Haggadah Master file

**Pesach Preparation -** **Rav Moshe Landau ztl.[[1]](#footnote-1)** noted that the month of Nisan is a month of preparation, a month of work. The important part of the work is to change, to turn from being ‘slaves of Pharaoh’ to being servants of HaShem. Pharaoh is the Evil Inclination. It is everything that enslaves us. Our work is to break free from it. In Hassidism they say that the general redemption needs a prelude of a personal redemption of each and every person. That is, every one should prepare oneself, to be redeemed from all the elements that hinder his life. This is our work now: to prepare, to arrive at Leil HaSeder ready, with the proper emotions.

**Preparing for the Seder** – When **Rabbi Alvin Marcus[[2]](#footnote-2) z”l** would begin his seder, he would first stop and look at the amazing table and remark to his guests that since the Seder night was built on gratitude to Hashem for the exodus from Egypt, it was also incumbent to first offer gratitude to Mrs. Marcus and everyone else who had helped make the environment royal. According to Mrs. Marcus, this was vintage Rabbi Marcus, anything he did, he was careful to find the gratitude to others in the process. (A sign of Cheirus is the ability to express gratitude and be proud of it).

**Preparing for the Seder** – **Rav Yitzchak Feigelstock ztl[[3]](#footnote-3).** implored mechanchim to prepare for each shiur even if it was a simple one and was one he had delivered many times. He noted that Rav Aharon Kotler ztl[[4]](#footnote-4). would give 2 shiurim a week in Lakewood in the earlier years but prepared for them intensely. It was not the ideas that he wanted to present that he was spending the hours on. Rather he was reviewing how each student would take the lesson and work hard to achieve the clarity of the lesson. This, Rav Feigelstock added, is a requirement of every single Rebbe. It is also especially important for the Seder – to take the time to review the Haggada and the lessons that we hope to impart to our children. Rav Feigelstock added that we also need to make sure that the choices of points we want to impart, should be points that our children can receive. Merely throwing deep philosophical ideas that cannot be grasped by the learners is not helpful to the children (and not the Seder experience).

**A Lesson in Haggada:** **Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** noted that there are differences between the monuments in Washington and the edifices in England. The former have quotations on them while the latter do not. The difference, says Lord Rabbi Sacks, is that in the former case(the US) , the goal of having the monuments seems to be to bring the history into the present. The latter (England) is to remind us of the way things were. In regard to a covanental society, there is no room to merely glorify the past. The greatest freedom is the opportunity to tell the story in the present. Hence the Seder night – it speaks to us and we speak to it and speak it to those around us – keeping our freedom alive and active.

**The focus of the Seder** – The Talmud notes that the ideal style for the Seder is a question and answer format. Questions and answers provide for a meaningful interaction in Torah transmission and Jewish transmission of Torah ideals, philosophy and way of living**. Rav Moshe Twersky ztl. HYD** pointed out that the process of Torah transmission is always focused on the Kesher between teacher and student. Absent that, one could merely speak to a tape recorder. Instead, in order to transmit the Chiyus HaTorah – which is the essence of life – one needs to be involved in the teaching of Torah. He would add that all have a Cheilek of the process of Lilmod U’l’lamed – everyone can teach. Seder night proves that point.

**Haggada** – My colleague and Mentor Dr. David Pelcovitz is also a well known PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) expert. He noted that as part of a recent study he was involved in with Bessel Van Der Kolk, Van Der Kolk showed him the FMRI of a patient undergoing a traumatic flashback. The FMRI showed that the flashback impaired Broca’s area of the brain, normally associated with the production of language. Dr. Pelcovitz notes that this reminded him of the comments **of Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop** ztl. the author of the Mei Marom who noted that slavery (like any other trauma) involves the process of being unable to process. One of the ultimate declarations of freedom is Maggid – when we are free to talk about our experience – and talk about it we will.

**Invitations to the Seder** – Rav Dessler is quoted as to pointing out that he did not accept invitations to the Seder. In his opinion, the Seder was not something you went to “someone else’s” for. According to Rav Dessler, a Seder is a transformative experience for each of the participants – no one is a guest at someone else’s seder. We all must be active and make whatever Seder we attend, our own.

**STORY from Rav Dovid Lau**– **Rav Yisrael Meir Lau** once led a seder for families who had lost a loved one in the Independence War and also who had lost someone in Yom Kippur War. The seder was very difficult, many tears and crying, very few participated. Finally Rav Yisrael Meir Lau got up and said we sayהשתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל . There are some who want to be here but can’t, like thoe trapped in the Soviet Union. Then, there are those who are here, in Israel, but don’t want to come to the Seder. Today, I feel there are those we have to think that we want to come to the Seder but are no longer here with us, able to come. If we don’t join together for a Seder, we won’t have anything to invite these loved ones to.

At that time, ten year old **(Rav) Dovid Lau** Shlita suggested to his father that they start singing Israeli folk songs to get everyone to start singing together – הנה מה טוב ומה נאים שבת אחים גם יחד, and slowly the assembled all started to sing -- with sorrow yes, but everyone was finally together. The song finished and an older couple got up and said, from the time we lost our son in the ’48 war of independence we did not join a Seder…until tonight we decided to come, Thank You!

Now, whenever Rav Dovid Lau is about to begin a seder, he looks around and always remembers that seder, saying to himself how thankful we have to be with what and who we have and that we are able to sit here together. To say thank you for what we have.

**A Pre-Seder thought** – My friend and colleague, **Rav Avrohom Herman Shlita** noted the comment of the author of the Sefer HaChinuch on the Possuk כי כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקטירו where the author explains that he does not know the exact reason for the mitzvah but offered a conjecture in order to stimulate his son’s (for whom he was writing the Sefer) mind and wanted him to be able to ask any question and find answers. Rav Herman added that this should be our goal on Seder night as well – to encourage all questions and try to find the answers.

**Kaddeish : Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowiz ztl.** noted the similarity of the Cheirus on Shabbos and on Pesach. Pesach celebrates the emancipation from slavery while Shabbos is our emancipation from the week. The idea of liberty involves 2 components – physical and spiritual independence. Physical independence is the Pesach part of Shabbos (after all, Pesach night is identified as a Shabbos as per the Torah’s language concerning Sfirah – MeeMacharas HaShabbos). But even the weekly Shabbos is a physical and spiritual freedom. Man is released from the responsibilities of thinking about his physical needs having already cared for them before Shabbos. He now has time to think about the spiritual and to exist on a loftier plain.

**Kaddeish:** Why the double language of Asher Bachar Banu Meekol Am AND Romimanu Mekol Lashon? **Rav Simcha Bunim of Pshischa** used to note that it is one thing to be a chosen people and another to be able to EXPRESS the distinction. We are doubly blessed to not only be Hahem’s chosen ones but also to have the clarity of language in order to be able to express that selection. When one understands something so clearly that s/he can put his/her own words to it, that too, is a cause for pause and thanksgiving.

**Kaddeish:** Why are so many Mitzvos assigned Zecher L’yetzias Mitzrayim? **Rav Perr** (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva of Far Rockaway, Risisei Leil Shimurim) quotes Rav Nekritz(Rav Perr’s Father in Law) who noted that the slavery in Mitzrayim was an educational process and not meant to be a punishment. If we hadn’t learned anything from it, it becomes a useless punishment. Thus, the more we learn, the greater the purpose and the bigger the growth experience for us.

**Kadeish: Asher Bachar Banu Meekol Am** – The Non-Jews are also commanded to keep the 7 Mitzvos. Why is it that we don’t mention our chosen nation status when we do any of the other Mitzvos? Why only in regard to the Yamim Tovim? **Rav Yaakov Galinsky ztl.** notes that it is in the concepts of Yom Tov where we see the differentiation between Jew and non-Jew most pronounced. The party of

Achashveirosh was also a party with wine but what was its purpose? It became a debate over hedonism.

When Jews sit to a Yom Tov meal, we sit and transform the experience into one of Shirah and Hodaah to Hashem. It isn’t just the difference in Mitzva that we highlight. It is the difference in how we do our job of living.

ורוממנו מכל לשוןYou **have raised us above all tongues** - Why is it that we have no thankgsgiving beracha for creating Lashon HaKodesh? After all, it is the language of the Malachim and is Kulo Kadosh! It is the language of Geulah -- why no mention of it in a Beracha of Hodaah? **Rav Avigdor Nebezahl[[5]](#footnote-5) Shlita** explained that there is a Beracha that effects the Kedusha of the day -- wherein we mention that Hashem raised us up and placed us before all other nations and tongues. Having the language gives us the ability to be the people who sing the praise -- the two come together and are in the Beracha.

**You have selected us from all other nations** – Why is it only by Kiddush and Birkas Hatorah that we highlight the choosing of Bnei Yisrael from among all other nations? In other Mitzvos we just note that you sanctified us. Why the change? **Rav Avrohom Erlanger ztl[[6]](#footnote-6).** explained that the nations of the world also have a day of rest and have laws too which may make them seem similar to us. However, we note that we are entirely different in this regard. We were selected as a nation by Hashem to be am Am Kadosh who follow the Torah life – not just the letters of the law. We make our days holy – not just restful. These are fundamental differences that we MUST note.

**Moadim l’Simcha Chagim U’Zmanim l’Sason - Rav Yaakov Galinsky ztl.** tells the story of the time an atheist tried to engage him in a debate. “I am ready to debate you because I know a concept or two about science” came the Maggid’s reply. “A concept or two? “ retorted the aetheist – “what good is that? How do you even know if you will apply those concepts correctly?” “Back at you,” said Rav Yaakov. “Knowing about sufganiyot on Chanukah, costumes on Purim and stealing the afikomen

**זמן חרותינו**– Why is the concept of *Cheirus* attached to Pesach? After all, Chazal tell us that there is no free person except one who delves into Torah. Doesn’t that seem to be more applicable to Shavuos? Rav Aryeh Rottman[[7]](#footnote-7). explained that the acceptance of *Ol Malchus Shomayim* is the mark of Freedom. That acceptance occurred when the Jews pointed at the time of Kriyas Yam Suf when they said *Zeh Keili V’Anveihu*. Until one accepts *Ol Malchus Shomayim* s/he is a slave to his *Yetzer HaRa.* That is still slavery. The Midrash Socher Tov notes that during Makas Bechoros Pharaoh went to Moshe and wanted to free the Jews right there in the middle of the night. However, Moshe told him that Hashem was going to effect Yetzias Mitzrayim in the middle of the day. Pharaoh feared that he might die so Moshe taught him the language of Shichrur Avadim – which included the language of *Harei Atem Avdei Hashem*. Rav Rottman explained that in order to be free, one needs to be able to be an Eved Hashem or else he is merely enslaved to the Yetzer HaRa. (Maybe this is why we take out all of our finery at the Seder. It reminds us that the worldly riches only serve to make us wealthy when we are not using them for Taava but rather to use them in the service of Hashem.)

זכר ליציאת מצרים **- Rav Schachter Shlita** would often note that it was interesting that we note that Shabbos is a זכר ליציאת מצרים because it is also a זכר למעשה בראשית. In fact what is the connection between Shabbos and יציאת מצרים anyway? He responded that in fact, the main difference between an עבד and a בן חורין is that the latter owns his time while the former does not. Being able to declare Shabbos and to sanctify it — using time properly in general— is a sign of freedom and a constant reminder of יציאת מצרים. It is no wonder that this is why kiddush introduces the Seder — off the bat we set ourselves free with the power to sanctify the time as a result of יציאת מצרים

**Mikadeish Yisrael V’Hazmanim – Dayan Chanoch Ehrentrau[[8]](#footnote-8)** noted that one of the fundamental differences between Shabbos and Yom Tov can be found in the closing of the Kiddush Beracha. Citing Rabbi Tzaddk Hakohein of Lublin, he noted that Shabbos is totally brought on by Hashem without human involvement. It is therefore known as Isarusei D’Leila (awareness from above) as opposed to Yom Tov which is a joint effort based on Kiddush Hachodesh (hence Isarusei D”Litata). Rav Ehrentrau noted that whenever there is an awareness from Shomayim without human involvement there is always a Nisayon afterward. Hence the Gra didn’t want to learn from a Malach (acc. To Rav Chaim of Volohzin in intro to Sifrei D’Tzniyusa) since he did not want to have the Nisayon in order to make things stick. Pesach is an example of heavenly awareness and Sefirah is the Nisayon. Through the tests of Sefirah growth we are zocheh to Kabbolos Hatorah.

**4 cups (Havdala) – The Meshech Chochma** notes that it is apropos that the 4 cups parallel the 4 languages of Geulah. The Jews separated themselves through these languages and nothing separates Jews from the nations more than wine. Wine usually creates problems when we are with the nations of the world. On the night of Pesach, we have the ability to even be liberated from the binding to the nations.

**4 cups –** The Yirushalmi and the Midrash parallel the cups to the 4 languages of Geulah. What is so significant about the words of redemption that it led to the establishment of the 4 cups? Also, why do we pour a fifth cup but disregard its drinking? **Rav Aharon Yeshaya Shapiro ztl (father in law of my great Rebbe Shlita and namesake of my friend Rav Shay Schachter Shlita)** suggested that the idea of Geulah is expressed in a Midrash about the words upon the Luchos – אל תיקרי חרות אלא חירות. From the time that they received the Torah, Bnei Yisrael were free from domination and torment. Yet, we see that this is not always the case. If so, where is the חירות? Rather, Rav Shapiro suggests, the goal of Pharaoh was two-fold. He sought to destroy the spirit of the Jew and to crush them physically. This is why Hashem promised והוצאתי for the salvation of the spirit and והצלתי from the physical labor. וגאלתי referred to the suspension of the rules of nature that took place in the יציאת מצרים process. ולקחתי refers to how we are not to be enslaved to any nation, culture or opinion. We emerge from every situation intact and with an unshakable faith. והבאתי refers to a time when the nations of the world turn to us and ask us to teach them how to serve Hashem. We still await that opportunity. Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita explained that each of the 4 cups is a toast to Hashem. We can only toast to that which we experienced. Until the final Geulah is achieved, we will recognize 4 and not 5 cups.

