

# SHALOM RAV HAGGADA

Commentary by Rabbi Shalom Rosner

Compiled and edited by Marc Lesnick

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*Shalom Rav Haggada*

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*Dedication from Rabbi Shalom Rosner*

לעילוי נשמת

חנה שרה בת הרב מיכל שמעון ע"ה

*This Haggada is dedicated to the memory of my mother a"h who returned her soul to her Creator during the preparation of this work.*

*My mother's unconditional love for each child, grandchild, and great-grandchild was no more evident than it was each Pesah, as she basked in the nachas of spending time with her family. She, along with my father, yb"l, brought the entire family together, to relax together, to experience together, and to celebrate together. The Haggada Shel Pesah is a most appropriate way to memorialize her commitment, loyalty, and love for all of us.*

*May her memory be a blessing,  
and may we continue her legacy for generations.*





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# Preface

After making available a collection of Rav Rosner's thoughts on the *parasha* in the two-volume work *Shalom Rav*, I am very excited to be able to facilitate the printing of Rav Rosner's inspirational insights on the Haggada.

The thoughts Rav Rosner shares come from a wide spectrum of sources that include *Rishonim*, *Aharonim*, Hasidic masters, contemporary *rabbanim*, and scholars with an assortment of *hashkafot* (philosophies). I have personally been inspired by many of these *divrei Torah*. I have used Rav Rosner's material at our family Seder as well as at various *shiurim* I have given in our community, and the feedback has been phenomenal. This is what prompted me to compile and print these pearls of wisdom – so that they can be enjoyed by many.

Rav Rosner has given a Haggada *shiur* annually since 2003. These *shiurim*, which serve as a basis for most of the material included in this book, can be accessed on the websites [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org) and [www.ou Torah.org](http://www.ou Torah.org).

This Haggada is organized in a user-friendly manner so that its insightful and inspiring messages may be read and shared at the Seder. In addition to the explanations that appear below the text of the Haggada, there are short essays that relate to Pesah and the Seder night. It is suggested to read these in advance so that these thoughts can be shared at the Seder and throughout the holiday.

◀ What is

What is most important, though, is to prepare for the Seder itself. The more one prepares, the greater the experience for all present. Hopefully, this Haggada will provide material that is pertinent and useful in triggering engaging conversation at the Seder.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to several individuals, without whom this endeavor would not have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife Tamar, who has encouraged and supported the effort to compile this Haggada commentary. She is my true partner in life, my *ezer kenegdo*. Her patience and understanding allowed me to spend evenings, weekends, and free time completing this project.

I have a tremendous appreciation for all of my children, with whom I have shared many of these *divrei Torah*, and who have helped make each Seder night a most memorable and enjoyable occasion. I have learned a tremendous amount from the approach of each of my children and their interpretations of the Haggada. Most recently, in order to encourage participation, we started assigning specific sections to each attendee of the Seder. This empowers each individual to prepare and participate. I highly recommend this approach. We have also shifted to discussing the Haggada in the living room rather than around the dining room table. The change of location has had a positive impact, and we have found the relaxing atmosphere to be most conducive to discussion.

I want to thank Miriam Schlussel, who assisted with transcribing Rav Rosner's *shiurim* that were used as a basis for this Haggada. I would also like to thank Matthew Miller, Rabbi Reuven Ziegler, Aryeh Grossman, Ita Olesker, Caryn Meltz, Rina Ben-Gal, Debbie Ismailoff, Tani Bayer, and Sabrina Lightstone for their support and uncompromising efforts in ensuring that this Haggada be presented in the most professional manner.

My utmost gratitude is to my parents, who made my Seder experience as a child unforgettable. I learned a tremendous amount of Torah from my father, not only on Seder night, but always. The love and appreciation that I have for Torah was imbued in me by him.

◀ In addition



In addition to running a business, my father utilizes every free moment to learn and transmit Torah through organized *shiurim* and discussion after shul and on the avenue. On my way to work, I listen to *shiurim* by Rav Rosner and Rav Weiss, and on my way home from work, I learn Torah with my father over the telephone. May Hashem grant my father many more happy and healthy years so that he may continue to spread Torah and *hesed*!

Since the publication of *Shalom Rav* (on the *parasha*), I have been spending a lot more time engaging in Torah discussions with my mother as well. I very much enjoy our discussions and her insightful perspectives. May Hashem grant my mother many more happy and healthy years so that she too can continue to share Torah with others.

I want to thank my in-laws, who enjoy sharing *divrei Torah* with us at the Shabbat table and who generously gift *sefarim* to all members of our family. They have instilled within us a great appreciation for learning.

After my parents, the person from whom I have learned the most Torah is Rav Rosner. By sharing his Torah with my family, Rav Rosner has had a positive impact on myself and on my children. I experience such *nahat* from my children when I hear them repeating Rav Rosner's *divrei Torah*. I am indebted to Rav Rosner for allowing me to publish ideas from his *shiurim* on the Haggada, and I truly appreciate this opportunity to make these inspiring *divrei Torah* accessible to many. I thank Rav Rosner for all the time he has invested in reviewing the drafts, checking the sources, and enabling this work to be published.

It is my hope that all who use this Haggada will enjoy it, share its content with others, and be inspired by it. *Hag kasher vesame'ah!*

Marc Lesnick  
Beit Shemesh, Av 5782

# Introduction

There is no more glorious night in the Jewish calendar than Seder night. It is a night when families gather together to recite and to remember, to educate and to experience, to uplift and to uphold. It is a night filled with mitzvot, in both deed and word, that is geared to uplift us all to a better spiritual place. The vehicle which guides our journey is the Haggada, the text which probably has more commentaries than any other book in our library. The Haggada and its commentaries allow each Jew around the table, young and old, seasoned scholar and layman, to participate in creating the experience of reenacting *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*.

There are two different types of commentaries within our tradition, those that “zoom in” and those that “zoom out.” For example, the *Maggid Mishneh* and *Kesef Mishneh* commentaries on the *Mishneh Torah* of the Rambam are “zoom in” types, delving into understanding the words of the Rambam and discovering which earlier sources his writings are based on. The classic commentaries on the *Shulhan Arukh*, on the other hand, are of the “zoom out” variety, generally using the text as a springboard to present new issues and related situations. We have tried, throughout this work, to employ both approaches, one that stimulates questions which flow from the text and enables one to delve deeper into the classical sources, and one that uses the Haggada as a springboard to discuss ethical and spiritual messages. Our *tefilla* is that the words found

◀ in this

in this commentary help foster discussion, curiosity, and above all, learning and feelings of closeness to Hashem.

The Seder night is built on the principle of *hakarot hatov*, as can be seen in many of the practices throughout the evening; we are called *Yehudim* based on this basic and defining principle. The Chofetz Chaim was once overhead in his study talking to Hashem: “What have I done for You? You have given me the *zekhut* to write the *Mishna Berura*, *Shemiras HaLashon*, *Chofetz Chaim*, and more, but what have I done for You?” It is truly a *zekhut* to be able to share Torah with Jews, both in person and virtually, and now, through the pages of this Haggada. *Ma ashiv LaShem kol tagmulohi alai*. I continue to try to be a committed servant and act as a conduit for bringing some of the endless *divrei Hashem* to His people.

This work, as well as the previously published *Shalom Rav on the Torah*, would never have seen the light of day were it not for the diligent and all-encompassing work of my dear friend Marc Lesnick. He listened over and over again to hundreds of hours of my Haggada *shiurim* and committed some of those thoughts to paper. It is not an easy feat to take “*Torah Shebe’al Peh*” and format it as “*Torah Shebikhtav*,” but he did just that with finesse, precision, and an immense love of Torah. He and his wife Tamar should merit all the *berakhot* promised to those who are involved in Jewish communal service, and we should be able to continue to publish many more *sefarim* together.

The thoughts in these pages were culled from twenty years’ worth of Haggada *shiurim* which I merited to transmit in my position as *rav* of Congregation Bais Ephraim Yitzchak (2002–2008) and later as *rav* of Kehillat Nofei Hashemesh (2008–present). These two shuls are overflowing with members who love Torah, Jews, and spiritual growth. I thank all of their members for allowing me to share these words of Torah with them. I also want to express gratitude to the OU and the entire staff at OU Torah for their amazing work archiving, organizing, and disseminating countless hours of Torah to the Jewish people worldwide.

◀ All of the

All of the Torah which I have been privileged to share is not my own. I try to be a conduit from my rebbeim to the *tzibbur*. Yeshiva University was my spiritual home for twenty years, and my rebbeim helped shape my way in Torah and mitzvot. I sat at the feet of Mori VeRabi Rav Michael Rosensweig for seven years, gaining from his mastery of *kol haTorah kula*, as well as his daily *hatmada* and the bond he created with all his students. Rav Herschel Schachter, Rav Mordechai Willig, Rav Mayer Twersky, Rav Yonasan Sacks, and Rav Yitzchak Cohen continue to be my guiding lights each and every day, through their Torah and their leadership of our community. Rav Yechezkel Yakovson, former *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivat Sha'alvim, helped model for me what it means to be an *ohev Torah* and an *ohev Eretz Yisrael*. Most recently, I feel a tremendous debt of gratitude to Rav Asher Weiss, who has been a mentor to me both personally and through his numerous *shiurim* and *seforim*. May Hashem grant all my rebbeim *arikhut yamim veshanim*.

