



1

מגיד

## Maggid: Forming a Bond

**Q:** The Haggadah uses the word Maggid (“speaking”) to describe the mitzvah of recounting the Exodus tonight. This is based on the verse, “והגדת לבנך” – “you shall tell your son”

(שמות יגה). Why does the Haggadah use this term rather than “sippur” – recounting, based on the verse, “ולמען תספר באזני בנך” – “and in order that you may recount in the ears of your son”

(שמות יג)?

**What is the difference between Maggid and sippur?**

The word maggid is closely related to the word agudah (“a bundle”) – a connected group of individual items. The type of speech implied by the word maggid is one which binds together the speaker and listener. The purpose of the Seder is not only to convey to our children information about historical events, it is to bind our children to us and to their pasts. Tonight, we must connect with our children. We must be responsive to their questions and converse with each child according to his or her level. The obligation of the Seder is not simply to impart information, it is to bond with our children. For only through bonding with their forebears will our children feel a true sense of connection with their heritage and their nation.



## A Cathartic Experience

**Q: What is the purpose of Sippur Yitzias Mitzrayim?**

The gemara quotes a passuk "Da'agas B'lev Eish Yisichena One interpretation of the passuk is: If a person is 'pressed,' he should tell his problems to other people. The word pesach is actually a contraction of two words --- peh such, the mouth that speaks. Sometimes a problem can loom larger than life, and being able to put the problem into words is a method of controlling and confining it. Addressing and discussing a problem is the first step towards the cure. Sippur Yitzias Mitzrayim is our way of extricating ourselves from the pains and horrors of our slavery.

Gemara Yuma 75a

ואת ערום וערוד

**Yet thou are naked and bare...**

**Q: Is this not redundant? How can one be in a state which is more uncovered than naked? What more is bare adding that naked does not already imply?**

If you are naked you are not wearing clothes. If you are bare than you have lost all shame, and you no longer feel embarrassed in being naked. Albeit someone is naked, nonetheless he might wish he were wearing clothes. The Bal Haggadah is revealing to us the level which we had stooped to in Egypt. We did not even feel shame in being naked and exposed.



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## היא לחמא עניא: Beginning in Aramaic

**Q: Why does the Haggadah begin in Aramaic? The reason cannot be because Aramaic was the spoken language at the time the Haggadah was written. If that was the reason then the entire Haggadah should have been written in Aramaic? Why recite most of the Haggadah in a language the listeners do not understand? That would hardly be a fulfillment of “And you shall tell your son” (שְׂמַעְתָּ יְגִידָה, שמות יג, ח)?**

Aramaic was the language of the people of Aram. The Midrash relates Aram to “ramai” – trickster, manipulator. When our forefather, Yitzchok, took Rivka as his wife, the verse refers to her as “the daughter of Besuel the **Aramean** of Paddan **Aram**, the sister of Lavan the **Aramean**” (בראשית כה, כ). Why the triple emphasis on her Aramean background, all of which the Torah already stated?

The answer is that the Torah is not simply stating that Rivka was righteous in spite of her sinister and manipulative background. To the contrary, it is stating precisely why she was suited to become Yitzchok’s wife. To be a good manipulator, as Besuel and Lavan were, one must understand the perspective of others. He must know what makes his victim tick, what are his vulnerabilities, and how to take advantage of them. Rivka was also able to understand others, but rather than using this ability to the detriment of others, she used it to perform acts of kindness – to give others what they truly needed.

Thus, Aramaic is the language of those who are able to see the other person’s perspective. The Haggadah is written in question and answer format. To truly and successfully impart information, one must understand both the level and needs of the questioner. (This also explains why the Talmud, which is in question and answer format, is written in Aramaic). These few introductory words (היא לחמא עניא) set the tone for the evening.

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## הא לחמא עניא Guest Of Honor

הא לחמא עניא ...בל דכפין ייתי יכיל  
Let Any of the Needy Come and Eat

**Q:** In Maggid, the fifth segment of the seder, we invite any impoverished person who wishes to join our seder. Is this not a little late to be inviting people? Most people prepare for their seder weeks in advance, and now you decide to invite people? Additionally, you already made Kiddush and anyone partaking in the seder is certainly obligated in reciting it. Why, then, do we wait until now to invite the needy, shouldn't we invite them before we start the seder?

We make this declaration to inform everyone around the table that each person is a guest of honor. This is not a sincere invitation. Only a host or a guest of honor can invite people to a party. Our welcoming people at the seder is our way of saying "I am a host." The purpose is to make all of us feel comfortable in asking questions and 'speaking up,' which after all, is an integral part of the seder. The seder should not revolve around the thoughts and ideas of one person, rather everyone should be involved in Sippur Yitzias Mitzrayim. Now as we are about to begin Maggid, the portion of the seder relating to Sippur Yitzias Mitzrayim, we encourage everyone to feel like hosts and partake in the discussion.

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## Owning Our Freedom

ואלו לא הוציא הקב"ה...הרי אנו ובנינו...משעבדים

And If Hashem had not taken us out...  
Behold We and our children... would be  
enslaved.

**Q:** In the Haggadah we proclaim that if Hashem had not liberated us from Egypt we would still be subservient to פרעה. Do we truly believe this? No nation has ever been subjugated by another for so many years! Likely, one of the following scenarios would have occurred: we would have rebelled, פרעה would have let us go, the United Nations would interpolate etc... How can we rationally accept that thousands of years later we would still be enslaved in Egypt?