**Hamavdil** – We accentuate the differences between Kodesh and Chol and Yisrael and Amim. Those differences are more from the spiritual realm. Why do we include the difference between light and dark which is more physical in the list? **Rav Elazar Kahanow ztl. (RY Torah VoDaas and Nesanel Milstein’s grandfather)** explained that in the same way that light and dark vastly different and not confused, so too, we must see the differences between Shabbos and the weekdays, Kodesh and Chol and the Jews and the nations of the world. We live by a different standard, we need to hold ourselves to that standard.

**SheHeChiyanu** – Why do we recite it at Kiddush but not on Sefirah or Kiddush Levana? **Rav Eitam Henkin Hy”D** suggested that when the entire mitzvah is about the sanctification of time and the ability to count it – as by Kiddush Levana and Sfirah, an additional Beracha of SheHeChianu is superfluous.

**SheHechiyanu: Rav Avigdor Miller** used to note that the Beracha of sheHeChiyanu—to be alive, is a source of Great Simcha in of itself. Compare to the work of Professor Tal Ben Shahar who notes that we do not take enough time in life to offer gratitude for that which is in front of us. One of the great messages of the Seder is Hakaras Hatov (Dayeinu comes to mind as an overt proof). So we begin – SheHechiyanu.

**שהחיינו** – Rav Meir Zlotowitz[[9]](#footnote-9) would instruct his family before Yom Tov not to merely rush through the Beracha. Instead he reminded them to stop and look around the table before making the Beracha. While getting to the Mitzva opportunity was a great thing and the primary focus of the Beracha, it is also important to be Makir Tov to Hashem that we are **all** there. This does not happen all the time. We need to look at our familes and thank Hashem for what He did for us bringing us all there.

**U’rechatz:** **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** would note that on the Pesach Night we express the understanding that we are the Banim (children) Hashem. Therefore, like dutiful children who stick to the custom of the family, we tend to be Machmir (stringent) with all sorts of Hiddurim on Pesach. Thus, we follow the opinions of those who say we need to wash our hands before partaking of a vegetable dipped into a liquid. Hence, U’rechatz is a further expression of Pesach-based freedom.

**ורחץ** – Why is this Netila written as a command (Richatz) as opposed to the real obligatory one which is merely called Rachtza? Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach[[10]](#footnote-10) explained that when something is well known, it does not need too much strengthening to do. Hence, since everyone knows we are going to wash, we should just do so. But things that aren’t as well known often lead to laziness and thus the author of the Haggada had us go in the step of reminding us that we need more Zirizus here.

**Karpas** – When the children ask why we eat Karpas, what should we answer them**? Rav Moshe Wolfson Shlita** answers that we are NOT to answer them. He explained that sometimes, the Emunah is strengthened when in a moment we do not get an answer but let it unfold (compare to our Derasha for Parshas Ki Sisa 5777 כי בושש משה לרדת)

**Karpas** – Many have the custom of using a potato for Karpas. The **Yismach Yisrael** suggested that there is a deeper meaning contained therein. All year long the Karpas remains under ground. Only on the Seder night do we raise it up through the process of Kaddeish U’Rechatz. We too, raise ourselves on the Seder night (from our lowly and often dormant spiritual state) through the Seder and the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. **The Beis Yisrael of Ger** would specifically use a radish noting that all year long it is a Retach and tonight it is a Mitzvah.

**Karpas - R. Nachman of Breslov** writes that karpas is animal food. After Adam ate from the eitz hada’as, Adam complained: how can me and the donkey eat the same food? To this HaShem responded בזעת אפיך תאכל לחם. This was a beracha. Vegetables are essentially the same thing no matter what we do to them. That is the limitation of what animals can eat on their own. However, we have the ability to turn vegetation into bread. The seder begins with karpas and ends with matzah because have the choice to use our freedom to be animals or to use it to be humans. (Contributed by Rabbi S. Silber & R. Josh Flug)

**Karpas:** Rav Schorr (Lekach V’HaLibuv) notes that Karpas has the same Gematriya as Shas. We dip into salt water to show us that we need to study Shas with diligence (Kach He Darka Shel Torah…)

**Karpas: Rav Soloveitchik** would underscore that the ***actions*** of eating are part of the mitzvah of Pesach recall (the Mitzva of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim). Eating, like when one eats the Karpas is to stimulate the young mind – perhaps especially the young mind that does not ask questions on its own, in order to get it rolling. The Mitzva isn’t just to tell the story because children do not listen if they are not interested.

**כרפס- Rav Yisroel Belsky ztl.[[11]](#footnote-11)** noted that calling it Karpas stands for Kol Sus Rechev Pharaoh that are dipped into the salt water, reminding us that they all drowned in the Yam Suf.

**Dipping – Rav Belsky Shlita** noted that in the olden days dipping was necessary in that bread was often old and hard. Dipping was an excuse to soften it.

**Yachatz: Rav Perr** notes that the goal of this step in the Seder is to hint to us that the best is hidden from us (Tzafun) and is yet to come (hence we put away the Afikomen for later). Moreover, the children tend to look for it, since the future is theirs to uncover.

**Yachatz: Rav Avigdor Miller** notes that the main part of our efforts (the bigger part) should be devoted to Olam Haba. Yachatz reminds us to separate time for bigger missions (**Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro** recently told me that we daven to Hashem for Parnassa Kdai SheUChal la’asos Ritzoneicha V’laasok B’toraseicha We need to do ours and in good measure– same idea.)

**Yachatz – Rav Kook ztl.** pointed out that there are 2 types of eating that we do. One is a spiritual consumption wherein every bite adds to the Oneg and spiritual delight. At the same time, there is a physical satiation that comes with the eating of every morsel that handles one’s physical needs. One needs the spiritual component to give purpose to one’s eating but an ascetic who never eats will not survive. Therefore normally we seek a Sheleimus in our eating (hence we make Hamotzee on a Shalem even if smaller than a broken component – RJS). However on Pesach night, we recall that the bounty (both spiritual and physical) could not have been achieved without the pressure of the Shibbud. Thus, stripped of all spirit – recalling only the physical starvation we still managed to become who we are. This teaches us that there is no challenge in life that makes us so low that we cannot overcome. No matter how mundane (planting and farming), there is spirit to be found in our ventures.

**הא לחמא עניא**- Maggid begins with a מ (מה נשתנה and ends with a מ. **Rabbi Daniel Stein** Shlita [[12]](#footnote-12) explained that תושבפ does as well. Perhaps this is because the מ is one of those letters that requires the whole mouth to form. The message is clear — we should open our mouths to the words of Hashem fully and when we are done we should close it. How we use our speech makes all of the difference.

**Ha Lachma:** The Gemara (Shabbos 19b) notes that welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Shechina. The Gemara’s proof is from Avraham who left Hashem’s presence to welcome the Malachim. But, since they were angels, no real Hachnassas Orchim existed?! Moreover, if there were no guests why was Avraham distressed? **Rav Shlomo Heiman ztl(Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah VoDaas)**  comments that Chessed involves 2 components – it involves the act itself as needed but also the teachable moment for Jewish destiny. While true that Avrhaham was not OBLIGATED in welcoming guests, he was distressed in the loss of the opportunity to train the descendants in the future.

**Ha Lachma Anya- R. Yisrael Meir Lau Shlita** tells a story about a Seder he was conducting on an air force base. A young pilot asked: how could we say השתא עבדי and לשנה הבאה בארץ ישראל? These aren’t true – right now I am in Israel and I am free. He answered that when he used to watch Gedolim perform Viduy, they used to cry. Why did they cry? They didn’t violate these Aveiros! Because they were crying for all of Klal Yisrael. R. Lau then said that that someone living in Eretz Yisrael observing the Seder might be free, but what about all of the other people who not only live outside of Israel but have no connection to Judaism. Are they free? Who is going to take responsibility for them?

A similar idea can be found in a story mentioned by R. Jonathan Sacks about Primo Levi who realized that he was truly liberated from Auschwitz when people started sharing bread with one another.

Rav Soloveitchik mentioned that we open with Ha Lachma Anya because slaves don’t have the right to invite others for a meal and by inviting others, we show that we are not slaves. (Contributed by Rabbi S. Silber and R. Josh Flug)

**כל דכפין** – Rabbi Ralph Pelcovitz[[13]](#footnote-13) pointed out that this is the introduction to the Maggid and the formal component of the Seder because the test of a free man is the ability to engage in Chessed. Chessed means that I take from what I have and I give it to someone else. A slave has nothing to give. He cannot pass that test. Thus, we open the Haggada not just with the declaration of independence but rather with the awareness that we are indeed free because we have the ability to invite everyone in with us to celebrate.

**Whoever needs shall come in and eat. This year we are here – Rav Schachter Shlita** would often cite **Rav Soloveitchik** ZTL who explained this strange paragraph based on the mishna in Bava Metzia (83a) where the Gemara identifies the obligation to take care of ones workers. The gemara tells of Rav Yochanan ben Mattiya whose father told him that even giving the workers the meal they deserve (Seudas Shlomo HaMelech B’Shaato”) one would not have fulfilled the obligation unless you minimize the obligation from the outset. Thus on the Seder night we tell the guests – this year we are recently released slaves, we have small amounts – maybe next year we will have more to offer but this year this is what we have.

**Whoever needs shall come in and eat** **– Rav Bernard Weinberger Shlita (Shemen Hatov)** noted that in regard to מעות חיטין the Rema holds that there is a minhag to give wheat to everyone. We do not find this concept by other Mitzvos. Why? From this line in the Haggada it sounds as if we are being shown that on Seder Night we are all equal.. – we all eat לחם עוני and we give permission to one another to offer praise to Hashem. Therefore we give each other the ability to do so through the giving of Matza and entering together into the meals of Pesach.

**כל שצריך יתי ויפסח- Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal (1896-1982),** the Skulener Rebbe, was the chassidic rebbe from a small town, Sculeni, in what was then northeastern Romania (now Ukraine). Toward the end of World War II, in March of 1945, he found himself, along with other holocaust survivors and displaced persons, in the Russian-governed town of Czernovitz, Bukovina. Although Germany would not officially surrender until May 7, much of Eastern Europe had already been liberated by the Russian army.

Passover was only weeks away. Although some Passover foodstuffs might well be provided by charitable organizations, the Rebbe sought to obtain wheat that he could bake into properly-guarded and traditionally baked [*Shmurah Matzah*](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2846/jewish/Shemurah.htm). Despite the oppressive economic situation of the Jews, he was able to bake a limited number of these matzahs. He sent word to other rebbes in the region, offering each of them three matzahs.One week before Pesach, Rabbi Moshe Hager, the son of the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, came for the matzahs that had been offered to his father, Rabbi Boruch Hager. After being handed the allotted three matzahs, he said to the Skulener Rebbe: "I know that you sent word that you could give only three matzahs, but nonetheless my father, the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, told me to tell you that he must have six matzahs." The Skulener Rebbe felt that he had no choice but to honor the request, albeit reluctantly. On the day before Pesach, Rabbi Moshe returned to the Skulener Rebbe, saying "I want to return three of the matzahs to you." "But I don't understand. I thought your father absolutely had to have six matzahs." "My father said to ask whether you had saved any of the *Shmurah Matzah* for yourself?" Embarrassed, the Skulener Rebbe replied, "How could I, when so many others needed?" "My father assumed that is what you would do," explained Rabbi Moshe. "These three matzahs are for you!"

**HaShata Hacha, Hashata Avdei**: **The Malbim** compared the situation to a prince who sinned against his father the king and he was exiled. The king worked him overtime in back-breaking labor and the young man cried out for the king’s mercy and it was received. A while later, the prince sinned again, and was exiled again. This time, the king decided to test the young man’s desire to return to his good graces. Hence, he set him up with comfort in the exile, without the backbreaking work. Thus, we will see if he wants to return to the palace or merely get out of the work. The **Malbim** explains that this is the case with the Jews as well. When the Jews were in Mitzrayim, they worked hard, they were redeemed but later sinned again. This current Galus, is still away from Hashem albeit without the slavery. To this we remind Hashem, Hashata Avda, We hope to be free to serve you again.

**Maggid – Rav Schachter Shlita** reminded us regularly that part of the Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim experience was a lesson in Emunah. So much so, that he noted that one needed to mention the יג עיקרי אמונה in the process of telling the story to his children and to show how those ideas were brought out in the Sippur. **Rav Moshe Shapiro ztl**. found the source for this idea in the concept of אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים in the Mitzva of Emunah[[14]](#footnote-14). The first elements of Emunah are identified in the words of Ramban at the end of Bo that through the miracles of Mitzrayim it became apparent that Hashem was the undivided and unique supreme God through the miracles (Ikkarim 1-5) Through the punishments, it was obvious for us that Hashem knows all and rewards and punishes accordingly (Ikkarim 10 & 11) By sending Moshe, it was obvious that there was a concept of Nevuah and that Moshe was the supreme Novi (Ikkarim 6 & 7). The ideals of Torah Min HaShomayim a d that Torah does not change come from Hashem’s promise of בהוציאך את העם ממצרים תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה (Ikkarim 8& 9) Moshiach is seen in the promise of אהי-ה אשר אהי-ה which came with an association that I will be with the Jews in this Galus and in the subsequent ones and redeem them from those too (Ikkar 12) Techiyas HaMeisim is apparent in Shiras HaYam – שר לא נאמר אלא ישיר משה ובנ"י (Ikkar 13).

**Haggada**: Why is there no Beracha on the recitation of the Haggadah? **Rav Shlomo Wahrman ztl.** explains that the entire purpose of making Berachos is a means of accepting the Yoke of Heaven (Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shomayim). The entirety of the Haggada serves the same purpose. It would be superfluous to make a Beracha when the entirety of the Haggada serves the same purpose.

**מה נשתנה** - The concept of setting the storyline of the Seder into question and answer ztl. form is intriguing. **Rav Avraham Chaim Levin ztl**[[15]](#footnote-15). explained that in fact this is not only a Halacha but an ideal. Chazal tell us that שאילת חכם חצי תשובה which applies to the whole Torah (hence the style of Tosafos) but on the Seder night which highlights and entrenches faith within us, it is especially important and is Miakev.