Teaching at Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh for the past five years under the leadership of Roshei Yeshiva Rav Gavriel Saraf and Rav Ahron Friedman, has been a demanding yet exhilarating experience. The students are inquisitive, hardworking, and have forced me to always be more prepared than I have ever been. May the yeshiva keep producing students who are a *kiddush Hashem* in all fields and areas of life.

Matthew Miller, Rabbi Reuven Ziegler, and the team at Maggid Books have been a pleasure to work with, and I hope that our teamwork can continue for a very long time, in both the English and Hebrew realms.

My first rebbi was my father, who learned Rambam (his favorite) with me each Friday night from when I was very young. He continues to be a guiding light in my life, blending Torah values and learning, along with a constant focus on using every minute each day. My mother, *a"h*, who returned her soul to the Creator on Rosh Hodesh Av, during the preparation of this Haggada, was the matriarch of our family. She was our rock, our symbol of loyalty and

◀ commitment

commitment, our source of love and comfort, and our lighthouse that lit up the way through every situation in life. Her *hokhmat hayim* and spiritual legacy will continue to guide us for generations. My in-laws, Dr. Robert and Dr. Susan Schulman, treat me like a son, supporting and caring for me at every stage of life. Their recent aliya to our neighborhood allows them to be a daily part of our children's lives. May Hashem give them both many years of good health, *simcha*, and *nahat* from all of their progeny.

To my life partner, Tamar, thank you for everything. Hashem has blessed us with so many *berakhot*. Our *tefilla* is that He enable us to continue to serve His people in His land for many years to come. May He allow us to guide our amazing children Yehoshua, Avigayil, Avraham, Michael, Naama, Eliyahu, and Chananya to follow in His path and to fulfill His will.

May we merit, along with all of Am Yisrael, to bring the *korban pesah* and celebrate this glorious evening in Yerushalayim, speedily in our days.

Shalom Rosner  
Beit Shemesh, Av 5782

## SEDER BEDIKAT HAMETZ

*On the eve of the fourteenth of Nisan at nightfall, one is to search for hametz. The custom is to hide ten pieces of bread throughout the house and to search with a candle and feather (Rema 432:2; Mishna Berura 13). If one plans to travel for Pesah and will not be home on the eve of the fourteenth of Nisan to conduct Bedikat Hametz in their home, it should be done at an earlier date without a blessing.*

בְּרַוְךָ Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has made us holy through His commandments, and has commanded us about the removal of leaven.

*After completing the search, the following declaration is made to nullify any remaining hametz that may be in one's possession. (Any hametz that you intend to use until the next morning is not included in this declaration and should be nullified in the morning during Biur Hametz.)*

כָּל חֲמִצָּה Any type of leaven that may still be in my possession, that I have not seen or not removed or that I do not know about, let it be nullified and considered ownerless like the dust of the earth.

## SEDER BIUR HAMETZ

*On the morning of the fourteenth of Nisan, all the remaining leaven in one's possession is burned. After burning the leaven (prior to an hour before midday), one should nullify the leaven and recite the following:*

Any type of leaven that may still be in my possession, that I may or may not have seen, found or removed, let it be nullified and considered ownerless like the dust of the earth.

## בדיקת חמץ

*On the eve of the fourteenth of Nisan at nightfall, one is to search for hametz. The custom is to hide ten pieces of bread throughout the house and to search with a candle and feather (Rema 432:2; Mishna Berura 13). If one plans to travel for Pesah and will not be home on the eve of the fourteenth of Nisan to conduct Bedikat Hametz in their home, it should be done at an earlier date without a blessing.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בְּעוֹר חֻמֵץ.

*After completing the search, the following declaration is made to nullify any remaining hametz that may be in one's possession. (Any hametz that you intend to use until the next morning is not included in this declaration and should be nullified in the morning during Biur Hametz.)*

כָּל חֻמֵּי־אֶרֶץ וְחֻמֵּי־אֵוָה דְּאִכְלָא בְּרִשׁוֹתַי  
דְּלֹא חֻמְתָּהּ וְדְלֹא בְעֵרְתָּהּ  
לְבָטִיל וְלִהְיוּ הַפְּקוּר  
בְּעֵפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

## ביעור חמץ

*On the morning of the fourteenth of Nisan, all the remaining leaven in one's possession is burned. After burning the leaven (prior to an hour before midday), one should nullify the leaven and recite the following:*

כָּל חֻמֵּי־אֶרֶץ וְחֻמֵּי־אֵוָה דְּאִכְלָא בְּרִשׁוֹתַי  
דְּחֻמְתָּהּ וְדְלֹא חֻמְתָּהּ, דְּבְעֵרְתָּהּ וְדְלֹא בְעֵרְתָּהּ  
לְבָטִיל וְלִהְיוּ הַפְּקוּר  
בְּעֵפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

**CANDLE LIGHTING**

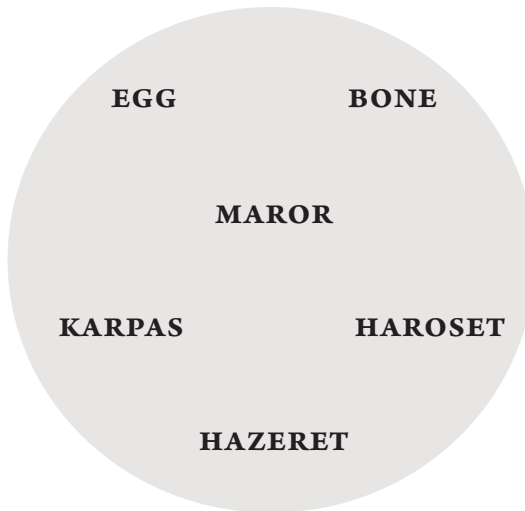
*Prior to sundown, the candles are lit, and then the following blessing is recited (on Friday night, add the words in brackets):*

**בְּרוּךְ** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who has made us holy through His commandments, and has commanded us to light (the Shabbat light and) the festival light.

**בְּרוּךְ** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time.

**THE SEDER PLATE**

*The most common practice of arranging the Seder plate is that of the Arizal:*





## הדלקת נרות

*Prior to sundown, the candles are lit, and then the following blessing is recited (on Friday night, add the words in brackets):*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שָׁל (שַׁבָּת וְשָׁל) יוֹם טוֹב.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

## קערת הסדר

*The most common practice of arranging the Seder plate is that of the Arizal:*



**THE ORDER OF THE SEDER:**

1. *Kadesh* – Kiddush
2. *Urhatz* – Wash the hands without a blessing prior to dipping the *karpas*
3. *Karpas* – Eat a vegetable after dipping it in salt water
4. *Yahatz* – Break the middle matza and reserve a larger portion for the afikomen
5. *Maggid* – Recite the story of the Exodus from Egypt
6. *Rahtza* – Wash the hands with a blessing prior to eating matza
7. *Motzi Matza* – Recite blessing of *Hamotzi* and eat the matza
8. *Matza* – the special blessing over matza
9. *Maror* – Eat the bitter herbs
10. *Korekh* – Eat the matza and bitter herbs together
11. *Shulhan Orekh* – Enjoy the main meal
12. *Tzafun* – Eat the afikomen
13. *Barekh* – Recite Grace After Meals
14. *Hallel* – Continue with the remainder of *Hallel*
15. *Nirtza* – Conclude the Haggada with songs of inspiration

# Reflections on Pesah and the Haggada

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**BOARD THE PLANE**

Every year I like to begin the *Shabbat HaGadol* lecture with an idea expressed by Rav Shimshon Pincus (*Haggada Tiferet Shimshon*, p. 1).

Imagine two separate individuals that prepare to depart on a trip by plane. One individual packs his bags, has them checked in at the curbside of the airport, and proceeds to the gate. He buys a cup of coffee and sits patiently, reading a newspaper. As the steward announces that boarding has begun, the individual peers out the window, admiring the various aircraft adjacent to the terminal. As the steward announces, “Last call for boarding,” this individual remains mesmerized, oblivious to the fact that the gate is closing. A moment later, he witnesses the departing flight lifting above the horizon.

The second individual performs the same preparation and goes through all the same motions, but with one difference: He actually boards the plane!

As we spend days and perhaps even weeks cleaning, shopping, and preparing *divrei Torah* for the night of the Seder, we need to make sure that we not only get ready for the flight, but that we actually board the plane on this monumental night. We need to ensure that all the preparations culminate in a meaningful and enjoyable Seder.

It is said that the Hatam Sofer’s son-in-law was warned not to look at his father-in-law at the Seder. The son-in-law did not fully understand the warning until he personally experienced a Seder with the Hatam Sofer. The Hatam Sofer was so illuminated that it hurt one’s eyes to look in his direction. Clearly, we need to prepare for this most special of nights.

**RETELLING (SIPPUR) AND REMEMBERING (ZEKHIRA) GO HAND IN HAND**

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik (*Emek Berakha Haggada*, p. 1) distinguishes between the mitzva of *zekhirat yetzi’at Mitzrayim* (remembering the Exodus from Egypt) and *sippur yetzi’at Mitzrayim* (retelling

◀ the story

the story of the Exodus from Egypt). Remembering the Exodus is something that we fulfill on a daily basis. We mention *yeti'at Mitzrayim* each morning and evening in the third paragraph of the *Shema*. However, retelling the intricacies of the event, along with questions and answers – this we perform once a year at the Seder.