Obviously, we would still not be slaves in Egypt. The Bal Haggadah (author of the Haggadah) is teaching us a fascinating thing. The term Mishubadim actually has two meanings: 1) subservient 2) obligated. If the first connotation is being used here, then you are left with the question—wouldn't we be free by now?

Let us now evaluate the second meaning. The Haggadah would read "Had Hashem not emancipated us, and פרעה had freed us out of the kindness of his heart we would forever be indebted to him." Even though פרעה would only be doing so as a demand from Hashem, from our viewpoint, he freed us; we would owe him our freedom. Similarly, by tzedakah, even though Hashem commanded you to give charity, I still owe you gratitude for giving it.

Consequently, when the Haggada says "Had Hashem not liberated us..." it does not mean we would still be slaves, rather it means "Had **Hashem** not liberated us, and פרעה had, we would eternally be obligated to פרעה." Ourselves, our kids, and our grandchildren would forever owe gratitude to פרעה for his kindness.

Question to think about: What is so terrible about being indebted to פרעה?

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## ואפילו כולנו חכמים

### Sippur: Feeling Gratitude

Even if we are all scholars...we are obligated to recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt. And whoever recounts the Exodus at greater length is praiseworthy.

**Q:** Why in fact is the Torah scholar who already knows every detail of the Exodus required to recount the story Pesach night? What really is gained by the repetition? Additionally, what is the idea that the more one recounts the more praiseworthy he is?

The Rashba writes that the reason we do not recite a blessing before reading the Haggadah is because it is an open-ended and unbounded obligation – as we just quoted, that the more one recounts the more praiseworthy he is. The Maharal asks, why would that be a reason not to recite a blessing? Torah study too is an open-ended obligation, yet we recite a blessing in advance of that!

The reason we recount the Exodus is not to learn information. Rather, the purpose is to feel a sense of gratitude. The more we review the story of our redemption and the more we relive it, the more real it becomes to us. The goal is not to gain knowledge but to grow in our appreciation for Hashem.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the Rashba that one does not recite a blessing before the recitation of the Haggadah. The reason is not simply because the mitzvah is open-ended. It is because it is essentially a mitzvah of the heart. The true purpose of reciting the Haggadah is not to do any specific action of speech. It is to develop a sense of appreciation. For this reason it is unbounded. The obligation is not one of reciting a finite amount of material – but of developing a boundless emotion. And we recite blessings on actions, not on emotions.

This is one of the primary messages we must keep in mind during the Seder. Our purpose is not to recite an endless procession of Torah thoughts or to have each child repeat every interpretation he learned in school. It is to create a feeling. “Recounting at length” does not mean saying a lot of words or even a lot of Torah. It means increasing our appreciation for the salvation. The story of the Exodus is one we must relate to and grow to appreciate.

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## ספור יציאת מצרים A Nightly Mitzvah

**“I never merited [to explain] that the Exodus should[also] be mentioned at night...until Ben Zoma expounded... [also] the nights”**

**Q: Ben Zoma infers from Biblical exegesis (“derasha”) that one is obligated to recall the Exodus every night of the year. Why do we mention the year-round obligation in the Haggadah? Tonight there is a special mitzvah of recalling the Exodus which is much broader than the daily mitzvah!**

On Pesach night we have a special obligation to re-experience the story of our Exodus. This includes understanding the special relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. The daily mitzvah of krias sh'ma is to reconnect to the experience we had at the Exodus. Thus, the daily mitzvah krias sh'ma is dependent upon the extent we have connected to the Exodus on pesach night. Thus the Seder becomes a year-round experience.



## The Wise Son: A Lasting Experience

**And you also say to [the wise son] the laws of Pesach: After the Pesach sacrifice one does not conclude the meal with dessert.**

**Q: Why do we respond to the wise son specifically with the law of having no dessert after the Pesach sacrifice? How does this answer his question?**

Perhaps the most central message we must convey to our children is that mitzvos are eternal and have a lasting effect on us. They must not see the Seder as an inspiring but once-a-year event. The recounting of our history and national heritage is a message we must carry with us the entire year.

This is the message of the Afikomen. The wise son wants to know what are the aidos, chukim, and mishpatim that we observe at the Seder. What is the significance of each type of mitzvah? What are we to learn from each one? And our response, in short, is that mitzvos must have an effect on us. We must allow their aftertaste to linger, just as we let the taste of the Pesach sacrifice remain. Just as each type of mitzvah makes a lasting impression on us, so too, we must allow the Seder experience to stay with us the entire year.





## The Wicked Son: Forfeiting Eternity

And because he has excluded himself from the community, he has denied the fundamental...

**Q: Why does the wicked son's denial of the Korban Pesach (the Pesach offering) deem him a heretic, as one who denies the foundations of our faith? Isn't the Korban Pesach only a single mitzvah of the Torah?**

The Korban Pesach is no ordinary mitzvah. It is Hashem's covenant with us. It commemorates Hashem's rescuing us from Egypt and choosing us to be His nation. It further commemorates our own devotion in setting aside and slaughtering the god of the Egyptians for the sake of G-d. The Korban Pesach commemorates G-d selecting us – and we selecting Him. We reaffirm and recommit ourselves to this unique relationship every year at the Pesach Seder.