**מה נשתנה** - We begin the Haggada with a series of questions based on the understanding that this is the Torah’s description of how the story is to be laid out. **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita[[16]](#footnote-16)** explains that the real goal of the seder night is to implant the foundations of faith within our future generations. To do so, we need to point out the extraordinary in the storyline. It is the extraordinary that piques the interest of the listeners and raises within them the desire to understand more. The more involved the listener is, in the storyline, the more likely that the faith and the story will become entrenched in the listener. Hence, the need for questions. Questions are a listener’s means of clarifying and acquiring ownership over information placed before them (All too often this is a major challenge in the Chinuch system of Emunah -- we expect our children to possess the information, we do not try to allow them to break it down and digest it. In that regard, we are cheating them.)

**מה נשתנה** – Why do we start the Haggada with questions? Who needs questions? Rav Aaron Rakeffet Shlita[[17]](#footnote-17) quoted in the name of Rav Soloveitchik that questions are the secret to Jewish continuity. We not only need to allow questions – we grow because we ENCOURAGE them. Rav Rakeffet added that on the Seder night we highlight the questions from EVERY child – not just the Chachamim because Leil HaSeder reminds us that our Torah (and our Yeshivot) are not just for the elite – they are for the masses and the masses need their questions addressed as well. Seder night reminds us of that opportunity.

**Mah Nishtana** – IT is interesting that the style of Maggid is Q & A. Why must we use this style instead of simply storytelling? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** (Rosh Yeshivas Mir and father of Rav Refoel Shmuelevitz ztl.) explained that we have an inherent need to make the old emotional experiences fresh when we relive them. (See Points to Ponder on Shabbos HaChodesh 5776). The best way to do so is by bringing a newness and a freshness to them. The Seder experience is one we not only retell but rather relive. The difference is whether we are emotionally connected to it. In order to emotionally connect, there needs to be a freshness in the connection.

**The 4 questions** – **Professor Elie Wiesel** once noted that Pesach used to be most special to him because it was the opportunity for him to escape time. For the seder process is a period of skipping around from Avrhaam, Lavan and Yaakov to Yosef to the slavery and the redemption and then to the Beis HaMikdash with Hillel & Rabban Gamliel and later to Bnei Brak and back. We do it all in one night. However after the Holocaust, Wiesel learned that time is inescapable and joy to him was short-lived. He then found a different meaning in Pesach and the seder in particular because it called on the person to ask questions. He noted that the idea of asking questions was a chance to arouse our curiosity by opening the doors to memory. He noted that by allowing all questions from all levels of understanding, we collectively live in biblical times. We too, live not only in the paroxysm of evil but also the realization of a promise, not only the kingdom of night but also the rebirth of a dream, not only the horrors of Nazism but also the end of the nightmare. Wiesel would often focus on the fact that history moves at a dizzying pace. While man can conquer so much, it is Pesach and the Seder that reminds us to raise a cry against indifference and a cry of compassion.

**Mah Nishtana** - why do we ask Mah Nishtana on the night of Passover and not on the night of Sukkos as well? After all, on Sukkos we leave our comfortable homes filled with luxury to live in the temporary hut made up of boards and beams**? Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** notes that one cannot ask such a question about Sukkos – since throughout the exile, the wandering Jew has left homes filled with riches and walked with his staff and his coat trying to find refuge. However, sitting at a table filled with delicacy and luxury – this is not normal in Jewish tradition – at such a child is urged to ask Mah Nishtana?

**Mah Nishtana:** The word “Mah” is often misinterpreted as why – although technically it is “what” -- as in “for what purpose is this night different” **Rabbi Lamm** used to note that the goal of the Mah Nishtana is not to merely recite history or question Hashem but instead – to plumb the depth of Jewish existence and derive sources of strength and hope that will carry us through the Galus to the ultimate Geulah.

**Chametz and Matzah**- **Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein**[[18]](#footnote-18) noted the difference in the makeup of chametz and matzah, and particularly the way they come into being. Chametz is leaven bread, is dough that has risen and now looks puffed up and larger than when you began mixing its ingredients. Matzah, on the other hand, remains flat and without excess volume. But there is something even more telling about how each of these processes unfold. To make chametz, you would think that it should require a lot of work. After all, there is more of the bread. It’s larger, denser and much more significant than something slender and flat. But it’s quite the opposite. Chametz is relatively easy to make. You place the initial ingredients of water and flour together, and then simply sit back and let it do the work. You let it rise by not doing anything to it, but rather allowing it to grow on its own accord. Matzah, in contrast, is exactly the opposite. You’d think that it’s flat and meager, and doesn’t require much work and effort to produce, especially in contrast to real bread. But it’s not so. It, in fact, demands from the very minute when the water and flour make contact that the baker work assiduously and without respite and ensuring no leavening takes place. The lack of work generates a chametz status, and the continuous application of effort is what keeps it matzah. In life, true success and spiritual growth occur when there is never a lack of stagnation, not a point of resting on one’s laurels and thinking that now is time for a vacation, now is time to sit back and rest. The continual effort is what is required, at its very basic and elemental level, to retain the matzah in our life, to obtain the goals of spiritual ascent and mastery. It’s human to desire a break, pine for a respite and look forward to time off. But not a break from acting as a committed Jew and focusing on our Torah values and principles. A vacation from those, an unguarded attitude in those realms, leads to a life of chametz, of inflation and self-aggrandizement where Hashem finds little room to enter. The holiday of Pesach reinforces the principles of hard work, of spiritual labor. Our freedom comes when we remain committed, always and always, to the Torah. Instead of being enslaved to our passions and desires, we are devoted and dedicated to Hashem. And nothing, not even for a moment, will stir our attention away from our desired result: matzah. A life of purity and subordination to the will of G-d. There is no greater life, neither rich nor rewarding, than that.

**On this night we are all reclining –** Why do we recline? Simply put, it is a sign of חירות. However, the Midrash (Shemos Rabba 20:18) compares it to the roundabout way that Hashem took the Jews out from Mitzrayim(ויסב אלקים את העם). What is the connection between the trip and reclining**? Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** explains that the Midrash Tanchuma (Bamidbar 1) notes that the Midbar is both a place of danger but can also be a place of tranquility depending on how prepared you are to deal with it. When the Jews left, Hashem took them like the princes who proceed through the desert with a sense of tranquility. We highlight this idea in the concept of reclining – for even the poor must recline.

**Tonight we are all reclining** - One of the Four Questions is written differently in the Haggadah than it is written in the Mishna. In the Haggadah, the fourth question is asked as follows: *Sheb'chol haleilot anu ochlin bein yoshvin uvein m'subin; halailah hazeh, kulanu m'subin.* On all other nights, we eat either sitting upright or reclining. But on this night we all recline. In the Mishna this question is worded differently: *Sheb'chol haleilot anu ochlin basar tzali shaluk umevushal, halailah hazeh, kulo tzali*

On all other nights, we eat either roasted, stewed, or cooked meat. But on this night all the meat is the roasted meat of the Korban Pesach. The basic explanation for this variance is that the questions each corresponded to distinct periods in history. The Haggadah speaks to a time that we are no longer able to bring the Korban Pesach and we generally do not eat Mesubin (reclining). In this vein, the Haggadah asks the question about sitting or reclining. In contrast, in the times of the Mishha, our ancestors offered the Korban Pesach and they would often eat in the style of Mesubin (reclining). Therefore, the question of Mesubin is substituted with questions of the Korban Pesach, without any mention of reclining. **Rabbi Jerry Acker z”L[[19]](#footnote-19)** would often cite his friend, who offered a take of a different sort: Bobby Marcus shows us that our question today about Mesubin is an allusion to the Korban Pesach. The Halacha of the Korban Pesach is that one cannot just join in the eating of the Korban Pesach. One needed to RSVP in order to join in with a specific group (Chaburah), otherwise he could not participate. The Mishna in Brachos 6:6 says הָיוּ יוֹשְׁבִין לֶאֱכֹל, כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מְבָרֵךְ לְעַצְמוֹ. הֵסֵבּוּ, אֶחָד מְבָרֵךְ לְכֻלָּן. If several people were sitting to eat individually (not as a group meal) each one recites his own Birchas Hamazon. However, if the men were reclining, one person may recite the Birchas Hamazon on behalf of them all. On the night of Pesach, one needed to have a prearrangement to eat the Korban Pesach together with a Chaburah. The question that we ask in the Haggada, is that on all other nights of the year we eat without a prearrangement of a group, or with a prearrangement of a group “Bein Yoshvin U’vein M’subin”. But on the night of Pesach one has a responsibility to eat with a group, “Kulanu M’subin”. As such, the verb “M’subin” hints to the prearrangement needed as well for the Korban Pesach and the Seder.

**עבדים היינ**ו– Rav Schachter Shlita[[20]](#footnote-20)[[21]](#footnote-21) would often remind us that true freedom is not that one is now able to do that which he pleases. Only one who is free to be Oived Hashem is considered free. This is the reason that Moshe told Pharaoh Shlach Es Ami V’Yaavdunee. Until Pesach night the Jews were slaves to Pharaoh but once he freed them – they were now servants to Hashem. This is the way we break the shackles that bind us to so many other things. Rav Schachter adds that when we get to serve as Avdei Hashem then everything we do is considered part of the service of Hashem. We are not dividing our day into holy and secular – we make even the secular – holy.

**Avadim Hayeenu** – The Gemara (Pesachim 116a) notes that there are 2 opinions as to whether the trip through Maggid of Genus to Shevach (negative to praise) is from the Avadim Hayeenu or the idea that MeeTechilah Ovdei Avoda Zara Hayu Avoseinu. **Rav Belsky ztl.** explained that the goal of understanding the slavery is to help us experience and appreciate the brilliance of the freedom. Since the slavery contained 2 components – both physical and spiritual, the Machlokes surrounds which option is the better starting point from which to appreciate the exodus. Rav prefers the people to have a perspective on their low spiritual plane and from there to appreciate Hashem’s Rachamim in the redemption and the spiritual guidance that came from at that time. Shmuel prefers us to focus on the physical slavery and the physical freedom and from there to appreciate Hashem’s Chessed in the process.

**Avadim Hayeenu – Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt ztl.** once noted that Neitzche criticized the Jews for creating a slave morality instead of one for supermen. However, we see the greatness in our morality precisely BECAUSE of the experience of slavery. Our compassion for all, our lack of lust for the mundane – all grow from the reminder that we grew from slavery. Had we never learned this lesson, we would have remained slaves of a different type forever more.

**Avadim Hayeenu – Rav Soloveitchik ztl**. would explain that the Haggada really reads like a real life survival experience. When one survives a dangerous adventure, s/he first makes it clear that s/he is safe. Thereafter, once safety is clear and established can the story be retold in detail. It begins with the brevity of a telegram and later with more elaborate story-telling.

**Avadim Hayeenu** – In this section of the Haggada we note that if Hashem had not taken us out of Mitzrayim we, our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Mitzrayim. It seems like a bold declaration. In an address to a celebration of a Baal Teshuva Yeshiva, **Rav Shimon Badani[[22]](#footnote-22)** explained that the Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva notes that the Jewish nation cannot be redeemed without Teshuva and that in the end the people will indeed do Teshuva. Rav Badani noted that there is no source supporting either assertion of the Rambam in the Talmud. He added that one of the requirements of a Moshiach in the future is that he will convince the masses of the Jewish people to do Teshuvah. When that happens and how it happens, noted Rav Badani, is when the families work together toward a Torah lifestyle and Teshuva. He added that he sees this firsthand and that it encourages others too to spur on the process of reaching to even more Jews to encourage Teshuva in a familial lifestyle. He added that there is no Jewish home without life (or at least life potential) in it and none should be forgotten. Maybe that is our declaration here as well. Had Hashem not arranged that our families be geared toward him, no family could have merited leaving and we, our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved.

**Eilu Lo Hotzee** – Imagine a trip to Cairo, lowest degenerates of society. Today, we’d BE them if not for Hshem’s great Chessed in taking us out. In This regard, **Rav Avigdor Miller** notes, Hashem has taken us down from degradation in many countries. V’avAvditem BaGoyim – to be lost and assimilated has not happened – for that Mitzva Aleinu L’Saper.

**If Hashem had not taken us out of Egypt –** How can we make the declaration that had Hashem not taken us out of Mitzrayim we’d be enslaved to him if we also will later say Hakadosh Baruch Hu Matzileinu M’Yadam? **Rav Yoel Kahn ztl**.[[23]](#footnote-23) contrasted 2 types of miracles – Nes Paamee (a one time miracle) versus a continuing miracle (Nes Nimshach). Each Makah was an example of a Nes Paami. Thus, once each one was over, Hashem removed the elements from them. However, when it came to Yetzias Mitzrayim, it was the type of miracle that was not a moment frozen in time – it continues to be a lesson in so much of what and who we are today. Accordingly, had we not been taken out, we’d still need to achieve the benefit of the miracles of then, today.

**Even if we were all Chachamim, Nevonim etc** – **Rav Zevulun Charlop Shlita** once noted that our world is filled with what he called “many Jewish doughnuts” – people who are wise and filled in many areas of worldly knowledge but when it comes to their own religion, they know almost nothing. The antidote to this situation is knowledge. However, without inspiration, the thirst to seek Torah knowledge is non-existent. Thus, even if we are wise and discerning we need to tell the stories of Pesach in order to inspire that thirst – so that people learn to seek that which they do not know.

**Mitzvah Aleinu L’Saper B’Yetzias Mitzrayim** – What is the Mitzva all about? Ever notice that the word L’Saper is close to the shoresh L’Spor (to count) – Any connection? **Rav Moshe Wolfson Shlita** is oft to say that the Moditzer Rebbe ztl. would note that the concept of Yetzias Mitzrayim is mentioned in praise, 50 times in the Torah – the hint is to the fact that the Yetzias Mitzrayim was also from the 50th level of Tumah. Mitzva l’saper – to recall the count v’Chol HaMarbeh L’Saper – there are many more than 50 mentionings but of the 50 that count – Harei Zeh Mishubach – it is only the praiseworthy ones.

**Kol HaMarbeh Harei Zeh Mishubach – Rav Lau** once noted that we do not make a beracha on Maggid because we cannot know when we have achieved it (based on the Chasam Sofer). Rav Lau added that we find this in the language of the Haggada – normally we say do the mitzvah and do not add to it (Baal Tosif). But here it is a mitzvah to add to it.