Notwithstanding that one can distinguish between remembering, which requires one to merely mention the Exodus, and retelling the story in full, perhaps they in fact work in tandem. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (Rav Chaim's grandson) in his *sefer Me'afela Le'Or Gadol*, 2005, suggests that if we had a mitzva to merely remember *yeti'at Mitzrayim* in a cursory manner every day, the memory would not have a lasting impact (p. 31). That's why we need to spend one night a year delving into the intricacies of the event. This is what enables the remembrance to work for a whole year. Similarly, if we limit our focus to merely one night, it wouldn't last either. We need a combination of daily remembering backed up by an annual, extended retelling in order to reinforce its significance.

Rav Asher Weiss (*On Mo'adim*, vol. 3, ch. 15) compared this phenomenon to that of a telephone speed dial. It takes time and effort to input the phone numbers of one's family, friends, and business associates, but once they are saved in the phone, one can push a single button and use speed dial to quickly call a number. Seder night is equivalent to the initial insertion of all the contact information. We spend time and effort exploring the details of what transpired when we experienced the Exodus. Then, during the rest of the year, all we need to do is just mention *yeti'at Mitzrayim*, and it brings up our memory of the story we discussed in more detail at the Seder.

There are other examples of how we can use both an extended and abridged style in order to commemorate an event. For instance, on Tisha Be'Av, we experience twenty-four hours of mourning the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*. Yet there are smaller symbolic acts we perform on occasion to remind us of the

◀ destruction,

destruction, such as leaving an unfinished portion of a wall opposite the front door (Bava Batra 60b) or reciting *Al Naharot Bavel* prior to *Birkat HaMazon* (*minhag* instituted by the Shla). We can be reminded of the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* on occasion, so long as we experience an extensive mourning once a year.

Similarly, the combination of the daily remembrance coupled with the annual, in-depth discussion of *yetzi'at Mitzrayim* at the Seder is the winning formula to ensure that this momentous event is embedded in our hearts and minds.

### ONE NATION – SPANNING GENERATIONS

In the Haggada, we state that tonight, we are to feel as if we left Egypt:

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר  
חַיֵּב אָדָם לְרֵאוֹת אֶת עֵצְמוֹ בְּאֵלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

Generation by generation,  
each person must see himself  
as if he himself had come out of Egypt.

How is one to fulfill the imperative of feeling as if one participated in the Exodus from Egypt?

The Brisker Rav expresses that this is the most challenging mitzva of the entire year. What strategies, then, can we utilize in order to succeed in fulfilling this sublime command?

Rav Shimon Schwab in his *sefer Maayan Beit Hasho'eiva* (p. 155) offers an interesting insight to help us comprehend what it means to feel as if we personally participated in the Exodus.

Consider the human body. When a baby is born, the baby has hands, feet, toes, and fingers. What happens when the child matures? The child's body parts grow alongside the development of the child's mind. The hands of a person at the age of ten, twenty, or fifty are the same hands that person has always had, though they

◀ have grown

have grown larger and encountered more experiences. The hands are attached to the same person, just in a different form.

Rav Schwab posits that all of Klal Yisrael are *guf ehad* – one single entity. *Kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh* (each Jew is responsible for the other, is a guarantor for the other) is an idea not relevant only to the present nation, but to all generations, going all the way back to *yetzi'at Mitzrayim* and Avraham and Sarah. Therefore, when we state that we left Mitzrayim, we refer to our ancestors, who are like our hands at an earlier stage of our lives. Our predecessors and ourselves are one single entity, and leaving Mitzrayim is to be viewed as if it were our leaving Mitzrayim at an earlier phase of our development, as one nation, spanning generations.

Perhaps that is also the deeper reason of why, when the wicked son asks, *ma ha'avoda hazot lakhem* (what is this practice of yours) – he defeats the whole purpose of the evening. We are supposed to feel as if *we* left Egypt. We are one people – another link in the chain of the tradition. By the wicked son excluding himself from our history, he removes himself from the historic link to our people. Our future is connected to our past.

Tonight, we must re-experience the Exodus that we previously endured through our ancestors.

#### **BALANCING PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Pesah is referred to as the celebration of the creation of our nation. It is a time when families join together at the Seder and, when the *Beit HaMikdash* stood, they partook of the *Korban Pesah*. It is also a time when the nation gathered and will gather together in Jerusalem. Yet, as we unite, we must not forget the significance of each individual. We ought to strike and maintain a balance between the individual and the group or the *tzibbur*.

This holds true in many areas. Regarding Torah, we have to focus on the larger picture but also on each separate mitzva. The Or

◀ HaHayim

HaHayim on *Parashat Ekev* (*Devarim* 8:1) expresses this idea in the way he interprets the *pasuk Kol hamitzva*. The Torah should have selected the plural term *kol hamitzvot* to depict all of the mitzvot in the Torah. Why was the singular term “mitzva” chosen? The Or HaHayim suggests that Moshe knew that there is a dangerous attitude some may have while serving Hashem that can lead one down an erroneous path. One may focus on a particular mitzva that speaks to them, like *tzedaka*, learning, or *oneg Shabbat*, and let other less “appealing” mitzvot fall by the wayside. We need to have a bird’s-eye perspective that encompasses all of the mitzvot. Imagine if a patient informed the doctor that his pinky was bruised and he could not bend it and the doctor’s response was: “Don’t worry, you have nine other healthy fingers.” The fact that the patient’s finger is injured impacts his entire body. The focus needs to be on the whole package, not just on an individual mitzva. That is why Moshe uses the singular *kol hamitzva*. *Avodat Hashem* is a package deal. At the same time, we have to focus on our performance of each mitzva, recognizing the special opportunity that each one presents.

The Rambam, at the beginning of *Hilkhot Berakhot*, describes three types of blessings: *shevah* (praise), *nehenin* (pleasure), and *mitzva* (performance of a commandment). The Rambam inserts a seemingly superfluous word, linking two of these blessings. He states, “*keshem*” – just as we are obligated to make a *berakha* prior to enjoying a food or beverage, so too we are to recite a blessing prior to the performance of a mitzva. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik is troubled by the use of the word *keshem* (just as). What exactly is the connection between these two distinct blessings? In the sixth chapter of *Masekhet Berakhot* (35a), we learn that the blessing recited prior to eating is a *matir* – it serves to permit one to partake of a meal. Without such a blessing, one would be viewed as “stealing” for not recognizing that one’s food is provided by God.

Is the Rambam’s intention to compare the blessing on performing a mitzva to the blessing on partaking of food, such that both serve as a *matir*? What does a blessing prior to the

◀ performance



performance of a mitzva permit? The Rav explains that when one shakes a *lulav* or eats a piece of matza, they perform a physical act. How does that physical act evolve into a mitzva? How do we close the gap between the infinite and finite? Isn't it presumptuous to even dream of using this physical act to achieve closeness to the Master of the world?

That is the purpose of a *birkat hamitzva*. Once we recognize that we are serving Hashem in this manner because He instructed us to do so – once we recognize the Commander of our commandments – that turns waving a palm branch into *netilat lulav* and fulfilling the mitzva of the four species. Each and every mitzva presents this opportunity.

In life as well, we need to strike this same balance. Each of us has a unique purpose in life. We each have different goals and ways to sanctify God's name. We were born in this era to fulfill a specific obligation. As Rav Kook expresses (*Siddur Olot HaRaaya*) in connection with the prayer *Elokai ad shelo notzarti eini kedai* that we recite on the *yamim nora'im*, we state that until one was created he had no purpose. Now that he was created, if he does not fulfill that purpose (*takhlis*) it is as if he were never created. We must do our best to maximize our potential and fulfill our duty. Yet we cannot solely focus on ourselves. We are part of a larger picture.

We are all familiar with the simple understanding of the sin of the golden calf (*het ha'egel*), where Moshe Rabbenu threw down the *luhot*. Yet, the *Yalkut* offers a very different explanation. It states that when Moshe descended with the first set of *luhot* and he saw the *egel*, the letters flew heavenward, and the *luhot* became extremely heavy and Moshe dropped them. What does this mean? Furthermore, later in the *parasha* Hashem tells Moshe to carry the *luhot* up Har Sinai. Why was Moshe then able to carry the *luhot* all the way up the mountain, and they were not too heavy? Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains that it all depends on one's state of mind. When he saw the *het ha'egel*, Moshe was downtrodden. His mission had failed, and that was reflected in his strength and ability to

◀ hold the

hold the *luhot*. When he was commanded to take the second set of *luhot*, he was energized and excited that Am Yisrael was granted a second chance, and he now had a purpose and a mission to fulfill.

In the Brisk milieu, when Moshe descended with the first set of *luhot*, having witnessed the nation indulging in idolatry, he was passive – a *heftza* – but when he sought God’s forgiveness and was granted a second chance to transmit the *luhot*, he became a *gavra* – with a purpose and active role. It’s all about one’s mentality.

We all have a mission in life. When we awake each morning, the first prayer we recite is *Modeh Ani*. At the end of that sentence we state, “*Rabba emunatekha*.” Many *baalei musar* ask: Shouldn’t it have stated, “*Rabba emunati*,” “I have faith in You, God”? What is actually stated is, “You have faith in me.” In other words – I am being granted another day of life because You, God, have faith in me. If that is so, then I have the confidence to persevere and fulfill my mission for today.

This is all regarding the individual. But we also must recognize our second dimension, our being a small part of a greater whole, that whole being Am Yisrael.

To help clarify what it means to be connected to others, I am reminded of something I was told by Rav Yehiel, an elderly man who sat behind me in a shul in Boro Park. He learned in Radin with the Hafetz Hayim. He once told me that the Hafetz Hayim always cried when he heard of a *simha* or *tzara* (sad occasion) of a fellow Jew. He felt as if he were in the other person’s shoes. He truly shared their happiness and sadness. He was ecstatic for their *simha* and deeply saddened by their tragedy. He was truly part of the *Am*.