For this reason, one who fails to bring a Korban Pesach is punished with excision – much like someone who refuses to have himself circumcised. Both such people have severed themselves from the nation; they have denied themselves the most fundamental symbols of Jewish identity. Likewise, one who is unable to partake of the Korban Pesach for reasons beyond his control is given the opportunity to bring the sacrifice one month later on Pesach Sheni. No such provisions are made for one who unintentionally fails to perform virtually any other mitzvah. Regarding Korban Pesach, however, such provisions are made. No one should be denied the opportunity to reaffirm his connection to G-d and to Israel. It is interesting to note that the wicked son is attending the Seder. He wants to maintain a connection to Israel as a whole. He does not, however, believe in the ritual – at least in that of the outdated Korban Pesach. In his mind, he has every right to his place in Israel – but he can have it without the accompanying service. To this we tell him that without the Korban Pesach he has no place in Israel. One cannot be a part of Israel without accepting the national charter. The Korban Pesach signifies that our nationhood does not rest on lineage or history – and certainly not on ethnic culture. One must reaccept the covenant yearly – and the obligations it entails. For without acceptance of the mitzvos there can be no true relationship with Hashem.

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## ושאינו יודע לשאול:

## Answering the Indifferent

And the one who does not know how to ask, you must begin for him:

**Q: How could a child not even know how to ask? Even a very young child of two or three can ask (as the simple son did) “מה זאת” – “what is this?” Is the Haggadah referring to a baby, one too young to have even the most basic awareness of his surroundings and ask the simplest of questions?**

The Haggadah must be identifying different types of personalities that we must relate to at the seder. The one who “does not know how to ask” is not one too simple (or too young) to ask, but one who is too disinterested. This might be the uncommitted guest at the Seder, or the relative who though respectful of our religious practices, has no interest or curiosity in the significance of what goes on before him.

In a way, such a person is even further removed from religion than the wicked son. The wicked son at least felt threatened by our beliefs. He felt a need to question and to challenge them. And we in turn responded to him – forcefully perhaps, but at least there was a line of communication. This son, however, is entirely unmoved by and apathetic to the expressions of faith going on around him.

Regarding him the Haggadah says we must begin for him. Rather than allowing him to maintain his respectful distance, we must engage him. We must find ways to involve him in the experience. We cannot allow another Jew to be indifferent to his heritage. On this night we must ensure that all Jews are aware of who we are and how we came to be.



## Yachol MaiRosh Chodesh: Time Recreated

יכול מראש חדש תלמוד לומר ביום ההוא  
 One might have thought [the obligation to recount the Exodus] begins at Rosh Chodesh, the Torah comes to teach us, “on that day” (Shemos 13:8).

**Q: Why would we have thought there is an obligation to recount the Exodus from the beginning of the month of Nissan? We departed from Egypt on Pesach itself! How is Rosh Chodesh relevant to our redemption – so much so that the Torah had to specify that we not observe Sippur Yetzias Mitrayim then?**

On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Hashem conveyed to Moshe the mitzvah of Kiddush HaChodesh – of sanctifying the new moon (Shemos 12:2). This was significant in that it was the first mitzvah commanded to Bnei Yisroel as a nation. But its significance was far greater. With this mitzvah, Bnei Yisroel were given charge over the calendar. The months would no longer come and go in perpetual succession – expressions of Hashem’s absolute control over creation. The months begin only through the Jewish court’s proclamation. The calendar is now under our charge and management. The months, the holidays, and indeed time itself, are determined by us.

Thus, Kiddush HaChodesh represented far more than Hashem inaugurating Bnei Yisroel in the mitzvos. It represented that we had become partners with Hashem in running the world. This is what truly marked the birth of Israel as a nation. We had become a special nation unto Hashem, not merely a subject nation as the Gentiles, but a leading nation – a chosen nation – destined for the central role of providing leadership to the world.

We can now understand why the Sages at first thought the Haggadah should be recited on Rosh Chodesh. It was the day that truly marked our becoming a nation. Though we would not leave the Egyptian exile for another two weeks, we already had become Hashem’s chosen nation to partner in the direction of the world.

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## Transforming the Past

One begins [the Haggadah] with our shame and concludes with our praise (משנה: פסחים יד).

Shmuel says: (פסחים קטז) It means beginning with the verse, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt” (דברים ו.כא).

**Q:** What is truly gained from reliving the story of our slavery in Egypt? We certainly must express our gratitude for our freedom, but what is gained from “beginning with our shame”? What is the point in recalling in such detail our nation’s painful experiences – ones we would certainly prefer to put out of our minds?

The purpose of the Seder night is not only to celebrate our freedom - it is also to gain the proper perspective on the experience of our slavery. We may be tempted to forget the miserable experience of our bondage and put it behind us. But if we would, we would see ourselves as having a blighted past, as having lost and wasted hundreds of years of our national history.

Thus, the Sages instruct us to begin with our “shame.” We must not forget our past. We must learn from it and grow as a result. Our bondage (to Pharaoh) taught us unquestioning subservience to a master (Hashem). Just as the matzah, the bread of affliction, became the symbol of our freedom, we must transform all our past experiences into positive ones. For only if we remember our difficult past and learn from it have we fully realized what it has taught us.



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## ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל Hashem's Promise

לישראל ברוך הוא שהקדוש ברוך הוא חשב את הקץ  
ברוך שומר הבטחתו

Blessed be He who keeps His promises to Israel, blessed be He! For the Holy One, blessed be He, planned out the end of the exile...

**Q:** Why do we praise Hashem for keeping His promise to us? How could Hashem, whose seal is truth, not keep His promise?