**Whoever extends the Pesach story, it is most praiseworthy** – The Rambam (Hil. Chometz U’Matzah 7:2) notes that a parent telling the story should point to a slave and note to his children that we were enslaved like him. Why? **Rav Shlomo Fischer ztl[[24]](#footnote-24)**. explained that this instruction is given to the parent of the Tam who accepts everything without question, By telling the story more fully and comparing it to the world that he can relate to, we hope that the child will ask more questions causing the expansion of the miracle and the demonstration of more Cheirus.

**Bnei Brak:** Is it a place (as in the place mentioned in Sefer Yehoshua), a thing to sit on (As per the Abarbanel’s commentary to the Haggada) or a person or persons (as per the Midrash at the beginning of Parshas Shelach and the Gemara Gittin 57a <See Rav Hai Gaon there>)? In **our Biblical Personalities classes** we pointed out the commentary of Rav Avdollah Someich who points out that the Yetzer HaRa tries to stymie us any time we try to make a positive impact. These Rabbis tricked their Yetzer Hara by saying they were going on vacation to Bnei Brak and by the time the Yetzer Hara figured out that there was a spiritual ascent going on, it was too late. We added that based on this, we can understand that Bnei Brak is all three – it is a state of mind of self improvement. When we hit that state, we do not see the difference between day and night (Gaus and Geulah – See the Ohr HaMayir, Vayikra/Pesach).

**Bnei Brak**: **Aruch Hashulchan** points out that they all went there in order to receive inspiration after the Churban. Rabbi Akiva was the man of inspiration. The **Slonimer Rebbe** points out that when a Jew cries, he cries a cry of hope, not one of despair.

**The rabbis in Bnei Brak** – In other years we have highlighted that the Rabbis all came to Bnei Brak which was the locale of Rabbi Akiva. We’ve noted the comments of the **Aruch HaShluchan** in his Haggada commentary that Rabbi Akiva was the one who could provide the best Geulah related inspiration as he was the man of Geulah. The Talmud (Pesachim 112) notes that when Rabbi Akiva was in prison, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai came to speak to him in prison and asked him to Teach him torah. Rabbi Akiva refused. Rabbi Shimon told him that if he did not, then Rabbi Shimon would tell his father Yochai and he would hand him over to the Malchus. How could Rabbi Shimon threaten to be a Moser? And how could Rabbi Akiva refuse? It seems so out of his character? **Rav Yosef Liberman[[25]](#footnote-25)** explained that Rabbi Akiva thought that the time he was living in was one where the Novi’s statement (Ami Bo B’Chadeirecha) was being fulfilled and that he needed to be silent . Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai noted that for Rabbi Akiva, this would mean an end to his life. If Rabbi Akiva would want to thrive, he would need to be able to keep giving to others (which was his reason for living) <Chasam Sofer points out that when one gives beyond himself, Hashem will add to his years> . If he would not, Rabbi Shimon told him that he would return his soul to Hashem – the real Malchus.

**They spoke about Yetzias Mitzrayim all night long**- The Rambam (Talmud Torah 13:13) notes that although it is a mitzvah to study Torah both day and night, one learns most of his Torah at night. However in Hilchos Deios (4:4) the Rambam notes that one should ideally sleep 8 hours in order to be healthy. How is one supposed to dedicate his learning to the nighttime if he is supposed to sleep 8 hours then? **Rav Hillel Zaks ztl.** quoted the Brisker Rav who noted that if one wants to follow the letter of the law, one needs 8 hours of sleep. However, from the perspective of Talmud Torah, he who strives for the Keter of Torah does not need to worry about 8 hours. For such a person fulfills Chazal’s idea that if one studies Torah at night, the Chut Shel Chessed sits with him through the day.

**Seder in Bnei Brak – Rav Belsky ztl.** asked why the Rabbis were not exempt from the Shema since Osek B’Mitzvah Patur min HaMitzva? He answered that there are 2 aspects of the mitzvah of remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim – daily Zechira and the mitzvah of Leil HaSeder of Sippur. It seems as if the Mitzva of Sippur ends at daybreak. Therefore the students told them that the time for Sippur was over and the time for Zechira by day had begun.

**Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says that he is like a seventy year old man and never merited to know about the obligation to mention yetzias Mitzrayim at night until Ben Zoma came along** - We are all familiar with the comment of the Gemara that he wasn’t really seventy years, old, but a miracle occurred to make him look like he was seventy years old so that he would gain the respect of his colleagues. If he wasn’t really seventy years old, what is the chiddush that he never knew this halacha? Maybe if he would have been a little older, he would have discovered this halacha. **Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztl.** answers that if HaShem performed a miracle to make him look older, there is an expectation that he should have the knowledge of a seventy year old, and as such, the fact that he didn’t know this halacha is a chiddush. [Practical application: acknowledging that we don’t know everything, even when we are expected to know.]

**בן זומא** – What is the basis of difference here? And what does the context have to do with it? **Rav Yosef Wanefsky[[26]](#footnote-26)** suggested that the awareness of Yitzias Mitzrayim contains 2 aspects – Sippur and Hazkara. The mention of Yetzias Mitzrayim and the Geulah seems to suggest that it take place only at the end – they left by day so mention it in the day only. But the Mitzva of Sippur highlights a different type of responsibility – of explaining all of the steps in between. . Why? Because Pesach represent a redemption as a result of struggle. It is not a “clean break” but rather part of a longer process. One that began in the darkness and came with a tremendous cost at the end (shores of Yam Suf – Maaseh Yadai Toviim BaYam V’Atem omrim Shirah?). For that reason one should mention Yetzias Mitzrayim even at night – according to Ben Zoma and even in the meantime today according to the Chachamim.

This idea extends to the Korban Pesach as well. The Korban Pesach does not have the Gid HaNashe removed from it prior to roasting. Even a Korban olah has that. Why? The Pesach is the only Korban that is not Reiach Nichoach, Why? Based on this discussion, it is clear. This Korban comes out on top in the face of adversity. But the adversity cannot be denied. There was pain There was loss. These things are not easy. And so the Jew leaves the Gid in – the gid represents adversity and challenge. The Korban is not an obvious Reiach Nichoach – we need to DO it properly for it to bring the Nachas Ruach to Hashem.

**KOL Yimei Chayeicha L’Havee L’Yimos HaMoshiach** – Does every time the word Kol get used, it refers to Moshiach? What about the promise to Adam that food would be difficult to eat kol yimei Chayeicha – does this too refer to the times of Moshiach too**? Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** answers that through recalling Yetzias Mitzrayim we bring the Moshiach.

**ברוך המקום** – Why do we say Baruch 4 times in this section? Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman[[27]](#footnote-27) explained that the 4 “Baruch” statements refer to the 4 sons and how the Torah needs to be taught to each.

**Baruch HaMakom** – Why do we use the term HaMakom here to describe Hashem? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explains that whenever we find the word HaMakom as an attribute of Hashem, we are also identifying a situation of Tzidduk HaDin. But how is that relevant here at all? What Tzidduk HaDin applies to this situation? **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** explains that sometimes we want those sitting at the Seder to be the ideal, perfect seder with the ideal and perfect life, wife (or husband), family and kids. Then reality kicks in and we see that things are not always the idealized version that we expected them to be. To that we recite (בָּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא). Hashem is Makom, is at every Seder table no matter if there are disappointments, if there is excitement, if there are things which you rather be different. Whatever your table is like, make it a tool in serving Ribbono Shel Olam.

**Baruch HaMakom** – The word HaMakom is a reference to Hashem who fills the space of the world. Nothing is free from his influence. **Rabbi Bernard Weinberger (Shemen HaTov) Shlita** notes that we never refer to Hashem as Hamakom anywhere in the Torah overtly. The only reference is a hint in regard to the Akaida (on the third day he saw the place from a distance). Thus, notes Rabbi Weinberger, the use of the word HaMakom connotes an awareness of distance in our relationship with Hashem. Therefore at the seder we use the word, since in Egypt were so distanced from Hashem, we weren’t even able to hear Moshe speak about Him for our benefit.

**Baruch HaMakom** - We mention the word “Baruch” 4 times in this introductory piece to the 4 sons section of the Seder. Why? **Rabbi Haim Drukman**[[28]](#footnote-28) [[29]](#footnote-29)explained that every son is a blessing, including the wicked son, and this is because in their essence they are all sons–“You are sons to the Lord your God”” (Deut. 14:1). When we sit all together around a Seder table, that is a great lesson to always remember.

**Baruch HaMakom:** The name Makom is used often throughout the Haggada as a means of identifying Hashem. Why? **Rav Soloveitchik** used to explain based upon a comparison in the Talmud (Chagiga ) compares the Nevuah style of Yeshiyahu and Yechezkel. Concerning the former, who offered Nevuah in the temple times, the nature of Divine presence was apparent. Therefore he would declare “M’lo Kol HaAretz Kevodo.” Yechezkel received his nevuah from the Golah – he closes his nevuah with Baruch Kevod Hashem Mimkomo – from his hidden place. Makom Hashem is a reference to the times when the presence of Hashem is hidden (hence HaMakom Yinachem or HaMakom yirachem). Thus, in the Seder which was written for Galus times, we highlight the Makom aspect.

**Baruch SheNasan Torah** – There is a vast divide between Judaism and the reigning Greek culture. The former identifies with the soul, the latter with the intellect. The former with the heart, the Greeks with the mind alone. Character is crucial to the Jewish pinnacle of thought development, while wisdom and understanding is the end of the Greek experience. **Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz ztl.** pointed out that these differences go all the way back to the giving of the Torah. The Sianaitic experience was vastly different than the rules of the culture of Mount Olympus. The twinning of the 2 is impossible.

**K’Negged Arba Banim** – Why is the knowing of Hashem directly connected to the process of telling the Sippur yetzias Mitzrayim (Shemos 10:2)? **Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz** once noted that the telling of the story to the children must effect a clearer and deeper understanding of Hashem by the parents. Then and only then, have we fulfilled the obligation of telling the story.

**4 sons** – It is interesting that the entirety of the Mitzva of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim is to be done in a form of question and answer. In fact, in this famous segment of the Haggada, we focus on the 4 sons and 4 different ways children engage the Pesach story. However, a closer read of this section of the Haggada will reveal that it is less about how the children learn as much as it is about how to teach and motivate them appropriately. **Rabbi Dr. Dovid Eliach ztl[[30]](#footnote-30).** noted that parents and teachers need to understand that what we perceive, we store up, and experiences that we lived through become the store of knowledge. This is part of the apperceptive theory of learning. Perhaps, based on this understanding, e can understand why each of the 4 sons needs to be spoken to differently. The motivation as a bridge to understanding is the first and most important step in the educational process. It needs to be relevant and personalized in order for it to come alive for the student/child.

**4 Sons** – I have often been taught to think of this section of the Seder as a call to us to remember how to transmit the Torah. In other words, it is less about the sons and more about the versatility that Torah generally and the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim in specific, gives the parent and the teacher of Torah to make impactful impressions on those in front of us. We have no one in the entire nation who cannot learn and appreciate and benefit from what Torah has to offer. It just needs to reach them at their level. **Rav Ozer Glickman**[[31]](#footnote-31) appropriately demonstrated this concept in many ways – try this one:

*As I climbed down from the SUV (Uber cars can be difficult to exit), my stumbling caught the attention of passersby. One of them was also headed to the same lobby. It was the young man who has been emailing me. He called me "Rebbe" in the manner of b'nai yeshiva. He hadn't been in any of my classes and I think we had never actually met before. A YU student reached out to me for a summer chat over coffee and I happily accepted. That's all I needed to know.*

*He had issues, academic and otherwise. It sounded to me that the combination of character, a supportive family, and a good therapist have done their work and he is ready to succeed. Natively smart in the traditional ways, scores, performance in tough math courses, and his presentation told a very different story than the darker corners of his transcript.*

*I listened for an hour and we spent a second hour formulating a plan to get his academic life back in order. I held out the promise of connections in his chosen field of business if he succeeded as we both know he can. I had another meeting and had to call an end to our chat.*

***"Rebbe, I have to tell you one more thing. I can't be dishonest." I just listened. "I'm not frum now. Do you still want to help me?"***

***Some will be critical of me but I cannot be something other than what I am. "Well, you just did a very frum thing. You honored me and yourself by telling the truth. A difficult truth."***

***"Rebbe, how can I repay you?" he asked. "Do acts of חסד. First to yourself, then to others."***

*He stood to leave. We hugged. He left my office to go home and I left to visit a client. My Torah u'Mada life, for what it's worth.*

**4 sons -** **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** noted that at the end of Parashas Bo, the Torah tells us about the obligation to bring the Pesach sacrifice, and adds: “You shall tell your son, on that day, saying: Because of this God acted for me, when I came out of Egypt” (Shemot 13:8). The Torah makes no mention of the question that prompts this response, nor can we know what the questioner was trying to get at. However, we do learn that part of the commandment of the Pesach sacrifice is to convey the commandment onward and to tell the accompanying story to one’s children and future generations. The reason for this is clear: the Torah must continue to be passed down beyond the generation of those who left Egypt, and hence the story must be retold. It is for this reason that the Torah omits to mention any particular situation in which this response is elicited; rather, it is “on that day” – any regular, normal day that may be in the future.

Earlier, however, the Torah presents a different scenario, where the telling is prompted by a specific question: “It shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What is this service to you?’ You shall say, ‘It is a Pesach offering to God...’” (Shemot 12:26-27). The Torah does not describe this question as arising out of nowhere, without any context; rather, it arises at a specific time: “It shall be, when you come to the land that the Lord will give you as He promised…” (12:25). From this perspective, the situation that the Torah is describing is familiar to us – not only from the time of Bnei Yisrael’s first entry into the land, but also from the beginnings of modern Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael. The question that is posed here is as follows: in exile, the commandments were necessary for the purposes of creating a national identity and uniqueness that would protect us from assimilation, but why must they still be observed now that we are in Eretz Yisrael? The question is in essence a demand to abandon the mitzvot, because – as the questioners see it – these are necessary only for an external reason, to create a nation that is consolidated around something. Therefore, now that we have returned to our homeland, the mitzvot are no longer necessary. This approach is expressed in the famous dictum of Achad Ha’am that “More than the Jews have kept the Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews.”