In the introduction to his *sefer Shaarei Yosher*, Rav Shimon Shkop discusses how we define ourselves and the need to expand our definition of *ani* (me). On the surface, focusing upon oneself seems to conflict with focusing on another, yet upon deeper reflection, one should unite the two. We start alone and focus on ourselves. Then once we get married, the “I” turns into “we.” It

◀ expands

expands further when we have children and establish a family. It then extends to our shul, school, community, country, and to our entire nation. Hashem demands more from us so that we include those around us.

We see then that both in the world of Torah and mitzvot, as well as in the world of our personal *avodat Hashem*, we need to recognize the *klal* and *prat*, the general and the specific, the singular individual as well as the global and communal.

As we celebrate Pesah and the formation of our nation, may we reflect on our personal mission and what we can do to maximize our personal potential and improve the lives of those around us.

### WHY THE TITLE “HAGGADA”?

#### VEHIGADETA LEVINKHA

The book we use to guide us through the Seder is referred to as the Haggada. Why has this book merited this title? The term *vehigadeta levinkha* – to tell your children – is utilized in the response we are to provide to the son who does not know how to ask (*she'eino yode'a lishol*). Yet the verb *amira*, to tell, is connoted in our response to the other three sons.<sup>1</sup> Since the term *amira* is utilized in connection with three of the four sons, perhaps it would have been more appropriate to refer to the Seder guidebook as *ha'amira* rather than Haggada.

Rav Yerachmiel Kram, in his *Haggada Talmudo Biyado* (p. 50), explains that the only *pasuk* in the Torah that refers directly to the night of the Seder is *Vehigadeta levinkha* (“Tell your son”). All the other *pesukim* are more general and represent the questions of the sons that are asked throughout the year. Therefore, *she'eino yode'a lishol* (“the one who does not know how to ask”) is connected to the Seder by the *pasuk Vehigadeta levinkha bayom hahu leimor*.

1. To the *hakham*, it states *atah emor lo*; to the *rasha*, *hak'hei et shinav ve'amar lo*; the *tam*, *ve'amarta eilav*. Only with respect to the *she'eino yode'a lishol*, it states *vehigadeta levinkha*.

◀ It also

It also relates to a specific day – *bayom hahu* (the Seder night). In sum, this shows that even if a child does not ask, we are obligated to transmit to him our history of *yeti'at Mitzrayim*.

That is why we call it Haggada, since the phrase *vehigadeta levinkha* describes our obligation specifically on this evening.

Still, we may ask, why is that word most appropriate? Maybe we can glean an answer based on Rashi. In a different context, Rashi asks in *Parashat Yitro* (*Shemot* 19:3): What is the difference between *amira* and *aggada*? *Amira*, explains Rashi, is soft-spoken. In contrast, *haggada* is a more serious expression which goes into depth. The *pasuk* states: *Ko tomar lebeit Yaakov, vetaged livnei Yisrael*. In the *pasuk*, Moshe is directed to instruct the men and women, yet the term used when instructing the women (*beit Yaakov*) is *tomar*, which refers to a softer language. When instructing the men (*bnei Yisrael*) the term used is *taged* (from Haggada), which is a harsher manner of speaking. This does not mean the language should have a negative connotation. Rather, *haggada* is meant to be an intense, lasting experience. That is why the term Haggada is most suited for this mitzva of telling *yeti'at Mitzrayim*.

#### REVELATION

Here's an additional thought with respect to the term Haggada. The Gra believes that to best comprehend a word, one should study the first time the word appears in the Torah. The word Haggada first appears after Adam and Hava eat from the forbidden tree. Hashem asks Adam,

...וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵירֹם אָתָּה? (בראשית ג:11)

And [God] said [to Adam]: Who revealed to you that you are naked? ... (*Bereshit* 3:11)

The term *higid*, to reveal, is used here to highlight something that was previously unknown. Only after eating the forbidden fruit did

◀ Adam have

Adam have a revelation that he was unclothed. This connects to our obligation on Seder night. We are to inquire and explore our history and our customs on this night. We are to gain a deeper understanding and comprehend new ideas that were previously unknown to us. It behooves us to prepare and encourage others to raise new insights that are engaging and meaningful at the Seder. That is the true meaning of Haggada.

#### TESTIMONY

Another explanation as to the use of the word Haggada is offered by Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. The Torah itself uses the term Haggada with respect to the requirement to transmit to our children the historical events surrounding the Exodus from Egypt, as is stated: *vehigadeta levinkha*. Rav Soloveitchik suggests that perhaps it is also related to another area in the Torah where a similar term is used: *haggadat eidut* (testifying). What is *haggadat eidut*? It is when I relate something that I witnessed or experienced. When a person provides testimony in court, it is based on his personal experience and not on hearsay. Haggada means I saw it, I felt it, I witnessed it! On this night, we are to feel as if we participated in the Exodus, as it is said, *Bekhol dor vador, hayav adam lirot et atzmo, ke'ilu hu yatza miMitzrayim*. We have to feel as if we've become free. That is what we are to experience at the Seder. We should be transmitting the story as if we experienced it firsthand, similar to the requirement of *haggadat eidut*, which requires eyewitness testimony.

#### SIPPUR – INSCRIBE

There's another word, another element, we can focus on as well. In the Haggada, the term *lesaper* is used to describe the transmission of the story of the Exodus. וְכֹל הַמְרַבֵּה לְסַפֵּר בִּיְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הָרִיזָהּ מְשֻׁבָּח, "The more one tells of the coming out of Egypt, the more admirable it is."

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik in *Haggada: The Night That*

◀ *Unites*

*Unites* (Aaron Goldscheider, 2014, p.38) suggests that there is a special meaning to this word. *Sippur* is derived from the words *sofer* and *sefer*. What does a scribe do? He writes on a parchment, on a *klaf*, something that's meant to last. Whenever we're *mesaper*, we're *sofrim!* We are scribes, and we are writing into the hearts of all who will be attending our Seder.

When a *sofer* writes a *sefer*, he creates something that has permanence, something that will serve future generations, even beyond the time that he is physically present. At the Seder, every parent and grandparent creates a *sefer* by being *mesaper* (transmitting the story). We are each a scribe. We are engraving the messages of tradition on the hearts and minds of each child. If we can succeed in telling our story through the Haggada – feeling as if we experienced it – we can be that *sofer* who will create something that will last for generations.

Moshe was called the Great Scribe because he inscribed the Torah on the hearts of all of Am Yisrael. May we be able to properly and successfully transmit the tradition and engrave the Torah into the hearts of our children.

### **A NIGHT OF EXPRESSING APPRECIATION**

Seder Night can be summed up in two words: *hakarat hatov*, expressing appreciation. Perhaps that is why in the Haggada, when we cite *pesukim* related to *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, we refer to *pesukim* in *Parashat Ki Tavo* that are recited during the ceremony of *Mikra Bikkurim* (offering of the first fruits) rather than from *Shemot*, where the description of the story is recorded originally. Bringing *bikkurim* exemplifies one's gratitude to Hashem for having provided produce. Retelling the story of *yetzi'at Mitzrayim* is also an example of expressing gratitude to Hashem, which is what we are to do this evening.

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein once observed a certain *rosh yeshiva* standing outside of a hospital, looking up at a sign containing names

◀ of all the

of all the different wards. He was mumbling to himself. Rav Zilberstein asked what he was doing. The *rosh yeshiva* replied: “When I come to the hospital, I look at all the signs, and I thank Hashem for my health and for keeping me out of the cardiology ward, the oncology ward, the emergency room, and all the other departments of the hospital.”

So often, we don’t focus on gratitude. We just live our lives and go through our daily routine. Only when there is a problem and we lose something do we start to appreciate what we had. Pesah is about recognizing what Hashem does for us even while we have everything.

At the Seder, it would be a meaningful exercise to go around the table and have each participant state something for which they are thankful. Health, special talent, being together, milestones achieved, because that’s what this night is all about, gratitude and appreciation.

THE SOURCE OF HAKARAT HATOV

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח מַטֶּיךָ וּנְטֵה־יָדְךָ  
עַל־מִימֵי מִצְרַיִם עַל־נְהַרְתָּם וְעַל־אֲרֵיהֶם וְעַל־אֲגַמֵּיהֶם וְעַל־  
כָּל־מִקְוֵה מִימֵיהֶם וַיְהִי־דָם וַיְהִי־דָם בְּכָל־אֲרָץ מִצְרַיִם וּבְעֵצִים  
וּבְאֲבָנִים. (שמות ז:יט)

And Hashem said unto Moshe: “Tell Aharon: Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, and over their ponds, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may turn into blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even inside vessels of wood and of stone.”  
*(Shemot 7:19)*

Hashem commanded Moshe to tell Aharon to initiate the plague of blood. Rashi explains that the reason Moshe didn’t bring the

◀ first three



first three plagues is because of the *hakarat hatov* he had for the water and earth which had protected him when he was an infant! The water protected Moshe when his mother left him in a basket in the Nile, and the earth covered up the corpse of the Egyptian he had killed as an adult. Hitting the water or earth to bring about a plague wouldn't have been an appropriate display of *hakarat hatov* on Moshe's part.