As the Egyptian exile progressed, Bnei Yisroel sank to increasingly lower levels of corruption and impurity. The Egyptian culture was immoral and decadent to an extreme; and the longer Bnei Yisroel remained there, the more they were in danger of losing what little remained of their connection to Hashem. Chazal say that Bnei Yisrael descended to one of the lowest levels of impurity, almost to the point of no return. To counteract this, Hashem “planned” the end. He brought us out before we became just another degenerate Egyptian minority.

This is the promise Hashem kept to us. Had we become so fully integrated into Egyptian culture, we would not have **wanted** to leave Egypt our homeland. No one is obligated to honor a promise to another if the other does not want it fulfilled. Hashem would have been absolved of His oath. Nevertheless, Hashem “guarded” (“shomair”) His promise to us. He saw to it that the time for redemption arrived while we still desired to leave.

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## Bikurim: Parsha of Hakaras

In the Haggadah, we recite the version of the Exodus which appears in the viduy bikurim, (Devarim 26:5-9) which is a declaration of thanks we proclaim as we bring the first fruits of our harvest to the Temple. This proclamation begins by briefly summarizing the Exodus.

**Q: Why did the Bal Haggadah not use the original story as it appears in Shemos? Instead, he preferred to explain the verses written by bikurim by referring back to the original account of the Exodus in Shemos.**

Both Rambam (Hil' Chametz U'Matzah 7:1) and the Bal Haggadah state that one who recounts the story of the Exodus at length is praiseworthy. Rambam writes (Hil' Teshuva 1:1) similarly regarding the obligation of viduy (confession) – "kol hamarba harei zeh meshubach". Certainly, the reason we confess at length is not to feel we've "talked it out of our systems" and have gotten the guilt off our chests. Rather, it is in order to internalize our sense of obligation to Hashem and our need to improve ourselves. Likewise, we recount the Exodus at length not in order to increase our excitement over our suspenseful history and harrowing escape, but in order to internalize the sense of gratitude we must feel towards Hashem. The more we recount and relive the story of our salvation, the more we feel the proper sense of gratitude and obligation.

It is interesting to note that Rambam, following the Yerushalmi, terms the proclamation of thanks we recite upon bringing the bikurim as "viduy bikurim" – literally, the "admission" of the bikurim. Thus, we recite the story of the Exodus there too in order to internalize our sense of obligation to Hashem. For this reason, it is used as the outline of the Haggadah. We do not recite the Haggadah in order to recount our history or even to learn lessons in G-d's power and greatness. We do so in order to increase and internalize our sense of gratitude to Hashem. The viduy bikurim highlights the exodus from this perspective and is therefore the appropriate source from which to recount the exodus at the seder.

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## Yetzias Mitzrayim: Immortality

ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול ענצום ורב  
יורד מצרימה

“...and he (Yaakov) went down to Egypt and dwelled there with [a family] small in number; and he became there a nation, great, mighty and numerous” (Devarim 26:5).

**Q:** The Torah uses the term “מעט” to refer to the “small number of people” that descended to Egypt. A more commonly used form of the word מתי is מת, or corpse. Why, in describing the exile into Egypt, does the Torah use an uncommon term (mesai) to describe the Jewish people? (Interestingly enough, the same is true in English, the word mortal – which signifies our transience – also refers to a human being.)

In Hebrew, as well as in many languages, human beings are referred to with a word suggestive of death. This is because all people eventually die. Our lives are a process, slowly and inexorably, leading us toward our mortality.

This, however, is not true by the Jewish nation. When Hashem took us out from Egypt we became His nation. Becoming His nation transformed us into a timeless entity as we are now connected to an eternal source. We now understand the Torah’s unique choice of words. We went down to Egypt “bemsai me’at,” as mere mortals, but there we became a “great powerful nation”- an eternal nation connected to G-d.

The Haggadah further elaborates on this idea. In expounding the words “ygn h.nc,” the Haggadah quotes the verse (Devarim 10:22): “With seventy souls your fathers descended to Egypt, and now Hashem your G-d has made you as numerous as the **stars** of heaven.” Stars signify immortality. In English, we call a famous person – one whose name will outlive him – a “star”. With the Exodus, we were transformed from finite human beings into eternal ones – in a process which began as we became a nation in Egypt. This is one of the primary messages of Pesach night. We not only need to thank Hashem for rescuing us from bondage, we must also thank Him for making us His eternal nation.



## The Jewish Question

וירעו אתנו המצרים כמה שנאמר: הבה נתחכמה לו

And the Egyptians Did Evil Unto Us, as it is Written “Come Let Us Devise Plans Against Him”

**Q:** In reference to the evils the Egyptians inflicted upon us Haggadah quotes the passuk: “Ha’vah Nis’chakma,” “Let Us Devise Plans.” This passuk does not actually contain any misdeeds or crimes through which the Egyptians burdened us. This passuk merely says that they plotted against us. Would it not be more fitting that the Bal Haggadah quote a source that actually portrays them exacting evil upon us?

The most severe harm you can do to someone is to label him as a problem. Once you identify somebody as a problem then everything he does becomes harmful and delinquent. Merely determining that something is a problem is the ultimate harm you can cause. When a teacher brands a student a “problem child” that is the greatest hindrance and setback for that child’s development. Everything that child now becomes and achieves is looked upon in a negative light and is detrimental to the child. So the Bal Haggadah is quoting the passuk that describes the ultimate harm Pharaoh stimulated against us --- labeling us, saying Jews are a problem.

