Hillel the Elder, who would wrap them and eat them at once, to fulfill what it says “upon matzot and bitter herbs shall they eat it.”

My grandfather's practice, which has, Baruch Hashem, been passed down from generation to generation, was to recite the final word with quite a flourish, “yocheleohoo-hoo,” which definitely stood out in my mind. However, I believe there is more to this custom than just another Seder-night practice intended to “make the children ask.”

I had always assumed that Hillel, who indeed lived at the time of the Beit Hamikdash, made a really awesome laffa-style “wrap” with some of those floppy Sephardic matzot wrapped around juicy lamb meat with some lettuce—yum! The “**them**” expressed in the passage above then refers to the three central mitzvot of Pesach, Matzah and Marror, which are already highlighted by Rabban Gamliel earlier in the Haggadah. When we do our *Korech*, we feel the loss of the central ingredient, the Korban Pesach, as a “*zecher lechurban*,” a commemoration which highlights what we are missing.

However, after further research, I discovered that in fact, according to a number of preeminent authorities, this was not Hillel's practice at all! Rambam (*Hilchot Chametz*

Umatzah 8:6) writes that the practice in the times of the Beit haMikdash was actually to recite a blessing over the matzah and marror together “*Baruch ... asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al achilat matzot umerorim*” and to eat them by themselves prior to consuming the meat! Even Ra'avad, who disagrees with Rambam on the law, agrees that this was the opinion and practice of Hillel.

What could possibly be the motivation for such a strange practice? If one had all of the three central pieces of Pesach, Matzah, and Marror in front of them, why not eat them together, or, alternatively, all separately. Why would they eat Matzah and Marror together, but Pesach only afterwards on its own?

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (*Meishiv Davar* 1:32), in a letter to the famed Rabbi Shlomo Hakohen of Vilna, explains this by highlighting a difference between the way the Torah describes the first Pesach, “*Pesach Mitzrayim*,” and the way it prescribes the eating of the Korban Pesach for future generations, “*Pesach Dorot*.” Regarding *Pesach Mitzrayim*, the Torah writes (Shemot 12:8):

ואכלו את הבשר בלילה הזה צלי אש ומצות על מרורים יאכלוהו

And they shall eat the meat on this night; fire-roasted and Matzot, upon bitter herbs shall they eat it.

However, regarding *Pesach Sheni*, which the Netziv identifies as the practice for *Pesach Dorot*, the Torah makes a slight change in language, and writes (Bamidbar 9:11):

על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו

Upon matzot and bitter herbs shall they eat it.

In Egypt, explains the Netziv, there were

two equal central mitzvot—the Pesach and the Matzah. But for *Pesach Dorot*, the Korban Pesach took centre stage; it was eaten alone, on its own high level, with two less-important mitzvot, namely the mitzvot of Matzah and Marror, as secondary to it. Therefore, it is only logical that these two mitzvot were performed together in the times of the Mikdash as relics of the past actions—our bitter slavery and our quick baking of Matzot as we left Egypt. But G-d's protection remained central, and separate from those two, which is why the main mitzvah, Korban Pesach, was eaten on its own.

Nowadays, in exile, it seems that we have given up on the Korban Pesach so much that at the start of the meal, we place the Matzah back on the centre stage (alone), and make the Marror secondary to it. That's why we first consume Matzah with a special beracha, and afterwards have some Marror. Hillel's custom comes to remind us that we yearn for a time when the Matzah and Marror will both be eaten together, equally secondary, and no longer will the Matzah be the highlight, but in its place, we will have the Korban Pesach, reminding us of Hashem's ever-watchful eye and care for His Nation.

Although he was not likely aware of this passage in Rambam, nor the explanation of the Netziv, my grandfather could not have been more correct in his custom. Hillel was not coming to emphasize the Matzah and Marror, but rather, the Yochelehu—the “it” that we would primarily eat, the Korban Pesach. May we soon merit a Pesach on which the Matzah and Marror become secondary relics of the past, and we can truly enjoy eating the Korban Pesach which will remind us not only of our redemption from Egypt, but also the Final Redemption, Amen!