However, the question may also be interpreted not as a casting off and abandonment, but rather in a less extreme – and hence, perhaps, more dangerous – sense. The question here does not mean to annul Divine service, but rather to question its particular form: “What is THIS service to you?” This demand is not for uprooting and rejecting, but rather for change and adaptation to reality. In this sense, we must understand exactly how the Torah responds to such a demand and how we are to contend with it.

On the surface, the Torah’s reply seems unintelligible, unrelated to the question: “You shall say: It is a Pesach offering to God, Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and saved our children, and the nation kneeled and prostrated themselves.” Upon closer examination, though, we find here a fundamental lesson.

The parents’ answer relates to the commandment of “Pesach dorot,” the Pesach sacrifice brought in future generations. The original Pesach sacrifice that the Jews brought in Egypt was quite different: they took a bunch of hyssop, spread the blood on their doorposts, took the sheep on the tenth day of the month, etc. All of these obligations are absent from the celebration of Pesach in later generations.

Thus, in this statement we are effectively telling our children that there is room for innovation and change where necessary, in accordance with a changing reality; the commandment of the Pesach sacrifice in fact symbolizes this change. However, we must also bear in mind the final words of the verse: “And the people kneeled and prostrated themselves.” Change is essential, and the great Torah sages throughout history have applied Halakha to the situation of each generation. But all of this can take place only on condition that it is undertaken with complete commitment to Halakha and its obligations, rather than out of a desire to cast away or to submit oneself to fashionable philosophies.

There is a tendency among parents, when questioned by their children, to dismiss the questions and to remain frozen and inflexible in their position. Yet sometimes there is an opposite tendency to submit altogether to the spirit of the times and to youthful impatience, leading to a shift in the very fundamentals of our religion for the sake of making life easier. The Torah, in its answer here to the children, attempts to indicate a middle path that we should observe in every generation.

On the one hand, we must preserve the Torah from any attempt at uprooting commandments or fundamental principles; on the other hand, we must be open to change in certain points if it is truly necessary. The basis for any such decision must be the understanding that the Torah was given to us in order for us to observe it, not for our convenience, and any change must come from an appreciation and internalization of the greatness and depth of the Torah, as well as an absolute commitment to Torah and its values: “And the people kneeled and they prostrated themselves.”

**The Torah speaks about four sons - Rav Wolbe ztl.** comments that if the Torah felt it imperative to write four separate pesukim to parallel the four different sons, it implies that every child must be spoken to in a language that he can understand. Even the wicked son must be answered with a response that is hand tailored to his personality.

**Chacham Mah hu Omer – Rav Yaakov Bender[[32]](#footnote-32)** reminds us that the children who are Chachamim also deserve to be listened to, rewarded and attention paid to them.

**Echad Chacham** – Why is there no Tzaddik mentioned? **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** noted that we note Chacham and not Tzaddik because how can we tell who is a Tzaddik? Alternatively, maybe anyone not a Rasha by today’s standards is a tzaddik in his own right?

**Ein Maftirin Achar HaPesach Afikoman – Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm** noted that the Wise son goes beyond the initial recitation of the Hagadah. He understands the concepts and the ramifications beyond the initial moment of the story. Therefore, we teach him the laws including remembering the final taste

– that god alone redeems, that he works in mysterious ways which sometimes are paradoxical and that Hashem’s ways are surprising but certain. This is the essence; all the rest his commentary, development, and denouement.

I’d like to suggest a different reason for that message. The cerebrally gifted son needs to understand that it’s not cognitive ability – memorization - alone that guarantee success in religious life. Rather, it is the Yiddishe Taam – the taste of the afikomen that even after all of the intellectual arguments have been exhausted, will carry the commitment to the faith.

**Echad chacham**: **Rav Shach** once noted that it does not say Echad Tzaddik because the first thing we ask of a Ben Torah is to be able to think and properly evaluate what he is choosing in life.

**Answer to the Chacham** – We tell him all the Halachos of Pesach**. Rav Perr** explains that the Yetzer HaRa of a Chacham is to stay within his strengths – the intellectual. He thinks to himself that he will do only that which makes sense to him. Therefore we tell him Hilchos HaPesach – up to Ein Maftirin – to tell him that we follow the letter of the law even after the intellectual reason for doing so is no longer appealing to us.

**What is this service to You** – Why is the Rasha’s question so bad that it makes him a Rasha? **Rav Yehuda Copperman ztl.** noted that a similar concept exists in Yehoshua (4:5-7) when the people crossed the Yarden and were told to set stones as a reminder to fact that the Yarden split because of Hashem. Rav Copperman added that there is a difference between the stress on the nation and the stress on the Aron. When people are present at the event then they do not need the sign in order to remind themselves of the answer to the questions tomorrow. The real tomorrow needing the reminder is in the future. Similarly here at the Seder where we speak of a Ben (as opposed to grandchildren) who rejects the service, we need to understand that he ignores the reality of his experience. That effort to deny what he knows, is what makes him a Rasha.

**Rasha’s question:** The Yalkut Shimoni (Bo 208) notes a difference of opinion as to whether this question implies that Torah will be forgotten (a bad implication of the possuk) or whether it will be a good sign – that there will be children and grandchildren. **HaGaon HaRav Eliyashiv shlita** asks how having children and grandchildren asking heretical questions can be interpreted as a “good thing” according to the Midrash? He answers that Torah itself can never be forgotten. After all, we are told Kee lo tishachach MiPee Zaro. However, a generation that will ask the question “What are you doing <Mah Haavdah HaZos Lachem> and uses these questions to LEAVE the path of religious observance will have the next generation ask THEM the same question – what are YOU doing and will return to authenticity.

**Mah HaAvoda HaZos Lachem; Rabbi Lamm** once noted that young ppl. tend to ask the question “why should I” while the Chacham asks “what should I?”

**Since he took himself out of the group, he was denying the main part** – Why is the question of the Rash interpreted to be so evil? What did he ask that was a denial of the religion? **Rav Shmaryahu Shulman ztl[[33]](#footnote-33)**. notes that every Jew has obligations toward the community. The more that the person has (whether in wealth, means or energies) the bigger the obligation toward the community. When the Rasha asks what all the work is for YOU, he is asking why we need to follow rules for the community. Why can’t we personalize our Judaism for ourselves. This is an unacceptable position for a Jew. A Jew who champions a personal Judaism to the exception of having a connection to the whole of Am Yisrael is expressing heretical ideas.

**Rasha Mah Hu Omer** – Great legend **Rav Uri Zohar[[34]](#footnote-34)** wrote extensive works trying to help parents deal with their children who were off the derech. Trying to give them the Ometz and direction, he set a tone by noting that the first step is not to give up on them. But at the same time he also encouraged parents to seek an ability to recognize the quality time that a parent spends with children who are off so that they do not think that they are worthless. As he noted “we owe our thanks to the children that are our gifts from Hashem who merits us the opportunity to raise them and correct and effect the greatest Tikkun in our lives – that by raising and ‘correcting’ their traits, we are really correcting and improving ourselves.” He encouraged the parents to realize that these are times that the parents can test themselves on their own inner fortitude (to withstand their own sense of loss over the choices their children make) and to rely on the third partner in child rearing – He too, must be looking and hurting along with the parents. It helps. Seder night is a time not to abandon nor look for failure. (think Miriam and not Amram’s approach )

הקהה את שיני**ו Blunt his teeth**- How does blunting his teeth make a difference? Perhaps one can suggest that when our young people feel left off from the party -- when they feel at odds with the mainstream, they are ready to split off. Hence, the Rasha’s comment “What is this job to YOU?” He does not see the point as he feels estranged from the community -- so why work? It reminds me of the approach of my late friend **Rav Moshe Gottesman z”l** [[35]](#footnote-35) who never gave up on anyone. He once told a rebellious student who never heard “I love you” from anyone in his life “No matter what you do, there is nothing you can do that will make me stop loving you.” Perhaps that lesson in Chinuch is a central one. Every Child is educable -- just need to find the right level.

**Lee V’lo Lo: Rav Shteinman shlita** notes that we tell the Rasha that had he been in Mitzrayim he would not have been saved. Yet, we do not even look at him and respond to him but rather address the assemblage surrounding him (we say “lo” and not “Lecha”). On the one hand we must ask why we even bother to answer him if we aren’t going to address him but at the same time we also need to recognize that he comes to the Seder – so as if to recognize that even HE has an obligation to see himself as if he left Mitzrayim -- eventhough HE would not have left. How do we reconcile the issue?

I’d like to suggest an answer based on a second question: if we aren’t addressing him, whom are we addressing? Perhaps the answer is that we are addressing the non-Rasha side of him. We address the person who perhaps was skeptical during the slavery, due to life circumstances etc. but at the time of Geulas Mitzrayim the Torah tells us that Va’Yaamein HaAm – even the skeptics were won over. The Rasha side of them in them would not have been redeemed.

**If he would have been there he would not have been redeemed – Rav Shear Yashuv Cohen ztl**. once distinguished between the Rasha of the Seder and the wayward of today. He noted that the Rasha of the seder was פורש מן הצבור – through his actions he demonstrated that he wanted to separate from the community and did not share in their sorrow. If anything the wayward of today share in the sorrow of the community and see leaving it as a great shame. We cannot give up on them.

**תם** – Why offer such a deep explanation to a seemingly simple question? Rav Aharon Brafman [[36]](#footnote-36) once noted that the Rambam at the end of Hilchos Temura states a fascinating characteristic of the human psyche. The Torah writes: "He shall not exchange it nor substitute it, whether good for bad or bad for good" (Vayikra 27, 10) The Rambam asks why not replace a bad animal with a better one? The Rambam answers that once you allow an individual to make changes, he will say that the inferior one is really better. For the human mind has the capacity to distort reality in its own self-interest. This is the basis for the morality crisis we see today where the most basic and supposedly ethical conducts need reclarification due to liberal, self-serving application. This is why we need the Torah as a guide. Hakadosh Baruch Hu granted us - and, through us, the rest of mankind - eternal truths and values, which should provide us with guidance despite the ever-changing values and mores of society. IT will help the Jew deal with challenges even with those that might be “parve” in application. Perhaps[[37]](#footnote-37) this is the reason why the Tam in particular who seems more “Parve” as a child is given such a strong answer -- with a reminder about the strong hand of Hashem – to show him that even things in life that appear “Parve” can become excessive and dangerous when living life. Rabbi Brafman would often add that a major error in general society is that its leaders seem to focus their concern exclusively on minors. All talk of restrictions refers to children. The reality - and the Torah view - is that anyone, including mature adults, can be negatively affected by destructive influences. – We need to look at the Tam not as a child but as ourselves.

**Tam – Rabbi Lamm Shlita** would often note that the Tam need not be identified as a simple son in regard to hi lack of intellectual depth. Rather, he would (citing Akaidas Yitzchak) note that he was simple in his faith. The Tam need not ask impressive questions – his love and devotion to Hashem is whole and unshakable. He is unimpressed by intellectual acrobatics – he is more swayed by Temimus.

**Tomorrow when your son asks “What is this?” You should tell him that it was with the strength of the Hand that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim (13:14) – Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl** asks why we answer the Tam with this particular answer. He answers that different children need different connections to our heritage. Some children need to connect to the supernatural miracles in order to be drawn to Emunah and active Mitzva observance. This is likely the case with the Tam. Still, he adds,לא המדרש העיקר אלא המעשה– it is the Yad – the doing -- that got us out of Mitzrayim not the stories.

**שאינו יודע לשאול**– Rav Yechiel Yitzchock Perr Shlita[[38]](#footnote-38) noted that the Sheino Yodeiya L’Shoel gets the full possuk of V’Heegadita. It sounds as if he is the primary one we direct our Seder toward. Why? Rav Perr answered that truthfully, all of our sons do not know how to ask insofar as we tend to have closed hearts. The goal of the Seder is to open closed hearts by demonstrating that the Geulah of the past directly impacts our Geulah of the present and future as well.

**והגדת לבנך** – Rav Mordechai Willig Shlita [[39]](#footnote-39) pointed out that this Possuk teaches a crucial lesson of Chinuch. The Possuk begins with the word “V’Heegadita” implying a harsh series of words and ends with “Leimor” or saying softly. When it comes to teaching kids, boundaries and discipline need to be established at the outset. Limits need to be set notwithstanding the cut into their freedom but at the same time, once the children learn the limits, a relationship cannot be built on discipline alone – there needs to be encouragement and love at the same time.

**V’Heeegadita L’Bincha:**  Moshe could have used the opportunity of Yetzias Mitzrayim to focus on a myriad of things to inspire the people. Instead, he reminds them about what to tell their children in the future when the children ask about the process of making Pesach. **British Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks** pointed out that upon their attainment of freedom Moshe wanted to highlight to the people that they had become a nation of educators. Freedom is not won in the political arena or on the battlefield nor in the courts but rather in the human imagination and will. To defend a free society one needs schools where ideals are passed from generation to generation. The Yirushalmi (Chagigah 1:6) explains that Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi once sent Rav Chiya and Rav Issi and Rav Ami through the towns in Israel. They came to a town without any teachers. The Rabbis asked to meet the defenders of the town and were introduced to the military guard. “These are not the defenders, they are the destroyers,” they said.

“Who were the protectors they sought?” they were asked. “The teachers” was the swift reply.

**והגדת לבנך**- In Parshas Bo Hashem tells Moshe that the reason he is to go to Pharaoh and speak to him despite the hardening of his heart is so that Bnei Yisrael will speak to their future generations and that they (you) will know that I am Hashem. Truth be told the word VYadu is more grammatically correct than V’Yidatem. Why is the word V’Yidatem used? **Rav Shlomo Levenstein[[40]](#footnote-40)** quotes the **Belzer Rebbe** ztl. Who explains that when one tells a story, it is the speaker who knows it the best by the time the story is over. The **Kotzker Rebbe** recalled that when someone came to him for a Beracha in learning success for his son, the Rebbe demurred. He explained that when someone comes to ask for success for his child then the child learns to come to ask for success for the child. What needs to happen is that the child needs to see that the parent seeks success in living and learning a Torah life for himself -- THEN the child will learn that the matter is important to the parent too. Rav Levenstein adds that he remembers a certain person describing how he became truly great. He remembered previous generations working hard so that their children could learn. The children did the same for THEIR children etc. Etc. Finally, the rabbi in question decided that he realized that each of the generations was working hard for a child in the future and he decided to be that child.