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## Hashem Champions Our Cause

ויצאתנו ה' ממצרים ביד חזקה וברוע גטויה  
 “And Hashem took us out of Egypt with a  
 strong hand and an outstretched arm...”  
 (Devarim 26:8).

**Q:** The Bal Haggadah understands the “strong hand” and “outstretched arm” of Hashem as referring to the types of punishments Hashem visited upon the Egyptians. “Strong hand” hints to the plague of pestilence and “outstretched arm” refers to the “sword” Hashem wielded against His enemies. If so, why does the above-quoted verse state that Hashem took us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm? These are the means by which Hashem punished the Egyptian, not by the means in which He took us out?

A central part of the message of the Exodus is that Hashem punished the Egyptians not simply because they were unjustly afflicting an innocent nation, but because they were afflicting Hashem’s nation. Hashem took up our cause. He punished Egypt because they were persecuting His chosen nation. Therefore, the vengeance Hashem exacted from Egypt was itself a part of our salvation. In punishing the Egyptians, the message was conveyed that Hashem would henceforth challenge and destroy all enemies of the Jews – for they are in truth enemies of Hashem.



## Maror: Tasteless Existence

**Q:** The Gemara (פסחים לט.) writes that of the five species which may be used for maror, the ideal species is chazeres - romaine lettuce. Why is romaine lettuce, which is not nearly as bitter as horseradish, the most fitting commemoration of “and [the Egyptians] embittered their lives” (שמות א.יג) “and [the Egyptians] embittered their lives”?

The most difficult aspect of the Egyptian bondage was not the hard labor, it was the sense of futility we experienced. The Gemara (סוטה יא:) states that the Egyptians forced men to do women’s work and vice versa. They also forced us to build (doomed) structures on shifting desert sands. The Egyptians did not want us to feel any sense of accomplishment or satisfaction in our labor.

This was precisely the servitude with which the Egyptians intended to oppress us. They did not only work us to death, they removed hope and purpose from our lives. We were thus crushed, both spiritually and psychologically, not able to envision ourselves as anything other than slaves. We commemorate such bondage with tasteless romaine lettuce. It was not merely slavery we suffered, it was life without taste, life without meaning.



## Klal Yisroel: The Eternal Nation

דוד חייב אדם לראות את עצמו הוא יצא ממצרים  
בכל דוד

In every generation one must regard himself as if he himself went out of Egypt...

**Q:** How can we be expected to perceive ourselves as having departed Egypt, while knowing that in reality we were never even there! How are we expected to relate to something we know is false?

A nation by definition is an eternal entity. Even while generations of a nation pass on, the nation itself endures. For example, a United States citizen may say, “**We** won the Revolutionary War.” Even though he was not there at the time and his ancestors may not have even arrived at Ellis Island till 150 years later, nevertheless, he views himself as a part of American history. When we departed Egypt, we too became a nation, the eternal Nation of Israel. Although as individuals we were not present at the Exodus, as a nation we were all there. Thus, the Haggadah is instructing us to imagine that we ourselves went out of Egypt – we must view



## Ensuring Our Legacy

...and so that you may relate to your son and grandson how I mocked the Egyptians and my signs that I placed among them, and you will know that I am Hashem (Shemos 10:2).

**Q:** The verse quoted above states that you will tell your children of Hashem's wonders in Egypt and then "you will know that I am Hashem." This seems to be out of order. Logically, one should know something before attempting to teach it to others!

Our self-definition depends far more on whom our children and grandchildren become than on whom our parents and grandparents were. People have a strong desire not to be alienated from their children – and particularly their grandchildren. This is because we see our children and grandchildren as our continuity and legacy to this world. In fact, people will often adapt to their children's values just to maintain their relationship. We must feel a connection to them in order to sense that through them we achieve immortality.

The verse quoted above states that we will teach our children the salvation brought by Hashem and then we will know Hashem ourselves. Only after we have instilled in our children belief in Hashem can we truly feel comfortable with ourselves and our beliefs.

The Haggadah is very child-oriented. We pique their interest, we hear their questions, and we allow them to direct the conversation. And we do this for our own sakes as much as theirs. For when our children and grandchildren believe, we believe ourselves.



## The Purpose of the Pesach Symbols

“שמות ינ”ח] בעבור זה”:  
I have said [that you must recount the story  
of the Exodus] only when the matzah and  
maror are placed before you.

**Q: Why in fact is the obligation to recount the Exodus so dependent upon the symbols of the story being before us? Does the story of the Exodus really lose its meaning without the “props”?**

The (entire) verse quoted above states as follows: “And you shall tell your son on that day saying, ‘It is **because of this** that G-d acted for me when I departed Egypt.’” Rashi, commenting on “because of this,” explains: “In order that I **will fulfill** Hashem’s mitzvos, such as pesach, matzah and maror.” Rashi did not explain simply: “Because of these past events, as symbolized by these items,” but rather, “Because of the mitzvos I will do in the future, such as pesach, matzah and maror.”

This distinction is significant. Rashi does not understand matzah and maror simply to be props - memory aids to commemorate our past. They give us a sense of purpose for the future – of the mitzvos we then accepted. The verse instructs us to recount the Exodus only when these are before us: only when we see our past redemption in light of its ultimate purpose. We achieved salvation in order that we would accept Hashem’s covenant and mitzvos. The purpose of the Seder is not merely to look backwards and remember our past – as miraculous and memorable as it was, it is to look forwards and accept our mission for the future. The Seder and the mitzvos we accepted are inseparable. Only by looking ahead to the future does our past attain true significance.