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שולחן עורך: Living in the Eternal

RABBI BARUCH WEINTRAUB

RABBI, MEVASER ZION SYNAGOGUE

SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH 5771-5774

THE SEDER'S MEAL POSES A SERIOUS problem. We tend to see the Seder night as an opportunity to communicate to our children the great tradition of the genesis of our people. This can be done in many different ways—a direct telling of the story, attempts to wake the child to ask questions, and use of pedagogic means such as the matzah and maror.

Alas, the place of the meal in all of this remains unclear. Is it part of the education process? If yes, in what ways? By adding bits of Torah during the meal? The question has become even stronger since the time when, due to our sins, the Beit haMikdash was destroyed. The meal, lacking its epicenter—the Pesach lamb—seems to be empty of any substantive meaning. Many families, who are not able to resolve this question, delay the meal until almost midnight, and then rush through it in order to reach the end time for eating the Afikoman. That cannot be what the meal is supposed to be. How can we redeem the Seder meal?

One answer can be found in Rabbi Soloveitchik's book of sermons on Pesach, *Festival of Freedom*. In the book's first essay, Rabbi Soloveitchik confronts this question from a slightly different angle. He explains that man has evolved two major ways to redeem the animalistic act of eating: the Greek way, which focuses on the Aesthetics of the meal, and the Jewish way. The latter, he elaborates, is focused on inviting G-d to partake in the meal. That is accomplished by two complementary acts: one is the act of extension and generosity, in which we invite others to join in our meal; the second is a move of withdrawal and sacrifice, in which we retreat from our positions of strength. The Seder incorporates both.

Rabbi Soloveitchik's words, are, of course, highly illuminating and inspiring. However, something is left wanting. Rabbi Soloveitchik's presentation is of the Seder meal as the ideal human meal, but the connection to the Exodus story and the night of Pesach remains somewhat vague. Perhaps we may suggest a way in which the meal can become part of the general experience of the Seder night.

In a sense, the meal is stationed in the middle of the Seder: before it comes the first part of the *Hallel*, concluding with the blessing of *Gaal Yisrael*; after it (immediately after *Birkat HaMazon*) comes the second part of the *Hallel*, concluding with the blessing of *Yishtabach*. Why was the *Hallel* split into two? And what is the meaning of having our meal just in the middle of it?

A possible answer to this question may be found in a mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:6). This mishnah brings a disagreement between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai regarding which chapters of *Hallel* should be said before and after the meal. According to Beit Shammai, only the first chapter should be recited before the meal, while according to Beit Hillel the first two chapters are to be recited. Based on Abarbanel (commentary to the Haggadah), I would like to suggest the following interpretation of this disagreement:

The first chapter of *Hallel* speaks about slaves being set free, "He Who lifts the pauper up from the dust..." This is parallel to the state of the Jewish people just before leaving Egypt, when they were already freed from slavery, but they still stood in Egypt, eating the Pesach lamb, awaiting the command to go. The second chapter of *Hallel* speaks about leaving

Egypt, when "the sea saw and fled". The next chapters speak about our prayers for a better future, "Not for us, Hashem, not for us, but for Your name give honour".

It seems that Beit Shammai sees the Seder meal as a reconstruction of the Egyptian Pesach meal. Thus, they say only the first chapter of *Hallel* before the meal, capturing the exact mood of the Israelites when eating their last meal in Egypt.

Beit Hillel, on the other hand, read the second chapter of *Hallel* before the meal as well. With that, they finish the redemption from Egypt, and they can conclude with the blessing, "Blessed are You, our G-d, who redeemed our nation." The meal, then, is not a reconstruction of some past event; rather, it is a meal of present redemption, a festival of the completely redeemed, an event celebrating the here and now.

Of course, Beit Hillel will agree that the redemption from Egypt was not the final one; many prayers for the future are still needed, as presented in the second half of the *Hallel*. But for one minute (or half an hour), that is pushed aside. For this minute, suspended in time between past and future, the diners partake in a meal of redemption.