Rabbi Bernard Weinberger, in his *sefer Shemen HaTov – Al HaMo'adim* (p. 268) asks a simple question based on a gemara in Bava Kama (92b). The gemara cites the source for gratitude as being from a *pasuk* in *Parashat Ki Tetzeh*: “Do not despise the Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land” (*Devarim* 23:8). In other words, we owe the Egyptians *hakarat hatov* because they hosted us.

The *Shemen HaTov* cites the Hatam Sofer, who asks why the gemara uses the *pasuk* in *Parashat Ki Tetzeh* as the source for *hakarat hatov* and not these *pesukim* in *Shemot*, which are much earlier in the Torah, where Moshe displayed *hakarat hatov* to the water and earth. The Hatam Sofer answers that *Hazal* chose this *pasuk* because the Egyptians seem the least likely to have deserved any *hakarat hatov*. They enslaved us! They threw our babies into the Nile! Yet despite all that, we still owe them *hakarat hatov* because they did do something about which we could be minutely positive.

A Jew finds something to be grateful for even in a situation that seems completely terrible. Even though the Egyptians were wicked, we can't disregard the tiny amount of good they gave us. We have to find the good within the bad. Most things in life are multifaceted; therefore, we can't define any one event by just one aspect of it. Even in Egypt, we can find a small bit of positivity.

Further, in a situation in which we fail to find the good, we have to fall back on our belief that all is from HaKadosh Barukh Hu. We believe that Hashem has a divine plan; therefore, all that happens is for our best.

That is why *hakarat hatov* is learned from the *pasuk* in *Devarim* and not from *Shemot*. We are taught about this *midda*

◀ specifically



specifically in a place where there doesn't appear to be anything good or deserving of *hakarat hatov*. It's easy to feel *hakarat hatov* in a situation where the *tov* is obvious; it's a much greater level to feel appreciation in the darkest times.

The Shemen HaTov adds at the beginning of *Parashat Emor* that perhaps the words of Hazal, *lehazhir gedolim al ketanim* – “To admonish the older about the minors” – refers to taking care to not look at the big picture alone, but to also recognize the small details and see all the different levels of each experience.

Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl points out that an underlying theme of the first five *parashot* of the book of *Shemot* is *hakarat hatov*, that is, “gratitude and acknowledgment of a benefactor” (*Sihot Al Sefer Shemot*, p. 13). Sometimes it can be very hard to recognize and acknowledge all the good that has been bestowed upon us. We often have great excuses to justify why we don't owe any debt of gratitude to someone who has been kind to us. “They owed me.” “I paid for it.” “It was not big deal for them.” “It wasn't even that helpful.” “I didn't ask for help.” “They had ulterior motives.” These are just a few of the ways a person can justify a lack of gratitude.

Nevertheless, *hakarat hatov* is one of the cornerstones of our faith, and we witness it in several dimensions in the beginning of the book of *Shemot*.

First, we are introduced to the *midda* of *kefui tova* – the “denial of goodness” that Pharaoh exhibited. The Torah says:

וַיִּקַּם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע אֶת-יוֹסֵף.  
(שמות א:ח)

A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Yosef.  
(*Shemot* 1:8)

Whether or not it was the same Pharaoh who had ruled during the time of Yosef, this ruler was extraordinarily ungrateful to Yosef, who had saved the country in its time of distress.

◀ This attribute

This attribute of *kefui tova* toward people ultimately leads to having the *midda* of *kefui tova* toward Hashem. Soon after Pharaoh rejected the goodness of Yosef and his people, he said:

מִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלוֹ לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל. (שמות ה:ב)

Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice to let Israel out? (*Shemot* 5:2)

In contrast to Pharaoh, the *midda* of *hakarat hatov* is exemplified many times by Moshe Rabbenu. From the first plague, we learn of Moshe's strong *midda* of recognizing the good done to him when he refrained from striking the water or the land because the dirt and the water had previously saved him. Moshe was saved by the water as a baby when he was placed in a basket on the Nile. He was saved by the earth when it covered the Egyptian guard he killed for striking a Jewish slave.

Further, the Torah notes the reward dogs received because they did not bark when we left Egypt. God commands us to throw them dead animal carcasses for their benefit.

וּבִשָּׂר בְּשָׂדֵה טֶרֶפָה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ לְפָלֵב תִּשְׁלַכֶנּוּ אֹתוֹ.  
(שמות כב:ל)

You shall not eat dead animals lying in the field; rather, you shall cast it to the dogs. (*Shemot* 22:30)

There's further complexity to this concept of *hakarat hatov*. One can understand that it behooves us to show appreciation to a person who provided us with a benefit, but water and soil are inanimate objects. The water and soil that Moshe refrained from striking were not even the same water and soil that rescued him! Water flows continually, and the earth that hid the body of the Egyptian killed by Moshe was not the same earth that he would have had to hit.

◀ Similarly,

Similarly, the dogs that we feed with our non-kosher carcasses are not the same dogs that remained silent when we left Egypt.

Why must we show them *hakarat hatov*?

Rav Nebenzahl explains that we offer thanks not because the provider needs the appreciation, but rather, because the recipient ought to recognize his dependency on the assistance of another. The Hebrew word for thanks, *hodaya*, is also the word for “admission,” that is, the confession of having a debt. One who gives thanks expresses their dependency on others.

Perhaps this is why it is difficult to say thank you.

The same theme can be found in the *Sefer HaHinukh*, which explains (mitzva 33, *Kibud Av Va'Eim*):

וכשיקבע זאת המדה בנפשו יעלה ממנה להכיר טובת  
האל ברוך הוא...

When this trait becomes engrained in a person, it will lead one to recognize the good that Hashem has bestowed upon all.

Showing appreciation to others leads one to appreciate all that Hashem has provided to him. Rav Nebenzahl cites a story about Rabbi Yisrael Zev Gustman, the *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivat Netzah Yisrael. Rabbi Gustman, at the age of eighteen, served on the *beit din* of Rabbi Hayim Ozer Grodzinski in Vilna. During the Holocaust, Rabbi Gustman hid in the bushes and forests to avoid the Nazis. Years later, he was seen watering the plants at his yeshiva in Jerusalem. When asked why he was doing this trivial task, he responded that it was his way of showing his appreciation to the bushes that saved his life in Vilna. Even though those were not the same bushes, he felt obligated to express his appreciation to the same species, even in a different geography, thus exemplifying the *midda* of *hakarat hatov*.

◀ We have

We have to realize that the *midda* of *hakarat hatov* is a fundamental principle in Judaism. We are known as *Yehudim*, a word whose root is also *hodaya*. We must make gratitude an integral part of who we are.

### **WHY IS THERE NO BLESSING ON THE RECITATION OF THE HAGGADA?**

Why don't we recite a *berakha* on the recitation of the Haggada? After all, the recitation of the Haggada is the way we fulfill the mitzva of *sippur yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, and we usually recite a *Birkat HaMitzva* prior to performing a mitzva.

We will suggest six explanations:

**Kiddush:** This is recited at the beginning of the Seder, includes a reference to the holiday, and also serves as the blessing on *sippur yetzi'at Mitzrayim* (Rif, quoted in *Sefer Abudraham*).

**The Berakha of Asher Ge'alanu:** This references the salvation that is recited later in the Haggada and thus serves as the blessing over *Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* (*Shibolei HaLeket*, Pesah Seder, *siman* 218). But there is a problem with this: The *berakha* appears much later, after we have already spent over an hour engaging in *sippur yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. We should have recited the *berakha* earlier in the Seder, based on the general rule of *over le'asiyatan* that requires us to recite a blessing immediately preceding the performance of the mitzva!

Perhaps we can suggest that since we are supposed to feel as if we are experiencing the Exodus for the first time our status is similar to a convert. Our nation was formed this very evening, and we are thus evolving throughout the night. A convert does not recite a *berakha* until after he immerses in a *mikve*, even though typically blessings are recited prior to the performance of a mitzva. This is due to the fact that one cannot recite a *berakha* before becoming a Jew. Similarly, we cannot recite a *berakha* at the beginning of the

◀ Seder because

Seder because we first have to experience the process of becoming a nation.

***Birkhot HaTorah:*** The Ponovitcher Rav (cited in *Rivavot Efraim*, 2:129) suggests that since *sippur* is a form of Talmud Torah, it is connected to the *Birkhot HaTorah* which we recited earlier in the day in our morning prayers.

***Infinite:*** One recites a *berakha* only on a mitzva with a finite requirement. Since there is no *shiur* (limit) or any way to quantify this mitzva, no *berakha* is recited. *Kol hamarbeh lesaper hareh zeh meshubah*. The more one retells the story, the more one is praiseworthy (Rashba, cited in *Sefer Abudraham*).

***Spontaneous Praise:*** It is preferable to engage in *sippur* and express our gratitude to Hashem for our Exodus from Egypt in an authentic manner rather than out of an obligation. For example, if a child recites a blessing of *barukh ata... al mitzvat kibud av* before bringing a parent a drink of water, the parent could be upset that the child is acting out of the obligation of *kibud* rather than out of love. We do not recite a blessing prior to fulfilling the mitzva of *kibud av va'eim* because it would be formalizing it, making it seem that we do not respect our parents out of love and appreciation. It is a similar idea with *sippur yetzi'at Mitzrayim*.

Hashem took us out of Egypt. He saved us from slavery and potential total annihilation. Wouldn't it be natural to recall such an event out of *appreciation*? Making a *berakha* would dilute the natural outpouring of emotion that one should experience when recalling such a meaningful and remarkable event. For the same reason, we do not preface the recitation of *Hallel* at the Seder with a *berakha*. This reflects a natural instinct to offer praise and joy for having experienced the Exodus (*Rabbi Lau Haggada*, citing Sefat Emet, p. 23).