## Remembering the Exodus: A State of Mind

*“In order that you remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life.” “The days of your life” [implies] the days; “All the days of your life” [implies] the nights.*

**Q:** How does the word “all” imply the nights? Is the Haggadah’s proof simply from the insertion of an extra word, or is a deeper connection implied?

**A:** Had the Torah commanded us to remember the Exodus only during “the days,” we might have understood the mitzvah to be a once-a-day activity. We must take a moment to remember the Exodus at some point every day. The word “all”, however, implies an ongoing obligation, one applicable all the time. We must constantly keep the awareness of the Exodus in our minds. Thus, the obligation spans both day and night.

This single word thus transforms our entire understanding of the mitzvah to remember the Exodus. It is not an activity we perform – even regularly – and then put aside. It is an ongoing state of mind. We must constantly keep the Exodus in mind, understanding the relationship Hashem has forged with us

based upon it. The story of the Exodus, which we relive at the Seder, must stay with us the entire year.

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## Not Through an Angel

*And Hashem brought us out of Egypt – not through an angel, not through a seraph... but rather the Holy One, blessed be He, alone and in His glory...*

**Q:** The Haggadah states that Hashem liberated us directly, not via an intermediary. It proves this from Shemos 12:12: “And I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and I will smite every firstborn...” - that G-d Himself will smite the Egyptian firstborn. The Haggadah sets off to prove that Hashem “brought us out” of Egypt directly. The verse cited only discusses how Hashem slew the firstborn directly! How does this relate to our redemption?

**A:** We can understand this only after answering a related question. For nearly the entire story of the Exodus, Moshe requested from Pharaoh one thing alone – that Bnei Yisrael be granted a three day journey to the desert to serve Hashem, not permanent freedom. If this was all that was at stake, why was Pharaoh so adamant that Bnei Yisrael not leave? Why did he bring his kingdom to the brink of destruction over a mere three days? It certainly was not over the loss of a few days’ labor. In fact, the Sages teach that the bondage ended towards the start of the plagues, several months earlier (Rosh Hashanah



11a). If so, what was the reason for Pharaoh's stubbornness?

The answer is that Israel's journey meant one thing – that we were first and foremost Hashem's servants and only afterwards servants to Pharaoh. Pharaoh refused to concede this notion. Thus, the entire showdown between Pharaoh and Hashem regarding those three days was over control of Bnei Yisrael.

Now we can answer the original question. When Hashem slew the Egyptian firstborn, Pharaoh came running to Moshe, begging us to leave. He had finally capitulated, accepting that we were servants of Hashem first. Even though Hashem could have miraculously taken us out at any time, he waited until Pharaoh sent us willingly, showing his acquiescence to Bnei Yisrael being Hashem's servants. That happened only by the Plague of the Firstborn. Thus it was after the plague of the firstborn that our redemption began.

Therefore, the Haggadah states that Hashem, by slaying the firstborn Himself, rescued us from Egypt Himself.



*“And he [Yaakov] became there a nation...” This teaches that Israel was distinct (‘metsuyanim’) there.*

**Q:** How does “he became a nation” imply the Children of Israel remained distinct?

**A:** There are two words in the Torah to describe a nation – ‘ahm’ and ‘goy’. ‘Ahm’ simply implies a large collection of people, a population which numerically constitutes a nation. ‘Goy’ implies a nation which is joined together, usually politically, not just a large population living in a defined area. The Jews were “distinct” in that they formed a nation of their own.

How is it that Bnei Yisrael were referred to as a “goy”? Weren’t we merely Egyptian slaves, possessing no political independence of our own? The answer is that although politically we had no autonomy whatsoever, we maintained ourselves as a separate nation. As the Midrash states (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:20), we remained distinct in our names, language, and morality (and according to some versions, our dress). And by doing so, even while immersed in the depths of Egyptian society, we

managed to preserve ourselves as a separate, distinct nation, ultimately meriting redemption.

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## Ha Lachma Anya Inviting the Poor

*This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat...*

**Q:** Isn't it odd that as soon as we describe the matzah as poor man's bread we invite others to come and partake? Are we inviting them to eat inferior food?

**A:** There is a common human tendency to rebel against a difficult past. If one was abused as a child, one is much more likely to abuse others when one matures. People tend to work out their own frustrations and complexes with a vengeance, avenging the hurts they endured themselves on those whom they are able to hurt. The former slave becomes the most oppressive tyrant.

This is precisely what the Torah instructs us not to do. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Rosh Hashanah 3:5) states that the first mitzvah we were given upon our redemption from Egypt was the law of freeing one's slaves. We must not take our own experience of bondage and reenact it by lording over others. Nor may we simply suppress the

painful memories of our past, ignoring them completely. Rather, we must relive and learn from them. We relive the slavery by partaking the very bread of affliction we were once fed. We must then take those memories and use them positively, empathizing with all others who are suffering. We are not inviting guests to partake in “poor man’s bread,” we are inviting people to join us in reliving the experience of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

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## The Wicked Son: Mitzvos as a Chore

*The wicked son, what does he say?  
“What is this work (‘avodah’) to you?”  
“To you” and not to him... You are to  
blunt his teeth and say to him, “On  
account of this did Hashem do this for  
me when I went out of Egypt.”*

**Q:** What in fact is the challenge of the wicked son? How does his “to you” differ so substantively from the wise son’s “What are the testimonies, statutes and laws which Hashem our G-d commanded you?”