This idea explains fully and forcefully the role of the meal in the Seder night. As Rabbi Soloveitchik said, this meal is the ideal meal. But the meal of the Seder night is not a model for other nights. It is present for the sake of itself, celebrating everything that G-d gave us. The meal should not be a neglected part of our Seder night; it should stand proudly at the centre.

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We run night Seder 5 nights a week in our home Beit Midrash at Yeshivat Or Chaim.



אחד מי יודע: Who Knows Eleven

R' IDAN RAKOVSKY

MAGGID SHIUR, BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

“ECHAD MI YODEA” (WHO KNOWS ONE)

stands as one of the most beloved songs in the Jewish tradition, eagerly anticipated by Jewish families worldwide as they sing this thirteen-verse poem. Believed to have been composed around the 10th century, it became officially linked with Pesach in the 14th century and was first printed in the Prague Haggadah (1590). Despite its popularity, the authorship of this cherished chant remains unknown.

The poem describes thirteen different motifs and principles of Jewish faith, from the unity of the one G-d to the thirteen attributes of G-d. Rabbi Yaakov Etlinger (19th century), known as the *Minchat Ani*, explains that the poem's journey begins and ends with one, as thirteen represents the numerical value of “Echad”: Aleph (1) + Chet (8) + Dalet (4) = 13.

Focusing on the 11th verse, “Who knows eleven? I know eleven: eleven are the stars,” we delve into its significance. What do these eleven stars symbolize? Where in Jewish texts do we find reference to eleven stars, and why are they among the thirteen significant motifs of the Jewish faith?

One explanation is offered by the *Maase Nissim* (18th century). He emphasizes the influence one has with his deeds on the natural order: good deeds enhance favourable natural conditions, while sins, G-d forbid, can lead to adverse outcomes (see for example *Devarim* 11:13-17). The stars, according to the *Maase Nissim*, represent G-d's cosmic guidance of nature, and by declaring “I know,” one acknowledges their own role in safeguarding our world beneath those stars through virtuous deeds and mitzvot.

Another perspective comes from Rabbi Tovle Bondi (18th century), who views the stars as a representation of the blessing bestowed upon Avraham's descendants: “I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as the stars of heaven...” (*Bereshit* 22:17). Some interpret this as a promise of multitudes, likening Avraham's offspring to the countless stars in the sky (see *Bamidbar Rabbah* 2, 12), while others see it as a reference to the quality of his descendants, whose wisdom will shine brightly like the stars above (see *Natziv* and *Kli Yakar* on *Bereshit* 22:17).

While thought-provoking, these explanations elucidate the symbolism of the stars but not the significance of the number eleven.

A renowned reference to the number eleven in the context of stars can be found in Yosef's dreams. In his second dream, Yosef tells his brothers, “..Look, I have had another dream: And this time, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me” (*Bereshit* 37:9). Many have thus interpreted the eleven stars in “*Echad Mi Yodea*” as alluding to Yosef's dream.

This interpretation poses two challenges. Firstly, what is the significance of Yosef's dream that warrants its inclusion among the thirteen essential concepts of Judaism? Secondly, if the eleven stars represent Yosef's brothers, who would later become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, it duplicates the subsequent verse in the song, which addresses the twelve tribes.

A potential resolution to these challenges can be derived from midrashic teachings (*Lekach Tov*, *Bereshit* 37:21). The midrash recounts

how Reuven, Yosef's eldest brother, expresses gratitude for being included among the eleven stars in Yosef's dream, leading him to intervene and save Yosef from his brothers' plot to kill him. Reuven, worried that his sin with Bilhah (*Bereshit* 35:21-22) might disqualify him from his rightful place within the family, recognizes through Yosef's dream that even with his transgressions, he remains part of the family.

However, when Yosef disappears from the pit, Reuven cries, “The boy is gone, and where shall I go?” (*Bereshit* 37:30), indicating that without the fulfillment of Yosef's dream, Reuven lacks proof of his inclusion among the stars. Ultimately, the dream comes true, and Reuven, despite his sin, is counted among the stars.