**יכול מראש חודש** – Why? **Rav Moshe Dovid Tendler ztl.[[41]](#footnote-41)** points out that Rosh Chodesh is the opportunity to demonstrate allegiance to the Torah system. This was the freedom of Rosh Chodesh. The message of Freedom of Rosh Chodesh was lost by Rav Elazar Ben Arach (See Shabbos 147b) who misread the words HaChodesh Hazeh Lachem as HaCheiresh Haya Leebam – that we do not get the message of freedom if we think it the opportunity to cast off rules.

יכול מר”ח - It Is interesting that from the birth of the Jewish nation we seem fascinated by the moon and our connection to it. Indeed many Gedolim have tried to explain the connection. My friend **Rav Shay Schachter Shlita** recently reminded me of that which he heard from **Hagaon Harav Asher Weiss Shlita** that we are like the moon because we continue to grow. Being the biggest is not the greatest thing. The greatest thing is to remember that יותר חשוב לגדל מלהיות גדול that one needs to be able to know being greatest isn’t as important or fulfilling as to always grow and have the ability to keep growing (one of the greatest antidotes to perfectionism by the way).

**Yachol Mei Rosh Chodesh** – **The Tosher Rebbe ztl.( Rav Meshulam Feivish Lowy**) pointed out that the job of the Jew throughout the month of Nissan is the revelation of Hashem’s sovereignty over the world. This process of Hamlachas Hashem begins with the person’s acceptance of Hashem’s sovereignty over himself. That begin on Rosh Chodesh – HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem – it starts with the person over himself and flows forward to other people. The process starts with a personal Bittul Atzmis and that is the job of the process of cleaning and Biur HaChometz of the soul.

**Yachol Mei Rosh Chodesh:**  Rashi at beginning of Torah – Torah could have started with HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem. How and why? Wouldn’t we lose all of the inspiration of the Book of Beraishis? **Rav Dovid Kviat ztl (Sukkas Dovid**) explains that Rosh Chodesh is, in of itself inspiring in that it brings one to Yediyas Hashem and Emunah. See Sanhedrin (42a) that Chiddush HaLevana is should inspire recognition of the Michadeish Chodoshim. Attention to that should inspire Emunah. <I wanted to add that this might be the hint to Yachol M’Rosh Chodesh – see Ramban to Anochi Hashem Elokeicha that Yetzias Mitzrayim is the core of all of Emunah. That core is developed already from the action of Rosh Chodesh. Hence Yachol M’Rosh Chodesh.>

**Yachol M’Rosh Chodesh** – Why is this connected to Yetzias Mitzayim? Why is it even in the Haggada? **Rav Moshe Shapiro ztl**. explained that time and Yetzias Mitzayim are concepts that are quite linked. For in general, we tend to be enslaved to time and expect nature to be dictated by it. But nothing could be further from the facts. Time in Hebrew comes from the word Zman which comes from the word prepared. Kiddush HaChodesh sets the Moadim which means they establish our opportunities to meet with Hashem (Moed comes from יעוד). Normally one thinks that he is bound to time as a slave or a prisoner is bound. However, the first part of the Geulah process is when we understand that we are bound to a different process. We attach ourselves to Hashem and seek to meet with Him regularly. That began with the command of Rosh Chodesh. When this outlook changed it was the beginning of the Yetzias Mitzrayim. Hence the thought Yachol M’Rosh Chodesh.

**Talmud Lomar BaYom HaHu**- **R. Dovid Lichtenstein** recently noted that General Lee explained how he lost during the Civil War despite being a superior tactical general. Lee noted that it had to do with being outclassed militarily due to technological advancements that the Union Army had in being able to handle long range weaponry. In essence, Lee lost the war because he was not up to date. This is the secret to life and specifically the idea of HaChodesh Hazeh Lachem. It is the opportunity for spiritual renewal in the most up to date, real time response. This is perhaps, the understanding we put in to our lives – המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית. Today’s renewal is not based on yesterday’s. Ironoically, we learn that from Rosh Chodesh but the Seder’s inspiration must be BaYom HaHu.

**Ba’avur Zeh Lo Amartee Ela B’Shaah Sh’Yeish Matza U’Maror Munachim Lifaneicha** – Why recite the Haggada when these symbols of Slavery are apparent? Shouldn’t the ideal time to recite the Haggada be after these items are consumed? **Rav Shimon Schwab** used to note that “Ba’avur Zeh” started while the Jews were already still in mitzrayim. It was in the merit of following the Mitzva to eat Matza and Maror while still in Mitzrayim that we were let out.

**Because of this (the Pesach, Matzah and Maror) Hashem acted on my behalf when I went out from Egypt** - **Rashi** explains that we were redeemed in order to perform His mitzvos. **Rav Yeruchom Levovitz ztl** would say that people think that because they want to eat they must therefore make a bracha. However, the opposite is true. The reason we were created with the need to eat is so that we should have the opportunity to say a bracha. Likewise, we do not perform these mitzvos because Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, rather, the purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim was to give us the opportunity to perform these mitzvos.

**At the time that Matza and Marror are in front of you – Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski** explains that the intricate Halachos of Pesach in general and the seder in specific is compatible with the modern psychological view that we change behavior first and then the insight and feeling will come on its own as a result. Putting the Matza and the marror in front of you guarantees that the experience will be one of Geulah and hopefully the insight and the feelings will last long after. (A Jewish approach puts Naaseh before Nishma as well…)

מתחילה עע”ז היו אבותינו Terach -- Why does Terach deserve any mention in our Haggada? It is amazing to consider human history. The first man, Adam, whose greatness is unfathomable, nevertheless raised Cain, the first murderer, in his home. In contrast, Terach, who was an idol worshiper, raised in his home Avraham, the founder of our nation and the one who established faith in One G-d. How could it be? **Rav Shlomo Korach** ztl[[42]](#footnote-42) suggested that "In the home of Adam, the first man, there was a spiritual downfall. They turned to materialism and lust, to the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. In addition, it was a home in which one does not admit the truth. When Adam and Eve were caught after the sin, they blamed each other instead of admitting the truth. When a child grows up in such an atmosphere, this is the result. In contrast, Terach worshiped idols all of his life, but at the end of his days he reached the truth. His whole life he was searching for the truth, and from a home in which people search for truth, even if they don't yet find it - an Avraham can emerge. Especially in our generation, it is important to show young people how important the truth is, in the home, admitting the truth and striving towards the right, proper things."

**At the beginning our forefathers were idol worshippers** – The Brisker Rav[[43]](#footnote-43) asked why this is essential to the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim? Why is this referenced as a starting point for the negative beginnings (Genus) of the Pesach story (See Pesachim 116a)? He answers that from the end of Shema where we mention the fact that the entirety of Hashem’s granting of Yetzias Mitzrayim was to be a God to Bnei Yisrael, the opposite negative is that originally we did not see Him as such. **Rav Avrohom Erlanger ztl[[44]](#footnote-44).** added that the idea that while in Mitzrayim the people (even the Jewish ones) were idol worshippers – we see that the element of idol worship was not totally eradicated until the exodus. This was part of the exile of the spirit highlighted at the time of the exodus.

**מתחילה עע"ז היו אבותינו** – Even in Mitzrayim they couldn’t hear Moshe מקוצר רוח ומעבודה קשהIs this one or 2 things? Many of the French Mifarshim thought that it was one thing but the Mechilta explained that Avoda Kasha refers to the Avoda Zara that they served. This idea is brought by Targum Yonasan as well. Rav Rafi Pozen[[45]](#footnote-45) pointed out that Onkelos does not explicitly note the Avodah Kasha as Avoda Zara since he never wants to add sins that are not stated in the Torah.

**MeeTichila Ovdai Avoda Zara: Rav Ovadiah Yosef** points out that at the dawn of time, it was acceptable to refer to idol worshippers as our forefathers. However, after we received the Torah, we no longer associate Jewish beginnings to anything but Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Rav Ovadiah tells the story of rav Yitzchak elchanan Spector who was assumed to be a reformed and enlightenend Jew by the Maskilim due to his often permissive views expressed in his response. When he was travelling through Vilna, he was approached by a Maskil who looked at him, adorned with the look of an old style Rav and said that he was surprised that the Rav was not “modern.” With a twinkle in his eye, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan retorted that indeed it was he who was modern and not the Maskil. After all, in the haggada we say, Meetichilah Ovdai Avoda Zara Hayu Avoseinu….

**In the beginning our forefathers were idol worshipers, but now Hashem brought us near to Him. - Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl.** asks why the text states, "now Hashem brought us to His service", for did this not occur more than three thousand years ago at the time of the redemption from Egypt? He answers that the celebration during Pesach is not merely a remembrance of what occurred in the distant past. Rather, at the time of the redemption there was a Heavenly spiritual illumination that was felt by Bnei Yisroel. Every year on the night of the Seder there is a re-occurrence of that exact spiritual illumination. If we tap into this illumination, we too can feel the feelings of those who actually left Egypt on this very night thousands of years earlier. It is with this aim that we recite the Haggada on the Seder night.

**תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור**– Why not the father of Haran? Rav Shteinman[[46]](#footnote-46) explained that the goal here is not to teach history but rather to demonstrate contrasts. Avraham recognized Hashem and went in one direction. Nachor was an idol worshipper. Haran sat on the fence. He does not deserve a mention.

**ואקח את אברהם מעבר הנהר**-- Avraham is referred to as “Ivri” because he came from the other side of the river. The Midrash explains that this means that Avraham could withstand the fact that the whole world was opposed to his ideas and he still stood strong in his quest because it was truth. He was not swayed by public opinion. **Rav Michel Feinstein** ztl[[47]](#footnote-47) noted that this is why the Talmud (Taanis 10a) refers to Talmidei Chachamim as Yechidim. True Talmidei Chachamim are not swayed by the fact that “everyone feels this way” but rather by what Hashem expects of us.

**And I took Avraham from the other side of the River and I led him (Vo’Oleich) throughout the land of Canaan** – The first command from Hashem to Avraham should have been to “leave” – Tzei as opposed to Lech Lecha? Why the stress on the “Halicha”? **Rav Wosner ztl.** suggested that one leaves a place only once but Halicha is perpetual. Avraham was to perpetually distance himself from the Avodah Zara of hi past and thus the stress is on the Halicha.

**And I took Avraham from the other side of the River –** Why do we not mention the fact that Avraham DISCOVERED Hashem and placed his faith in Hashem? Why stress only that Hashem took Avraham? **Rav Chatzkel Levenstein ztl. (Mashgiach of Mir and Ponovez)** would often point out that Pesach night is a time to reflect on Hashem’s Chessed to US. On that night, it is the primary focus instead of focusing on additional components of history – including Avraham’s tremendous faith. (This might also explain why Moshe is not mentioned at all except in connection to the faith in Hashem)

**And I gave Eisav Har Seir – The Ben Ish Chai** infers from the word L’Reshet that the Shoresh is from Rash or poor. In other words, Eisav became impoverished by this choice of taking Har Se’Ir as he lost his right to Eretz Yisrael.

**VaEten l’esav Et Har Seiyir LaReshet** – Why do we care what Esav got? **Rabbi Lamm** used to note that the fact that Esav was not in Mitzrayim made it that he had no right ot Eretz Canaan/Eretz Yisroel. **Rav Hirsch** notes this in his pirush to Tehillim 22 – not Lamah azavtanee but rather L’mah – what meaning and purpose does this anguish and suffering have for me/ What am I to do with it?

**And I gave Esav Har Sei’R** – Why must we highlight Esav and what he got**? Rav Joseph Grunblatt ztl.** quoting the Brisker Rav highlights the fact that only we fulfilled Hashem’s promises to Avraham about his children and therefore only we have legitimate rights to the benefits that come as a result of being his children. Those who sowed the seeds in tears shall reap the harvest in joy.

**ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל** - Hashem calculated the Keitz - Practically speaking, this is a hard thing to accept for many. The passage of time makes it difficult for us not to lose hope. What about all of the generations that died during the ensuing years of the slavery? What about their Emunah and Bitachon? Where did it get THEM? **Rav Reuven Feinstein Shlita**[[48]](#footnote-48) notes that this type of a statement comes from a person who does not understand Bitachon. Bitachon does not mean that Hashem WILL save you. It means that He CAN save you. It means that you trust in Hashem’s outcome and that He does whatever is for the best -- even if YOU don’t get it that way. Even the slave or the ill or the oppressed, has many opportunities to do great things. The Baal Bitachon always knows that there is something positive to do -- s/he is aware that if s/he is still there, s/he has a purpose in Hashem’s plan and that purpose is L’Heitiv.

**Baruch Shmoer – Rav Belsky ztl.** compared this to the author sitting down to write a book. First, he ponders the plot and only thereafter the setting, the background and the details. Irrespective of the number of words he uses, it is still the plot that is the focus of his writing. The same is true with the story here. The goal Hashem wanted was to honor his promise in Bris Bein HaBesarim. He focused on keeping his word. The rest of the details were merely contextual.

**Baruch Shomer HavTachaso** - Why would I say “Baruch Hamakom… Baruch Hashomer Havtachaso” in Haggadah – would I even think Hashem wouldn’t fulfill his promise like some politician? Also how can I say He fulfilled the promise when He didn’t actually fulfill it! He promised we would be slaves for 400 years but b’koshi we were slaves for 210, possibly in actual servitude even less. Finally, we say in Haggdah, if Hashem hadn’t taken us out we would still be slaves in Mitzrayim. Even if He hadn’t taken us out, by now we would have been freed anyway. So why are we thanking Hashem? **Rav Chaim of Volohzin** says based on the Gr”a, that in every nevuah it’s possible it can happen one way or another but it depends on the person how it will come about – “Hashem tzilcha al yad yiminecha” – just like tzeil (same shoresh as tzilcha), shade, mirrors a person’s actions, so too, what Hashem makes happen to a person mirrors their actions. And gives example of Sodom vs Ninveh, both wicked cities, but Ninveh who does teshuva is not destroyed unlike Sodom. Rav Lau suggests the same is true with the promise of 400 years of avdus – it all depended on how Bnei Yisrael acted in Mitzrayim, and when He heard their cries, He started the 400 years count much earlier from birth of Yitzchak. The promise happened, but how the promise manifested itself was dependent on us. We must thank Hashem for considering the slavery from earlier while still keeping His promise to Avraham.