**A:** The wicked son refers to the mitzvos as “work” – “avodah”. The Ramban (Shemos 20:8) defines avodah as work which one does not do for his own sake or benefit. “Melacha”, by contrast, refers to work one does for his own enjoyment.

This goes to the heart of the wicked son’s evil. He views the mitzvos as “avodah” – as a bother, as something we do only because Hashem says. They are not truly meaningful, beneficial acts. We would be much happier and better off acting as we please. The mitzvos are a purposeless imposition – to be done (if at all) for Hashem’s sake and not our own.

Our response to the wicked son is to blunt his teeth. His evil was not simply in excluding himself. He has disregarded the most basic message of the Torah. In response we quote Shemos 13:8 – that Hashem did this for me. The entire redemption was for our own sakes. Hashem is not imposing upon us for His own sake; everything He has done has been for us. And further, as Rashi there explains, Hashem did so “on account of this” – meaning, for the sake of the mitzvos before us today – Pesach, Matzah, and Maror. Just as the redemption was for our benefit, so too are all of Hashem’s commandments. Hashem’s entire motive in bringing about the redemption was so that we would be granted the opportunity to live the most rewarding and fulfilling life possible.

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*Blessed is Hashem ('haMakom'), blessed is He. Blessed be [He] who has given the Torah to His nation Israel, blessed is He.*

**Q:** Why is Hashem described here, at the introduction to the Haggadah, as “haMakom”, literally, “the Place”? What does it mean to refer to Hashem with such a descriptor?

**A:** When we say Hashem is the “place” of the world, the meaning is that He does not exist within the world in a sense we understand. The world is not Hashem’s “place”. Rather, quite the opposite: the world exists within His reality. Hashem is the Creator of time and space; these realities exist within Him, rather than He within them.

This message is central to our understanding of the Exodus. We do not view the redemption as Hashem simply acting upon the world, tweaking and manipulating events from without in order to direct the course of history. Rather, the entire world exists within Hashem. He does not merely control it; He contains it. All that occurs is entirely an expression of G-d’s will.



We thus view the redemption as an event directly and intimately guided by Hashem, from beginning to end – and all for the sake of Israel.

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## True Freedom

*...And You have given us, Hashem our G-d, with love... this holiday of Matzos, the time of our freedom ("chairu-sainu"), a holy convocation, in memory of the Exodus from Egypt.*

**Q:** In Kiddush, why do we refer to Pesach as the holiday of our freedom ("chairus") rather than the holiday of our redemption ("geulah")? Isn't the latter term more sweeping – and more accurate?

**A:** The term geulah, redemption, is more far-reaching than chairus, freedom. Chairus is freedom, geulah is being taken in by Hashem. Yet, at the Seder we cannot yet celebrate geulah. The ultimate geulah from Egypt would not occur until one week later – at the splitting of the sea, when the Egyptians were defeated once and for all. At that point, as we say in davening (end of Emes ve'yatsiv), "A new song did the redeemed ones ("geulim") sing to Your name at the edge of the sea."

Thus, at the Seder, it is too early to refer to ourselves as geulim. However, there is great significance in chairus alone. Chairus does not simply imply a lack of slavery. We in fact had been freed from Pharaoh's service far earlier, at

the previous Rosh Hashanah (Rosh Hashanah 11a). Rather, the true definition of chairus is implied by the Sages' famous dictum (Pirkei Avos 6:2): "There is no free person (ben chorin) except one who engages in Torah study." Hence chairus means freedom from inner conflict, as one who studies Torah is no longer torn between the dictates of his body and soul. He sublimates his entire being; he feels fulfilled on every level. At Yetzias Mitzrayim we became benei chorin. We began our relationship with Hashem. We would no longer be plagued by inner conflict – not between our commitment to Pharaoh and to Hashem, and not between our bodies and souls. We now became free to devote ourselves whole-heartedly to Hashem.

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## The Loss of the Children

*"[And Hashem saw...] our burden" – this refers to the children, as it states, "Every son which is born you shall cast into the Nile and every daughter you shall let live."*

**Q:** Why does the Torah state prior to the redemption that Hashem looked down and saw the drowning of the children? This decree was rescinded eighty years earlier, with the birth of Moshe (Talmud Sotah 12b)!

**A:** It seems clear from the Haggadah that even a full eighty years after Pharaoh's decree, the Children of Israel were still hurting from the loss of their drowned children. Hashem saw our suffering on that account and redeemed us.

This too, however, is surprising. Until relatively modern times with health-care and vaccinations, parents practically did not expect all of their children to grow to maturity. Could it really be said that we were still hurting from such a loss so many years later?

We could perhaps answer simply that with Israel's spectacular birthrate, any loss was unexpected and tragic. Yet perhaps a more profound issue

was at stake. The issue of the drowning of the babies was not only a matter of the loss of life, as serious as that was. It contained a message far more sinister – that Jewish lives are worthless and expendable. Our lives could simply be terminated for convenience and population control. This ultimate degradation was painful beyond words – and caused the Jewish people suffering until their redemption.

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# קדוש

## The Sanctity of Lashon HaKodesh

*Blessed are You... who has chosen us from all nations  
and raised us above all tongues...*

*ורוממנו מכל לשון*

*In the Kiddush we recite on Yom Tov, we praise Hashem for having “chosen us from all the nations” and “lifted us above all tongues” (romimanu mi’kol lashon). What is the difference between nations and tongues (generally different tongues imply different nations)?*

Every language reflects a unique way of thinking and expression. People who speak different languages will relate to certain ideas differently and will naturally develop different talents and predilections.