This concept is beautifully articulated by Rabbi Yoram Eliyahu from Machon Meir in Israel: “Only after it is clarified that even the sinning Jew is part of Israel can we achieve the unity of the nation of the twelve tribes, expressed by the next line in the poem.”

We can therefore suggest that the eleven stars in the poem serve as a reminder of the importance of unity within the Jewish people. Without embracing every individual as part of our family, we cannot hope to forge a truly united nation dedicated to serving one G-d and celebrating our redemption from the bondage of Egypt.

May this *dvar Torah* serve to the *Ilui Neshama* of Rav Yoram Eliyahu's son, Sergeant First Class (Res.) Yedidya Eliyahu z”l, who was killed in the Gaza Strip on November 3rd, 2023, during the war.

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חַד גַּדְיָא: Of Goats and Unintended Consequences

RABBI YAIR MANAS

AVREICH; RABBINIC ASSISTANT, CLANTON PARK SYNAGOGUE; 5772-5773

MANY OF US END THE CANONIZED PORTION of the Haggadah with the song *Chad Gadya*¹. This poem, of unknown origin, is assumed to be an adaptation of a children's nursery rhyme that was incorporated into the text of the Haggadah in Germany in the Middle Ages.² The poem tells the tale of a poor goat that was eaten by a cat, and the ensuing chain of events that all started with an unnamed father purchasing the goat. As the last text to be read at the Seder, what is the message that *Chad Gadya* imparts?

Many of the commentaries written regarding this poem focus on its symbolism. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks suggests that the father, G-d, purchased the kid, the Jewish people, by redeeming them from Egypt. Each of the subsequent animals is a reference to a nation that subjugated and oppressed the Jewish people, from Assyria in the times of Tanach up to the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The message of *Chad Gadya*, suggests Rabbi Sacks, is a "prayer" that G-d will "help us win a victory over the forces of death," and a "conviction" that "together we can start to make the world that ought to be."

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, in an article in the 2006 Yeshiva University Pesach To Go³, presents three other symbolic interpretations of *Chad Gadya*.

1. Rabbi Yaakov Emden explains that the poem is a reference to the downward slide of a person's soul when a person does not abide by the Torah.
2. Rabbi Yonatan Eybuschutz explains that the poem explains G-d's up and down relationship with the Jewish people. For example, the fire burning the stick is symbolic of the burning of the Beit haMikdash, while the water is symbolic of *Torah Shebe'al Peh*.
3. Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Chatam Sofer) explains the elements of the poem as various laws relating to the Korban Pesach. As noted by Rabbi Brander, these approaches "share one common denominator, focusing on the idea of redemption."

I'd like to suggest another approach. Perhaps there is no intended symbolism to any of the animals, and the poem really

is meant to be taken at face value. Indeed, it does not appear that any creature does anything wrong in the poem, such that we would symbolically interpret its actions in a negative way. Rather, each animal and creature merely does what it is supposed to do. A dog bites, a fire burns, an ox drinks, and a slaughterer slaughters.

The purpose of reciting this poem at the end of the Seder is to impress on us the relevance of our actions. Often, we set whole sagas in motion with a small act, and without even being aware of it. It may be suggested that had the father not bought the goat, the whole chain of events would not have happened. The parting message of the Seder is to be careful with our actions, for our actions can and do have far-reaching, and often unintended, consequences. Thus, after re-experiencing our national redemption at the Seder, we conclude the Seder with a poem to remind ourselves that in addition to being part of a great Nation, we are also great individuals, via the declaration that "I matter, and my actions matter."

¹ Others continue on to say Shir HaShirim. After the text portion of the Haggadah is completed, there is still an obligation of וכל המרבה וכל המשובח—extending the discussion.

² The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah pg. 133

³ Available at: http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/723407/Rabbi_Kenneth_Brander/An_Analysis_Of_Had_Gadya

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