**הקב"ה חשב את הקץ**– The Ari HaKadosh notes that the Jews had to leave Mitzrayim so as not to become stuck at the 50th level of Tumah and be unable to leave. **Rav Dov Yaffe**[[49]](#footnote-49) added that this was part of Yaakov’s fear but why would that fear be apparent if Hashem had promised Avraham that he would take them out of Mitzrayim? Rav Dov cited the Beis HaLevi who explained that the promised was for an exile to a place where they would not be in charge. It never stated where or to whom that enslavement would happen. When Yaakov saw that his children were going down, he feared that the environment of licentiousness would affect his kids and they would wind up leaving the fold – remaining enslaved to Egyptian culture forever. Yosef responded that he was there L’Michya – he was pre-tested on their behalf with the wife of Potiphar and had emerged victorious. Thus, Yosef told him that Hashem had been with Yosef and would be with the people even in Egypt. It would be possible to live in Egypt and have a Yad Hashem that would protect the people from slipping into the entirety of moral depravity. Hashem makes himself apparent in the world only for the benefit of the Jewish salvation and survival and he did so in Egypt.

**VaYomer Yehoshua el Kol HaAm Koh Amar Hashem – Rav Wosner ztl** noted that the inheriting of the land by Avraham and later by Yehoshua were entirely different. Avraham’s acquiring of the land was what provided the land with its kedusha and Segulah. It also created that legacy unique to the children of the Avos as opposed to all other nations. Yehoshua’s conquering of the land provided the land with the obligations of Mitzvos HaTiluyos BaAretz

**Hashem calculated the Keitz** – So when the possuk says 400 years, is it in error? And why does Hashem tell this to Avraham 30 years before the birth of his son? **Rav Wosner ztl**. explained that with each good deed that Avraham did, he created Malachim. The Yalkut Reuveini notes that these very Malachim were present in Mitzrayim and were involved in the Geulah. Thus, the count of 430 years included the Malachim created from this moment of Bris Bein HaBesarim and they worked toward paying off the debt for 430 years even though the Jews were enslaved for 210 years.

**Bris Bein HaBesarim** – during the Bris Bein HaBesarim Avraham is promised that his children will be like the Stars. **Rav Elazar Kahanow (Nesanel Milstein’s grandfather)** notes that stars are unique because when a person looks at stars from far away they look like tiny specks. When we get closer to them, we discover how great they really are. The same can be said about Bnei yisroel. When we are looked upon by outsiders who don’t really know us, they see us as small. If they were to truly appreciate us, they would recognize that we have a bright, large spiritual world.

**V’Gam Es HaGoy Asher Yaavodu Dan Anochi** – It sounds like Hashem must judge the nation in order to allow the Rechush Gadol. Why? Why doesn’t Hashem simply let it rain gold and silver? **Rav Efrayim Greenblatt ztl. the Rivivos Efraim**, notes that Rechush Gadol does not refer to the gold and silver for that would simply be Rechush. Rechush Gadol refers to the great understanding that Hashem is the provider of all wealth and good tidings in this world. This is what allows us to keep striving and growing no matter what comes our way – good or bad. It helps us build toward a greater tomorrow by beginning on a relationship of a greater today.

**וגם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי** – Ramban asks why the Egyptians were punished if they were just following the word of Hashem? Rav Nisson Alpert[[50]](#footnote-50) pointed out that there were 3 parts to the exile – being strangers, being enslaved and being pained. It was not necessary to make all of the Jews serve all three parts. When Pharaoh did so, he demonstrated his Achzariyus.

**Then they will go out with great reward** – The gemara (Berachos 9) notes that Hashem needed to asked them with a “please” (Daber “Na”). Why? **Rav Shmaryahu Shulman ztl[[51]](#footnote-51).** explained that the people told Moshe Halevai that they should just taste freedom, they could do without the great reward. However, a Jewish slave who is freed from service is entitled to Ha’anakah provided that he does not leave early (See Kiddushin 17). The Jewish people were explaining to Moshe that they were prepared to give up on their rights to the riches to leave even a drop early. This was not ok with Hashem who had already promised Avraham that they would leave with great wealth.

**V’he She’Amda:** The **Rokeach** in his commentary to the Haggada tells about the dispersal of a mob hell-bent on Jewish blood in exchange for a young woman who fell in to a well in Minchenberg in 1185 as his example of proof that Hakadosh Baruch Hu Matzil. However, the events of Tolouse, of Israel, and Riverdale in our times highlight that we need to be diligent. To those who say this paragraph highlights Jewish paranoia and hysteria, **Rabbi Wein** quotes Nixon who used to say “you’d also be paranoid if the whole world were against you.” While hoping for a better tomorrow, we need to be realistic in the world today. This is the message of V”He She’Amda.

**In every generation they stand upon us to destroy us** – **Rav Bernard Rosensweig ztl**[[52]](#footnote-52). noted that next to studying a Daf of Gemara there is nothing as important as studying Jewish history. Jewish history teaches us what a Jew is all about and what Judaism means.

**V’Hakadosh Baruch Hu Matzileinu MeeYadam – Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ztl.** explains that it is not merely that Hashem saves us. Rather Hashem saves us from those enslave us directly. Moshe was raised in Pharaoh’s home. Haman was the one who gave the advice to appoint Esther queen.

**והקב"ה מצילנו מידם** – Seems a little surprising to assume. After all, with all of the Korbanos in every generation do we really think it is ok that “alls well that ends well”? **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** explained that the intent here is similar to that which existed when Yaakov placed Rachel and Yosef last when preparing to go see Eisav. Yaakov knew that the continuity of the Jewish people would be perpetuated with Yosef alive. It does not excuse the Korbanos but it DOES serve as a Michayeiv on the survivors.

**והקב"ה מצילנו מידם**– How does Hashem save us from their hands? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef[[53]](#footnote-53).** explains that Hashem does not only save us, he twists the situation so that our enemies are directly responsible for our salvation. Pharaoh raised Moshe who saved us from him. Haman set the stage for Vashti’s demise that ultimately led to his own downfall. The same is true today…

**Tze U’Limad** – This section of the Seder describes the great suffering of the Jewish people in the land of Mitzrayim as told by he who brings the Bikkurim. He begins in the negative and mentions how Hashem took us out. However, we know that those who were taken out were not the ones who were originally enslaved. It raises the constant Hashkafic challenge of how to relate to challenges in life when it does not look great for the individual. **Rav Mordechai Sternberg[[54]](#footnote-54)** suggested that there are 2 ways to look at life. In the former, one sees himself or herself in the center and the world rolling around him or her. The other way is to see oneself as a part of a world running around Hashem’s master plan. He compares the situation to a soldier fighting a battle who smashes his glasses in the context of a fight. The soldier can lose the focus on his own loss or he can move on and focus his energies on the greater focus and emerge with his fellow soldiers victorious. This is the context of Emunah that Rav Sternberg recommends in dark times and otherwise. The key is to constantly ask ourselves what Hashem wants from us in His masterplan.

**Tze u’Lemad** – The **Lubavitcher Rebbe** noted that sometimes we are too rigid in our thinking of how the world runs. We are told Tze U’lEmad. – go out of your box of thinking.

**Lavan wanted to destroy everything** – Where is it clear that Lavan tried to uproot “everything?” **Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky zt"l** explains that the source for stating that Lavan wanted to destroy everything is to be found in the deal that they made together. While Lavan swore in the name of the God of Nachor and Avraham, Yaakov only mentioned Yitzchak. According to Rav Yaakov ztl. Yaakov and Lavan, by choosing different fathers by whom to connect, were sending clear additional messages to each other. Lavan desired to have his family and Yaakov's family mingle and co-exist. That is why Lavan connects Avrohom's G-d to Nachor's god, with Terach as the common denominator. By making this connection, Lavan is stating to Yaakov that since we share the same "yichus (lineage)," we are really one family. Yaakov, by connecting himself to Yitzchok, was declaring that although we originate from one great grandfather, we are two distinctly different families. With this declaration, Yaakov clearly expressed that he did not desire to associate any further with Lavan, since he knew quite well that Lavan's influence would corrupt his family and assimilate them into oblivion. Therefore, although Yaakov was making a covenant with Lavan, he was determined to clarify that it was only a peace pact, not a desire to live together. Ergo, Lavan's desire to unite his family with Yaakov's, in essence, is a plan of destruction for the Jewish people.

**The Possukim from Parshas Bikkurim**: Why does the one bringing the Bikkurim spend so much time discussing Arami oved Avi? The **Tosher Rebbe ztl**. (Rav Meshulam Feivish Lowy) explains that the goal of man’s work in this world is to free the Nitzotzos hiding in the straits of the mundane. This was the reason for the slavery in Mitzrayim – to open the 202 Nitzotzos to be gather from there too. Thus, the one bringing Bikkurim notes that his work was completed with the same spiritual intention as the Jews slavery in Mitzrayim. (Based on this, the reason why we, at the Seder use these possukim in description as opposed to those in Shemos would be based on the same lesson – it is not about the set table and the gold and silver – the ultimate Rechush we left with was a result of the sparks we freed.)

**Arami Oved Avi** – It is interesting that the selection utilized for the backbone of the Haggada text is the text for the bringing of Bikkurim and not the text from Yetzias Mitzrayim. Why? **Rav Abba Bronspiegel[[55]](#footnote-55)** cited the Gemara (Shabbos 31a) that equates Seder Zeraim (the agricultural Mitzvos including Bikkurim) with Emunah. Tosafos cites the Yirushalmi there by explaining that the farmer demonstrates his belief in Hashem and plants. Rav Bronspiegel added that unlike his more urban counterpart who is distracted by tall buildings and man made technological advancement, the farmer gets a chance to see the hand of Hashem in everything he does. In the end, his crops success and failure are ultimately and directly related to the level of Beracha he receives from Hashem. Hence, one who lives within nature is more aware of the Hand of Hashem in daily events and more attuned to the opportunities to engage in Emunah. Maybe that is part of the reason we use this text as a backbone. The one bringing the Bikkurim is attuned to matters of Emunah in his gift of Bikkurim. The Seder night, a night dedicated to expanding on the Emunah of Hashem is greatly enhanced by the awareness of the faithful farmer and his text declaring his Emunah every single year.

**Arami Oved Avi** – What is the connection between Parshas HaBikkurim and Yetzias Mitzrayim**? Rav Chaim Walkin**[[56]](#footnote-56) explained that the purpose of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim is Hakaras Hatov. Hakaras Hatov is the basis of Emunah which leads one to the open mouth (Peh Sach) of the Sippur. It is similar to the open mouth of the farmer who brings his Bikkurim to Hashem. He also opens his mouth to express the Hakaras Hatov. (Rav Schachter spends time at his seder pointing out how each step is another revelation of Gilui Ikkrei Emunah on the Seder night)

**V'anisa v'Amarta:** Why do we use Mikrah Bikkurim as the basic text for the Haggadah? **Ohr Sameach** notes that the goal for the seder night is the global picture of Hashgachas Hashem. That's why we say V'aneesa

**Rav Moshe Schapiro (YU Library**): That's why we start the Hagadah with the Simanim -- kaddeish 'rechatz etc. Stating the global and then going to the Specific.

**Chasam Sofer (Derasha):** That's why we end with Beracha because you cannot see Geulah until get to the end

**Beis HaLevi:** I sinned with M'Az, now I will praise you with Az. Beis haLevi asks what the sin of Az was? He was saying that the Avdus was a bad thing. Now that see Az --was necessary. This is Odecha Hashem Kee Anisanee.

**ארמי אובד אבי** – Why do we use the Mitzva of Mikra Bikkurim instead of the Yetzias Mitzrayim story as the backbone for Seder Night? Rav Dovid Grossman[[57]](#footnote-57) explained that the main Mitzva of the Sippur is not simply to say over the miracles we need to thank Hashem for the miracles. The Yesod of Hakaras Hatov is here in the story of Bikkurim. This is especially so AFTER you have achieved the successes. We need to thank Hashem because everything comes from Hashem. Rav Shneur Kotler ztl[[58]](#footnote-58). added that even a K’Zayis of bread requires the long Beracha of Birkas Hamazon. Why? Rav Shneur explained that for any small amount of Hanaah we get from Hashem in this world requires the major thank you. This is the reason we get Eretz Yisrael too – to be able to give Him.

**Arami Oved Avi:** The language of this declaration is strange – Lavan the Arami tried to lose my father? What does it mean? **Rav Avrohom Schorr (HaLekach V’HaLeebuv**) points out that the job of a true anti-Semite is to make the Jew believe that Hashem is not his father. So long as a Jew feels the princely uniqueness, he thinks that certain practices are beneath his dignity and station in life. Becoming “real folk” lowers expectation. Maybe that’s why we are instructed to feel the freedom of princes on the Seder night – to remind us of our station and not allow the “fatherly” relationship to be lost upon us (hence Milamed She’Bnei Yisroel Mitzuyanim Sham).

**Arami Oved Avi:** We speak of the anti-Semitism of the time of Lavan and of Pharaoh – stories that are many years old. Why mention them at the Seder this year? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Soloveitchik** who explained that AntiSemitism is not an outgrowth of sociological or economic reasons to the point whereby one could safely say that if they didn’t exist there would be no anti-Semitism. Rather, anti-Semitism goes back to the period of Aami Oved Avi and the twins in the womb of Rivka.