*Lashon HaKodesh*, is the language of Israel and most suited to spiritual concepts. The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:8) writes that Hebrew is known as *Lashon HaKodesh* – the “holy” tongue – because it expresses even very physical concepts in a more delicate and discreet manner. It is a language geared for spirituality, for an elevated way of thinking and relating to the world.

The intention of the Yom Tov Kiddush is that Hashem gave to us the language of *Lashon HaKodesh* – the ability to communicate in a holy tongue.

This is not simply a matter of learning a new language. Only one with an elevated soul can see and relate to the world through the prism of the Hebrew tongue. Anyone can learn a language – even Hebrew, but we were blessed with the ability to relate to *Lashon HaKodesh* – as a mother tongue. We have the means to relate to the world in a refined manner. This was Hashem’s true gift.

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# כרפס

ס' פרך (*Samech Prach*)

*Sixty Thousand Myriads of Jews Did  
Backbreaking Labor*

*Carpas is to remind us of our subjugation in Egypt. Carpas is a combination of two words, Samech and Prach (Samech, the Hebrew letter that represents the value sixty, a reminder of the sixty thousand myriads of Jews and the word Prach which is a reminder of the backbreaking labor in Egypt). The word Carpas was invented by the Bal Haggadah to remind us of shibbud Mitzrayim, our backbreaking servitude. Why do we reverse the letters to make the word Carpas? If the word is fabricated anyway, why not just formulate the word as Saprach, which is a more direct reference to the two words Samech and Prach.*

*The Ba'al Haggadah chose the word Carpas, alluding to another aspect of the labor. In Egypt, Pharaoh forced men to do women's work and women to do men's work. Why would Pharaoh incorporate such a slavery?*

*Pharaoh's intent was to deny us any satisfaction from our labor. When a person toils very hard he still ends up with a feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day. By switching roles, Pharaoh took away our sense of accomplishment. The word Carpas is therefore reversed to insinuates that not only did we perform backbreaking labor, we received no satisfaction while doing it.*



## יָחַצ

### Dividing the Middle Matzah

*Yachatz - we break the middle Matzah. This Matzah is put aside and eaten later as the Afikomen, which substitutes for the eating of the Korban Pesach.*

*One may wonder why do we break the Matzah that symbolizes the Korban Pesach?*

*The Korban Pesach itself has a special law prohibiting one from breaking any of the bones. This special law applies when we are offering the sacrifice or while we are eating the Korban Pesach.*

*In general, every animal has to be both תמים and תשלם "unblemished and intact" to be slaughtered as Korban (sacrifice).*

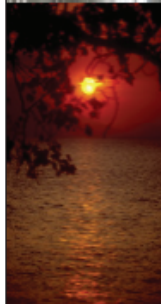
*The answer may lie in understanding another difficulty surrounding the Korban Pesach.*

*The Torah records how there were individuals that had become spiritually impure in the desert and therefore unable to bring the Korban Pesach along with the rest of the Jewish people. They queried Moshe concerning their situation. At this time Hashem taught Moshe the laws of Pesach Sheni. Hashem instructed Moshe to establish another date, one month later, when these individuals and others who because of unforeseen circumstances could not fulfill their obligation of Korban Pesach on the 14th day of Nissan. These people could bring a Korban Pesach one month later on the 14th day of Iyar.*

*This was very unusual, generally, if one is an "אינוס" unable to fulfill the Mitzvah because of circumstances beyond his control, he is exempt. Why is Korban Pesach the only Mitzvah where one is given a second chance after the time the Mitzvah has passed?*

*Korban Pesach, more than being just a Mitzvah, was the manner in which one affirmed his Jewish identity. To partake in the Korban Pesach was to identify oneself as a member of Klal Yisroel. Therefore, although they were exempt from the Mitzvah, they still wanted the chance to affirm their Jewish identity. The Korban Pesach served as a unification for the whole of Klal Yisroel and therefore no one who wanted to participate could be left out.*

*Perhaps we break the Middle Matzah that represents the Korban Pesach before we begin the Seder to symbolize that we are in exile and do not have the Bais HaMikdash, our relationship with Hashem is not fully intact.*



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## Haggadah and Sippur

The Rambam writes (7:1,2) *חמץ ומצה* that on seder night there is an obligation of *סיפור יציאת מצרים* (retelling of the exodus from Egypt). The Rambam explains (7:4), "we begin this mitzvah by mentioning our shame" (*מתחיל בגנות*) - which is that our ancestors were idol worshippers. A few lines later the Rambam writes, "and so we must begin that we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt".

It is perplexing, on which subject should we begin? That our ancestors served idols or that our ancestors were slaves? You can only begin something once!

In addition (1:4) the Rambam writes whoever discusses the subject of the Exodus [*יציאת מצרים*] at length is praiseworthy. He has already written this halacha at the beginning of the chapter (1:1). Why does Rambam choose to repeat this halacha?

A close inspection of the Rambam's exact words reveals the answer. There are really two obligations on the Seder night. The first is *Sippur* (*סיפור*) and the second is *Haggadah* (*הגדה*).

To fulfill the Mitzvah of *Sippur* (*כיצד מתחיל ומספר*) we must emphasize the purpose of our redemption is to serve Hashem by doing his mitzvos and "become close to Him".

The mitzvah of *Haggadah* (*וכן מתחיל ומדריע*) is to recount how Hashem redeemed us from Egypt, with miracles and wonders. He revealed his love for us and showed the world that we are His children.

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