◀ *Berakha*

**Berakha on a Berakha:** The Netivot (Rav Yaakov MiLisa, *Maaseh Nissim Haggada*, p. 23) suggests that one does not recite a *berakha* on a *berakha* or on a mitzva performed in the context of saying a *berakha*. Since the Haggada is already structured within four other *berakhot*, there is no need to introduce it with a blessing. For the same reason, we don't recite a *berakha* on *Birkat HaMazon* (which is a biblical obligation) because it in itself is a *berakha*.

### UNDERSTANDING HUKAT HAPESAH

Dovid HaMelekh requested: יְהִי לִבִּי תָמִים בְּחֻקֶיךָ – “May my heart be perfect in your statutes” (*Tehillim* 119:80). The Midrash explains that the word “statutes” is in the plural form to reflect two statutes (*hukim*). First, the *korban pesah*: It is written “Zot hukat haPesah” (*Shemot* 12:43) – “This is the statute of the *korban pesah*.” Second, “Zot hukat haTorah” (*Bemidbar* 19:2) is the statute of the *para aduma*.

What is the connection between the *para aduma* and the *korban pesah*?

Why did Dovid HaMelekh pray that his heart be sincere in the fulfillment of both of these statutes specifically?

Rav Asher Weiss offers an explanation. In the Midrash, there is not a comparison of these two different statutes, but rather, a contrasting. On the Seder night, we are encouraged to ask questions. Those people that are learned delve into an understanding of every nuance in the Haggada. We also do specific acts in order to trigger questions from our children (*Minhat Asher Al HaTorah: Vayikra, Bemidbar, Devarim*, p. 180, and *Rav Asher Weiss on the Haggada*, p. 309). Thus, the *korban pesah* is a symbol for asking questions: asking, searching, studying. For what other mitzva do we have to state the reason for doing it? We keep saying, *Al shum ma* – “For what reason?” We have to go above and beyond in order to understand and internalize the message and customs of Pesah.

On the other hand, the mitzva of *hukat para aduma* is a

◀ mystery.

mystery. Even Shlomo HaMelekh admitted he does not fully understand the reasoning behind the intricacies of the statute of *para aduma* (*Kohelet* 7:23).

So these are the two approaches to mitzvot. *Hukat haPesah* involves striving to understand, searching, and yearning. *Para* requires us to accept what HaKadosh Barukh Hu dictates we must do.

When are we meant to ask and investigate, and when are we meant to humbly accept Hashem's commandments?

Rav Asher Weiss suggests we learn the answer to this question from Avraham Avinu. When asked to sacrifice his son Yitzhak, Avraham acts without questioning. He wakes up early in the morning and sets out on his journey. Yet after Avraham binds his son and lifts a knife to slaughter him, an angel calls out to Avraham instructing him to cease and desist.

At this point, according to the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabba* 56:8, quoted in Rashi, *Bereshit* 22:12), Avraham begins to question. First Hashem says, "Yitzhak will be your heir," and then He says, "Kill your son." Now Hashem is commanding me, "Don't kill him." What is the meaning of all this?

However, why didn't Avraham question Hashem's request immediately?

So long as Avraham Avinu had a responsibility to act, he asked no questions. He focused on fulfilling a command. Only after he is instructed to spare his son and no longer has an obligation to complete an action, he inquires more deeply in order to better comprehend Hashem's intentions.

Perhaps that is also the explanation as to why Bnei Yisrael received two crowns for stating *naaseh venishma*. The gemara (*Shabbat* 88a) tells us that 600,000 angels descended and placed two crowns on the head of each individual at Har Sinai, one crown for having stated *naaseh* and the second for stating *nishma*. Why did we get two crowns? Bnei Yisrael did one great thing: We said *naaseh* before *nishma*. Why did we get a second crown for *nishma*?

◀ *The Minhat*

The *Minhat Asher* explains that yes, the first thing they did was *naaseh*, that is, *hukat hapara*. We accepted the commandments unconditionally. Then, there was the *hukat haPesah*, and this involved searching, yearning, and trying to understand the messages of the mitzvot. That's also what Bnei Yisrael committed to do.

Throughout the year we observe *hukat hapara*: obedience and unconditional fulfillment of Hashem's commandments. For one night of the year, it's time to try to fulfill the *hukat haPesah*, and that is on the night of the Seder. There's no other night of the year that we have more questions and more discussion.

Let's do all we can to fulfill this *hok* and engage in stimulating discussion around the intricacies of the Haggada, enhancing this special night for all present at our Seder.

### LESSONS OF THE KORBAN PESAH

There are many lessons to be learned from the laws of the *korban pesah*. We will explore several.

#### SEFER HAHINUKH: ROYALTY

The Torah commands that the *korban pesah* be eaten in the house and not be taken outside.

בְּבֵית אֶחָד יֵאָכַל לֹא־תוֹצִיאַ מִן־הַבַּיִת מִן־הַבֶּשֶׂר חוּצָה  
וְעֹצֶם לֹא תִשְׁבְּרוּ בוֹ. (שמות יב:מו)

In one house shall it be eaten; you shall not remove any of the meat out of the house, nor shall you break a bone thereof. (*Shemot* 12:41)

What is the reason behind this prohibition? The *Sefer HaHinukh* (mitzva 20) suggests that because we eat the *korban pesah* as a symbol of our freedom, we must eat it in the way that royalty would eat – inside the home. Royals don't eat outside on the run. Kings

◀ eat at home,



eat at home, while sitting, and in a relaxed manner. Their time is theirs. They don't leave in the middle of their meal. Since we are like royalty on the night of Pesah, we must act like it.

For the same reason we are also prohibited from breaking the bones of the *korban pesah*. We are to eat it in a civilized and dignified manner.

*MESHEKH HOKHMA: DISCIPLINE*

With respect to the preparation of the original *korban pesah* in Egypt, the Torah dictates:

דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ  
לְהֵם אִישׁ שֶׁה לְבֵית-אָבֹתָ שָׁה לְבֵיתוֹ. (שְׁמוֹת יב:ג)

Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying: On the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. (*Shemot* 12:3)

Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael to bring sheep into their homes on the tenth of Nisan, four days before they would be redeemed. Why was a four-day waiting period necessary?

The *Meshekh Hokhma* (*Shemot* 12:3) explains that Hashem wanted to take us out of Egypt in an orderly and disciplined way. He didn't want us to escape in a wild mob. Obviously, after 210 years of forced labor, all of Klal Yisrael just wanted to get out. Additionally, the entire Egyptian nation was on the verge of civil war, desperate for Pharaoh to release Bnei Yisrael so as not to lose all their firstborn. Would anyone have said anything if Bnei Yisrael had left? The Egyptians would probably have been thrilled; nobody would have wanted to stop Bnei Yisrael from leaving.

For this reason, Hashem commanded the four-day waiting period. The sheep would be tied for four nights, bleating the whole time, and the Egyptians would have to suffer the pain of witnessing

◀ their “gods”

their “gods” tied up to Bnei Yisrael’s bedposts, and then watch as they were roasted.

That was the purpose of the four days: HaKadosh Barukh Hu wanted to show the world that Bnei Yisrael could leave at that very moment, but didn’t because they were waiting to be told when to do so by Hashem. They were disciplined and orderly rather than spontaneous and disorganized. Yiddishkeit is not only about following the dictates of the Torah, but is also about being organized and disciplined.

Perhaps this is also why Bnei Yisrael were commanded to eat the *korban pesah* whole, without any broken bones, so that it was done in a neat and orderly fashion, not in an animalistic way. Additionally, on several occasions, the Gemara (Shabbat 114a) dictates that a *talmid hakham* has to act properly and dress immaculately so as not to appear disheveled. It is essential that all we do is viewed by others in a positive light, so to create a *kiddush Hashem*.

#### RAV AHRON SOLOVEICHIK

Rav Ahron Soloveichik (*Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind*, p. 138) expands on this idea of orderliness, linking it to the moment of liberation from Egypt. Most often, when there’s a change of leadership in a country, anarchy results and utter chaos reigns. There are several reasons why this is so: There is confusion and fear of the unknown, and moral laws fall by the wayside as people are delighted with their newfound freedom. The pent-up emotions of the people come to the forefront, and often in their anger over their pain, they hurt others.

During the Exodus from Egypt, although there was a change in rulership, says Rav Soloveichik, the usual chaos that follows the collapse of a regime was blatantly missing. When we left Egypt, there was perfect order. We did not leave a second earlier than we were told to. We left as a nation, in calm quiet, because while we may had been liberated, we were not yet free. When a Jew experiences physical freedom, it does not mean that he no longer has moral and ethical standards to uphold.

◀ *Hazal*

*Hazal* tell us that the only truly free person is one who engages in Torah (Avot 6:2). The more we subjugate ourselves to HaKadosh Barukh Hu, the more we appreciate life. It's only when we don't have the proper appreciation of halakha that we feel chained down to the Torah. Judaism, however, through its restrictions and laws, guides us to a meaningful and truly free life.

The halakhot of the *korban pesah* were a message to Bnei Yisrael regarding their newfound freedom. Chaos had no part in their redemption; they were told exactly where to be on that night. They were instructed to stay put in their homes and not to congregate in public places. Everyone was to remain in their house and be accounted for, eating exactly what Hashem told them to eat. Only when Hashem would tell them to go would they get up and leave.

#### OZDAYIM LATORAH: UNIFICATION

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (*Oznayim LaTorah*) offers yet another lesson to be learned from the laws of the *korban pesah*.

It took a long time for Bnei Yisrael to become a nation. There was a lot of divisiveness before we finally unified. Every single sibling relationship in the Torah, from Kayin and Hevel through to the tribes, was rife with discord, which is why we ended up in Egypt. Egypt served to purify us and heal us from this conflict that was so ingrained in us. We had to go through the pain of Egyptian servitude *together* in order to feel unity, a unity that was a necessary achievement in our becoming a nation.

The *korban pesah* was the first national *korban*, the defining *korban* of the Jewish nation, the *korban* that bound Bnei Yisrael together. It is the only *korban* in which every single Jew must partake. This serves as a lesson that we are all in it together. The *korban pesah* was all about unity. Even if a person could eat an entire lamb himself, he was not allowed to do so with the *korban pesah*; it had to be shared. The commandment was to eat it in groups, and no one was allowed to leave his group.

◀ The main

The main message of the *korban pesah* is a message of unity. At least once a year, the community would have to sit together, and if any conflict occurred, they were forced to resolve it. No one could leave. This command was meant to accustom Bnei Yisrael to a life of unity and love.

### **WHY SHIRA NOW – AT THE SPLITTING OF THE SEA?**

What was it about the Splitting of the Sea that prompted Bnei Yisrael to sing? Why did they not sing at any earlier point, and specifically after any of the awe-inspiring plagues? We sing their very *shira* every single morning following the words *vayaaminu ba-Hashem uveMoshe avdo*, “They had faith in Hashem and His servant Moshe.” This intensifies the question: Did Bnei Yisrael only begin having faith in Hashem after the Splitting of the Sea?

Rabbi Zalman Melamed (*LaZeman HaZeh*, p. 60), founder of the Beit El yeshiva, answers this question with a concept that is relevant up to this day. There is a corrupt mentality that existed then and unfortunately still exists. Some of Bnei Yisrael felt that Hashem was dealing too harshly with the Egyptians. They were worried that the Egyptians would worsen things for them after each plague Hashem dealt them. Somehow, they forgot about their infants who had been tossed into the sea. They chose to forget about the baths Pharaoh took in Israelite blood. They erroneously viewed the Egyptians as victims and themselves as aggressors, despite the very obvious falsehood of that belief. These members of Bnei Yisrael worried that the whole world would think negatively of them for treating their oppressors so harshly.

When a member of Bnei Yisrael chooses to side with their oppressors and defend them, no miracle is great enough. This point is relevant even today, unfortunately. Throughout history, we have been made to feel like we are the aggressor and our enemy is the victim.

What can be done to drive out this mentality? Hashem had to push the reset button on us. Hashem performed a miracle that

◀ was like

was like an electric shock – it froze the entire world for a few seconds, and then we rebooted. The Splitting of the Sea left no doubts for anyone. No one had any choice but to believe.

The Mekhilta (*Parashat Beshallah*) describes this concept very well with a *mashal*. A dove was being chased by a predatory bird. It finally found a crevice in a rock to hide in, but then it saw a snake lying in wait there. On one side, the dove was being chased by a predatory bird, and on the other side, it was trapped by a snake. Bnei Yisrael was that dove during the Splitting of the Sea. The Egyptians' cruelty was undeniable at that moment when Hashem performed the Splitting of the Sea, the greatest divine revelation that had ever occurred. At that moment, everyone was shocked into believing.

The *Sefer HaHinukh* (mitzva 173) explains that the idea of a *mikve* is that when we emerge from the water, it is as if we are recreated as a totally new person. It is compared to a baby emerging from the amniotic fluid of its mother's womb. The baby is created when it leaves that water and exits the womb.

This is what happened at the Splitting of the Sea. Bnei Yisrael were reborn as they emerged from the water. At that point, they no longer pitied their killers, and they recognized their misplaced pity. As the Gemara (Yoma 22b) tells us: "One who has mercy on the cruel will end up being cruel to those who deserve mercy." We learn this from Shaul who had mercy on Amalek and later massacred the entire city of Nov.

We are a merciful nation, but we must realize who our enemy is and not have misplaced mercy. This was what the *shira* by the sea was about. It was the moment when every single member of Bnei Yisrael recognized the extent of Hashem's greatness and couldn't hold themselves back from singing His praises.

Another explanation is offered by Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik in *Mo'adei HaRav* (pp. 70–168). The Rav raises a question as to why Bnei Yisrael sang praises at *Yam Suf* and not when they left Mitzrayim. The Rav explained that the two events, that at Har

◀ Sinai and

Sinai and that at Har HaMoriah are distinguishable. Har Sinai was infused with *kedusha* (holiness) when Hashem rested above it and transmitted the Torah to us at that location. Yet it did not possess an eternal *kedusha*. Har HaMoriah, on the other hand, the location upon which the *Beit HaMikdash* was built, has eternal *kedusha*. Why the difference? The Rav explains: Man is required to partake in something in order for it to be infused with eternal *kedusha*. At Har Sinai, man was passive. At Har HaMoriah, man was active. Avraham sacrificed there, Yaakov slept there, and for generations, *korbanot* were offered there. Once man participates, *kedusha* is eternal! Man was also active at Keriat Yam Suf. The nation had to immerse themselves in the sea in order for it to split, so that they could cross through the water to the other side. It was this activism that infused the event with a higher level of *kedusha* that warranted *shira* (praise).

### THREE HOLIDAYS AS A UNIT

Rav Asher Weiss in his Haggada (p. 132) asks, why is it that in *mus-saf leshalosh regalim* we include a reference to all three *mo'adim*? On Pesah, why not just focus on Pesah – why mention Sukkot and Shavuot as well?

Rav Weiss explains that really, each of the holidays represent another stage of an *avoda* that we perform. First, in order to engage in *avodat Hashem* (worshipping the Creator), we need to remove any impediments or stains that we have. This is referred to as *sur mei'ra*. This is symbolized by the holiday of Pesah, when we remove ourselves from the impurity of Mitzrayim. The second stage is the preparation (*hakhana*). This is symbolized by Sukkot, when Bnei Yisrael traveled through the desert in preparation for entering into Eretz Yisrael. Lastly, the goal of *asei tov* is symbolized by Shavuot and includes receipt of the Torah!

We need to extend the symbolism of the *hagim* to our daily lives. First, we need to rid ourselves of distractions, prepare

◀ ourselves,

ourselves, and then, actually engage in the performance of Torah and mitzvot. They all go together; they are not mutually exclusive. That is why they are referenced together in the *tefilla*, because we ought to combine all three attributes into our daily lives.

Why do we announce the fourteen *simanim* at the beginning of the Seder?

### ORDER HIGHLIGHTS FREEDOM

There is a custom to start the Seder with the recitation of the fourteen *simanim*, representing the various sections of the Haggada (*Kadesh, Urhatz, Karpas, Yahatz*, etc.). We don't do this on any other holiday. We don't announce the different *yehi ratzon's* that we will recite on Rosh HaShana evening at the beginning of our meal, nor do we have a similar custom on any other Yom Tov. Why don't we just begin the Seder? Why is it necessary to announce in advance what we will be experiencing?

We can glean an answer by looking at the end of the Seder. Following our meal, we recite **חֲסֵל סְדוּר פֶּסַח כְּהִלְכָתוֹ... כְּאִשֶּׁר זָכִינוּ לְסַדֵּר אוֹתוֹ, בִּן נוֹבֵה לְעִשׂוֹתוֹ**, “Just as we merited organizing the evening, we should be able to sacrifice the *korban pesah* as well.” The Shemen HaTov, in his Haggada (p. 175), explains that this is a sort of prayer. We left Egypt “*behipazon*,” in a hurried and unordered fashion. Yet tonight, as we recall that event, we organize the night into fourteen sections: *Kadesh, Urhatz*, etc. These juxtaposed positions underscore that we are in fact now free and able to control our time. We are not like slaves chaotically escaping their master. To maximize the experience tonight, we carefully plan and prepare the meal and the *divrei Torah*, as well as the sequence of events that will unfold. As *Hazal* tell us, “*zerizin makdimin lemitzvot*,” “We should rush to fulfill mitzvot.” However, there is no such concept as, “*zerizin makdimin bemitzvot*.” That is, once we are engaged in the mitzva, there is no rush. After all the preparation, let's relax and enjoy these monumental moments as we relive our past and transmit our tradition to future generations.

◀ MAXIMIZE



### MAXIMIZE THE EXPERIENCE

Rabbi Sender, in the *Commentator's Pesah Seder Haggada* (p. 93), addresses this question. He explains as follows. When one prepares for a long trip, he receives an itinerary detailing where he's headed, with all the stops along the way, as well as the final destination. An itinerary prepares the traveler emotionally for the trip and also enables the traveler to maximize his trip. Imagine traveling to Europe without preparing an itinerary and deciding haphazardly to visit a museum that afternoon. Upon arriving to the museum without an advance reservation, one may not be granted admission. Without a preplanned itinerary, inevitably, time will be wasted and sights will be left unseen.

Similarly, tonight we are embarking on a journey. True, we are to experience the Exodus from Egypt, but just as importantly, we are to arrive at a higher spiritual destination. The best way to achieve our goal is to announce the way in which we seek to get there (like the route established by a GPS system), so we all know how we will arrive at our endpoint. Staging the evening in an organized fashion guides the participants so that expectations are clear, as well as the path and the destination.

### THE "SEDER"

We inquired earlier as to the choice of the term Haggada for the book that leads us through the ceremony of the evening. What about the name of the meal itself? Why is it referred to as the "Seder"? The term Seder means order. *Talmudo Beyado* (p. 23) suggests that at the beginning, we list the *simanim*, in order to inform all present regarding the structure of the evening. This is an important lesson in education. It is important for the student to understand the structure of a *shiur*. To better absorb the material, a student should be told what questions will be raised and the structure of the lesson. This is the pedagogical nature of this night. There is a specific order to the ceremony of this night, and we lay

◀ out the



out the structure at the beginning so everyone can understand the progression. That is why we call it the Seder – this means “the order.”

### **SIMANIM... OF LOST OBJECTS**

The Tiferet Ish, cited in the *Maayana Shel Torah* (Alexander Friedman, *Haggada Shel Pesah*) discusses *derekh drush*, “*aveida hushav besimanim*” – a lost object is returned after being identified by signs particular to the item. If a person can relay a description of the unique aspects of an object, it proves his ownership of such lost item. Throughout the year, we’re lost. We lose ourselves getting caught up in trivial matters. One night a year, on our national birthday, at the Seder, we provide *simanim*, which are like declarations. When we partake in these *simanim* throughout the night, we find ourselves and return to where we ought to be. On the night of Pesah, we can return to ourselves, and that’s why those items are called the *simanim*, the signs. These are the signs of every Jew at the Seder.

There are only two times in the year we have a Seder: the Seder on Pesah night and Seder Yom HaKippurim (this is a reference to the Kohen Gadol’s services). These are the two nights of the year that we need to find ourselves to get back to our true identities. On Yom Kippur, a Jew gets back to his true identity and uncovers his true self as an individual. On Pesah, we do so as a nation.

### **RECLINING AT THE SEDER**

Why are we obligated to recline at the Seder? This is so fundamental that if one eats matza or drinks wine without reclining, then they have not properly fulfilled their obligation.

In *Haggada, The Night That Unites* (Aaron Goldscheider, p. 78) there is a citation from Rav Kook, explaining that when a nation is exiled from its homeland, its ability to survive is tested. Do the exiled people pray to return to their homeland? Most nations

◀ eventually

eventually conform and are integrated into other nations. The Jewish nation continuously prays to return to Israel and to rebuild our Temple. Although our land was taken from us, we retained our Torah ideals. Even though we may not have experienced full redemption, we recline in order to portray that although we are in exile, we are free because we can practice our religion and maintain our spirituality.

# הגדה של פסח

## THE PESAH HAGGADA



*The program for the evening is announced beforehand  
in the following form:*

קדש / ורחץ / כרפס / יחץ  
 מגיד / רחצה / מוציא מצה  
 מרור / כורך / שלחן עורך  
 צפון / ברך / הלל / נרצה

KIDDUSH  
 WASHING  
 KARPAS  
 SPLITTING  
 TELLING  
 WASHING  
 MOTZI MATZA  
 BITTER HERBS  
 WRAPPING  
 TABLE SETTING  
 HIDDEN  
 BLESSING  
 PRAISING  
 PARTING

## KADESH / KIDDUSH

*The first cup of wine is poured. Lift the cup with the right hand and say the following:*

*On Shabbat add:*

*quietly:* And it was evening, and it was morning – Gen. 1  
 יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי the sixth day.

Then the heavens and the earth were completed, Gen. 2  
 and all their array.  
 With the seventh day, God completed the work He had done.  
 He ceased on the seventh day from all the work He had done.  
 God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy,  
 because on it  
 He ceased from all His work He had created to do.

*On other evenings Kiddush starts here:  
 When saying Kiddush for others, add:*

Please pay attention, my masters.

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
 who creates the fruit of the vine.

---

To sanctify whatever follows it. We sanctify the *seuda*. Typically, the sanctification takes a few minutes, and then we continue on to the *seuda*. Rav Shlomo Zalman says that those two hours of reciting the Haggada are not a *hefsek* (interruption); rather, it's part of Kiddush. The extended retelling of *yetzi'at Mitzrayim* is part and parcel of sanctifying the night. It's not a matter of how much time passes. Rather, *Kiddush bemakom seuda* means, I can't do other things that have nothing to do with the *seuda*. The entire Haggada is about sanctifying the night of Pesah, and that's considered a continuation of Kiddush.

**KADESH – FOR US TO SANCTIFY**

We conclude the first paragraph of Kiddush on Friday night with the words *asher bara Elokim laasot*, that God “had created to do.”

The last 

## קדש

The first cup of wine is poured. Lift the cup with the right hand and say the following:

On שבת add:

בראשית א

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר *quietly*

יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי:

בראשית ב

וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צִבְאוֹם:  
וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:  
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ  
כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ, אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, לַעֲשׂוֹת:

On other evenings קידוש starts here:

When saying קידוש for others, add:

סברי מרנן

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

## KADESH / KIDDUSH

## HALAKHIC QUESTION

Usually, we have a halakhic obligation of *Kiddush bemakom seuda*. One is obligated to recite Kiddush adjacent to where one is to partake in the Shabbat meal. In fact, there are three requirements, including the place, the time, and the content of the food. The meal should include bread, or at least an item of food upon which one recites *borei minei mezonot*. Lastly, the recitation of Kiddush should be within a certain proximity of time to the meal.

On Seder night we make Kiddush, but we don't wash for *Hamotzi* for some time. What happens to the requirement of *Kiddush bemakom seuda*?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in *Kemotze Shalal Rav Haggada*) explains as follows. What's the purpose of Kiddush usually?

*On Shabbat, add the words in parentheses.*

ברוך Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
 who has chosen us from among all peoples,  
 raised us above all tongues, and made us holy  
 through His commandments.  
 You have given us,  
 LORD our God, in love  
 (Shabbats for rest),  
 festivals for rejoicing,  
 holy days and seasons for joy,  
 (this Shabbat day and)  
 this day of the festival of Matzot,  
 the time of our freedom  
 (with love), a holy assembly in memory  
 of the Exodus from Egypt.  
 For You have chosen us  
 and sanctified us  
 above all peoples,  
 and given us as our heritage  
 (Your holy Shabbat in love and favor and)  
 Your holy festivals for joy and gladness.  
 Blessed are you, LORD,  
 who sanctifies (the Shabbat,) Israel and the festivals.

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circumcised, why didn't he create us circumcised? Just finish the job! He created us with lungs, kidneys, and a heart; couldn't he have just taken off that extra piece of skin?

The *Sefer HaHinukh* explains that HaKadosh Barukh Hu created us up to a certain point and then wanted us to take over. We have to act in order to perfect ourselves and our world. This is also why our custom is to mention Pinhas at the beginning of every *brit*. As Rashi mentions in *Parashat Pinhas* (*Bemidbar* 25:11), God stepped aside so Pinhas could act in a way that would sanctify God's name.

This is precisely 



On שבת, add the words in parentheses.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר  
בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם, וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן, וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו  
וְתַתֵּן לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (שִׁבְתוֹת לְמִנוּחָה  
וּמוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן, אֶת  
יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם) חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה  
זִמַּן חֲרוּתָנוּ (בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ  
זָכַר לִיציאת מצרים, כִּי בָנוּ  
בְּחֵרָת וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ  
מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, (וְשַׁבָּת)  
וּמוֹעֲדֵי קֹדֶשׁךָ  
(בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן)  
בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הַנְּחַלְתָּנוּ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְקַדֵּשׁ (הַשַּׁבָּת וְ) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזִּמְנִים.

The last word, *laasot* (to do) seems superfluous. The *pasuk* which is quoted from the first chapter of *Bereshit* could have ended with the statement *asher bara Elokim*, that God created. What does the word *laasot*, to do, add to the phrase?

Hashem created the entire world. As the description of the six days of creation are concluded, God tells man: I have created this world; now it is your turn to do your share, so to speak (*laasot*). Now, you take over. You be creative. Work hard to maximize your potential and achieve great accomplishments.

A similar idea is expressed by the *Sefer HaHinukh* (mitzva 2) in connection with the mitzva of *brit mila*. If God wanted us to be

*On Motza'ei Shabbat, the following Havdala is added:*

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God,  
King of the Universe,  
who creates the lights of fire.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,  
King of the Universe,  
who distinguishes between sacred and secular,  
between light and darkness,  
between Israel and the nations,  
between the seventh day and the six days of work.  
You have made a distinction  
between the holiness of the Shabbat  
and the holiness of festivals, and have sanctified  
the seventh day above the six days of work.  
You have distinguished and sanctified  
Your people Israel with Your holiness.  
Blessed are You, LORD,  
who distinguishes between sacred and sacred.

*Those who recited the blessing Sheheheyanu at candle lighting do not repeat it here:*

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God,  
King of the Universe,  
who has given us life, sustained us,  
and brought us to this time.

*Drink while reclining to the left.*

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Now begins man's task to perfect himself and the world around him, to conduct himself in a way that will sanctify Hashem's name throughout the world.

#### **KIDDUSH IS PERSONAL AT THE SEDER**

Although every Shabbat and Yom Tov begins with Kiddush, at the Seder, there is a unique aspect to it. Not only do we drink four cups, but whereas on other occasions one may recite Kiddush on behalf of others, tonight everyone has their own cup of wine for Kiddush.

Kiddush 