**Arami Oived Avi** – Where do we find Lavan interested in destroying EVERYTHING? **Rav Shalom Yosef Zevin ztl** answers that Lavan tried to kill Eliezer. Had he been successful, Yitzchak would not have been able to marry anyone out of fear that the girl might be related to the one that Eliezer had selected. Hence Judaism would have died with Yitzchak. **Rav Shlomo Wahrman ztl**  pointed out that Yitzchak would still have been able to marry the daughters of Canaan or of Lot. Therefore, he notes, a different explanation is necessary. Citing the Targum Yonasan (to Parshas Matos) he notes that Lavan is none other than Bilaam. Bilaam is he who is identified in the Midrash as the one who proposed the enslavement (See Sotah 11a) – hence his mentioning in the Haggada as a juxtaposition to Pharaoh makes complete sense. Both suggested heinous means of destroying the Jewish nation. Pharaoh tried to destroy the male population. Lavan’s (or Bilaam) advice would have destroyed the entire future. **The Imrei Emes** suggests a third possibility. When Lavan decleared “the girls are mine, the sons are mine” what he attempted to do was to remove any unique distinction for the Jew viz a viz the other nations of the world. This, says the author of the Haggadah, is complete and total destruction. For the distinction of what a jew IS begins with knowing what he’s not.

**וירד מצרימה אנוס**-- This is not true! Yaakov went to Mitzrayim willingly! He stated Elcha V’Ereinu B’Terem Amus. Why do we seem to state otherwise? **Rav Bernard Weinberger** ztl[[59]](#footnote-59) suggests that the Ones was that he didn’t get to leave as he wished. Anus al Pi HaDibur Vayagar Sham. He wanted only to visit Yosef and return but the will of the Divine was different and that was an Ones.

**B’Shivim Nefesh** – Why does the Torah refer to those who went to Mitzrayim as a single Nefesh? **Rav Efrayim Greenblatt ztl. the Rivivos Efraim** notes that there is a secret here: They went down together united in thought and guide because they were of one soul – a torah soul. When we unite around Torah we can bring others close to it. Otherwise, we are a disparate bunch of poor, unfortunate souls.

**It teaches us that they were Mitzuyanim there – Rav Shach ztl. asked what the merit of being Mitzuyan** was? He explained that it was in the merit of the Sefer Yuchasin that was studied on the day off (Shabbos) provided to the slaves. Rav Shach ztl. explained that this sefer Yuchain was a sefer of History to explain the positive actions of the previous generations going back to Adam. This, explained Rav Shach is the purpose of history – to study the earlier generations in order to understand exactly what they did to find favor in Hashem’s eyes.

**ויהי שם לגוי גדול is מלמד שהיו ישראל מצויינים שם.** We were a distinct nation and we didn’t want to assimilate. The next pasuk is וירעו אותנו המצרים. **Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztl.** explained that the hatred came from the fact that we didn’t want to assimilate. If we would have assimilated, the hatred might have been less, and nevertheless, we didn’t give in and assimilate**.**

**Our Toil refers to the Children –** Its funny that when Maakas Arbeh was upon the Egyptian people, Pharaoh was ready to give in except that he asked, Mi V’Mi HaHolchim and stopped when he heard that the children were expected to join. Why? **Rav Simcha Krauss z”L**[[60]](#footnote-60) explained What Paroah was asking Moshe was “Mi V’Mi Haholchim – Who in their right mind is going to follow you? Judaism is so demanding of people. It has so many obligations and expectations of us. (Shabbat, Kashrut, Tfillah, Torah study). Why would all these people want to follow you into the desert to accept such an oppressive religion?” What did Moshe answer? “Bin’ureinu U’vizkeineinu Nelech Ki Chag Hashem Lanu – from our young to our old, we will all go out for this is a festival unto Hashem. Judaism is a celebration! It’s song. It’s festive. It’s joyous. It’s Not oppressive. It’s beautiful. It’s about family and kindness and unity and times together. Everyone will go!

**Hava Nischacma Lo:** Why didn’t Pharoah simply massacre the Jews? The Ramban notes that to do so would have caused a huge uproar in the country when a nation, brought into Egypt BY THE KING is massacred by another king. Therefore he decided to massacre them in a way they wouldn’t notice. Taxes. Hidden edicts like the ones with the Miyaldos. Let anyone with a claim come and bring proof. In this manner, Pharoh convinced the Egyptians that they could destroy the Jewish nation and still be “ethical.” **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide** of Yeshivas Chevron (Sam Derech, Shemos) notes that this lesson highlights the need to tie ethics closely to the torah. Where the Torah is not at the center of the ethical teachings (Mussar) then those teachings are merely superficial – lacking the complete honesty of ethics. Such superficial “ethics” leave room for decrees, progroms and murder periods. Rav Broide notes that when we follow such a crooked path, we will follow in the ways of Egyptians: at the beginning, merely with taxes – leaving the people on. Afterwards by murdering babies until ultimately, anarchy exists and Egyptians were coming into the home to murder people indiscriminately.

**VaYasimu Alav Sarei Misim** – The commentaries explain that the building of these treasure cities were really an exercise in futility for as soon as the cities would be close to completion, they would sink. Similarly**, Rav Hillel Zaks ztl.** quipped that at the time of the establishment of the state of Israel the people had to be taxed in order to establish a functional government. They put taxes on everything. Finally someone came up with the idea to put a tax on stupidity. Why was that so brilliant? The more foolish one is, the greater the tax! So what did they do? They called the tax Mifal HaPayes.

**VaNitzak El Hashem**: What is the difference between Shaava and Zaakah? The Zohar explains that shaava refers to a worded prayer while zaaka is a cry without words. The Zohar adds that Shaava can be refused by Hashem but Zaaka cannot. **Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus** explains that Shaavah has to travel upward to Hashem while Zaaka is met by Hashem. The reason is that Zaaka refers to a purity that is unadulterated by word. Such simple, raw emotion is likely to be met emotionally by Hashem and uadulterated.

**בימים הרבים ההם - Rav Reuven Feinstein Shlita** explained that it is important not to give up on Bitachon because of the passage of time. The Gemara (Berachos 10a) notes that even if a sharp sword is on the neck of the person he should not refrain from praying for mercy. Sometimes, it is the belief in Rachamim in the tough moment that brings the Rachmanus (think Nachshon in the waters of Yam Suf). Rav Reuven adds that Bitachon does not mean that Hashem WILL save you but rather that he CAN save you. It does not mean that you will immediately be happy with the results but rather that you believe that it is His will and for the best.

**Baby boys born shall be thrown into the Yeor – Rav Pam** noted that every attempt to downsize the Jewish people has resulted in more people becoming interested in Judaism. He compared it to Temurah where one tries to exchange Kedusha from one Korban to the next. We are told that in these situations it cannot be done. Instead both become Kodesh. Same thing in the time of Haman. He tried to exterminate Kedusha and many people tried to convert to Judaism as a result. The same will be true today as well.

**כל הבן הילוד** - This decree came about because of the prophesy of the astrologers of Pharaoh. **The Steipler ztl.** notes the irony of the events. Not only was Moshe not drowned in the river, it was Pharaoh’s own daughter who saved him. Based on this, the Steipler comments that no human plan has the ability to deter the heavenly decrees. The implications are enormous – רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום

**Pharaoh’s decree regarding the babies is כל הבן הילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל הבת תחיון – Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztl.** explains that the second half of the decree seems extraneous. If the decree was only on the males, of course the females will live. Rather, we see from here that the females were also included in the decree. Pharaoh didn’t want the males to live but he also wanted the Jewish females to marry Egyptians (when they couldn’t find a Jewish male husband) and this would cause the Egyptian population to grow.

**And the King died and they cried out – Rav Perr Shlita** used to quote his father who used to say that this is the way of the world. First we assume our troubles come from the particular monarch. When the monarch is removed and the situation doesn’t improve, hopefully we wake up to realize that the problem is with US and our relationship to Hashem.

**וישמע ה׳ את קולנו**- Tana D’Bei Eliyahu (Zuta end of chapter 11) explains that Hashem does not bring Geulah as a response to pain or slavery. Rather he brings it because of finding 10 Jews sit side by side and are able to learn with one another. **Rav Shmuel Wosner ztl** explains that this was the situation in Mitzrayim. Hashem mentions that he heard their cries but that he also recalled his Bris. The commentaries explain that the Bris referred to here, is the Bris of Torah. In other words, in a generation where the people do not merit it, the fact that there are groups who band together in order to study Torah and do Chessed can help the fledgling people move forward. In Mitzrayim, there were three groups -- the Reshaim who died in Chosheich. The unknowing Ovdei Avoda Zara who could’ve died if not for Hashem’s Chessed and the Tzaddikim who brought the other group back. We have the same situation today -- if we strengthen our Chessed and Torah study, we will be able to bring many back with us -- to another Geula too.

**ויציאנו ה,’ ממצרים - Rav Elyashiv Knoll[[61]](#footnote-61)** who served an incredible role as a well regarded Posek and Michaber Seforim noted that he was quite “mediocre” as a student. He attributed his success in the world of Torah to Hashem’s Chessed. Often he would note, “Why do I disclose this secret? So that we should all internalize the following message, parents regarding their children, and every person regarding himself. We never know when Ha Kadosh Baruch Hu will reveal Himself upon us. We should do all that we can, and there is no person who does not have a place in the world. The world is full of surprises, and we must be ready to lift up the Metziah, the 'catch', which will roll into our hands so that with it we will be able to make things much better for all who surround us and for the whole world."

**Me and not an angel** – The Midrash cites a Possuk that highlights the idea that Yetyzias Mitzrayim was Goy M’Kerev Goy. What is the intention of the phrase Goy M’Kerev Goy? The midrash (Socher Tov 114) compares it to birthing an animal or taking gold out of the smelter without tongs or mitts. Why was it so hard to take Bnei Yisrael out that it required the power of Hashem alone? **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl** (Mashgiach Mir and Rebbe of Rav Gershon Yankelevitz ztl) pointed out that even when Bnei Yisrael left Hashem was afraid that they would return – within a week – to the slavery. We also know that 4/5 of the people didn’t want to leave. This is a function of assimilation says Rav Yerucham. Assimilation is not only a situation that arises when we marry into the nations around us – we need to live in a way wherein inevitably a Jew stands out.

**Ani V’Lo Malach – Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth ztl**. notes that in today’s times we see the hand of Hashem fighting on our behalf as well. Think of the gulf war or so many of the thwarted Katusha rockets. Before man has to go out and fight, his enemies have already been weakened. Rav Neuwirth adds that it is a great means of recognizing and strengthening one’s emunah if one would merely think about this.

**Ani V'Lo Malach:** Only Hashem has expansive picture (**Rabbi Baruch Simon**) at hand. Also explains why we say Chad Gadya at end – after all, it is the blue print of Jewish History.

**Tzlach** (Pesachim 50) – While in Olam HaZeh we say HaTov V'HaMeitiv and Dayan HaEmes but in future say only HaTov V'HaMeitiv - what does this mean? After all, It says “Odecha Hashem Kee Anafta Bee” ? Rather in Olam HaBa, we will have the broader vision of Yetzias Mitzrayim. (**Chasam Sofer** (p. Ki Tisa -- Only understand Hashem in retrospect <**Rav Schachter** - U'Panai Lo Yeirau>). Rabbi Simon wanted to explain that this is why we highlight Bnei Brak – Barkai and explains Laila KaYom Yair.

**Ani Hu V’Lo Acher – Rav Gedaliah Schorr ztl**. notes that when the word Hu is used to describe Hashem it refers to Hashem’s conduct in a hidden manner. Ani refers to Hashem’s conduct openly. Ani Hu notes the unity in both. Don’t think that the revealed Hashem is weaker or stronger than the hidden one. They are one and the same.

**B’Yad Chazaka Zo HaDever – Rav Shlomo Alkabetz** notes that Dever was but the fifth Maka – why highlight it? He answers that from Maka 5, Pharoaoh lost his Bechira. **Rav Tzedaka (cited by Chacham Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef)** explains (using the parable of the nursemaid who did not want to drink a bitter medication meant to help her nursing client -- until the client’s father explained that it was due to her negligence that the child was sick in the first place.) that this is why Pharoh lost his choice. He had enslaved the Jews to the point that they could not choose Hashem. Thus it was up to the captors to serve as the training ground to repair the severed bond.

**Behold the hand of Hashem will attack your cattle in the field** – **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** asks how we use this as a proof to the Yad Hachazaka of the Seder. After all, the Makka of Dever was only at the halfway point to Geulah? Why was Dever singled out with the phrase Yad HaChazaka? **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita, Chevron Rosh HaYeshiva,** explains that the first 5 makkos broke the spirit of Pharaoh and he would have let the Jews go. Thereafter Hashem hardened his heart in order to punish him. This is why it is referred to as “Yad HaChazaka” it is a five fingered punishment that destroyed the economy.

**במורא גדול זו גילוי שכינה** – Usually one would expect great terror to be a time where the Shechina would NOT be realized**? Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm Shlita**[[62]](#footnote-62) uses this and other examples to highlight many of the “ironies” of the Pesach Seder. The ironies remind us that when man confronts his own limitations finitiudes and inadequacies – when he sees how weak he is – that is when he discovers his greatest blessing and strength and hope – in Hashem.

משה רבינוCould it be that Moshe’s name is primarily absent from the Haggada story? **Ari Fuld Hy”d**[[63]](#footnote-63)explained that it is not a coincidence that Moshe Rabbenu is not mentioned in the Pesach Haggadah even once, nor is it a coincidence that we do not know where Moshe is buried. Hashem and Chazal did not want us putting Moshe at the center or worshipping him at his grave. In his last moments, Moshe teaches us an important Jewish principle: the nation and the Torah are more important than the charisma of the leader.

**And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant** – **Rav Chanoch Tzvi of Benden[[64]](#footnote-64)** was the son in law of the Sfas Emes. He asked his wife why Moshe was told “Bo” come to Pharaoh instead of “Lech” – “go” to Pharaoh. She told him that Moshe was challenged with a speech defect. He had no experience as a politician or as a diplomat. Hashem reassured him that “Bo” – when you go on the Divine mission you are not alone. Hashem is with you to assist you. **Rav Zecharia Senter ztl**[[65]](#footnote-65). explained that this is one of the differences between a Human and a divine Shlichus. When a person appoints another as his messenger or agent, the second one replaces the first and the first disappears so to speak. But when Hashem sends a messenger, He never leaves the messenger’s side. He is there to support the messenger in whatever way He needs to.

ובאותות זה המטה - How are the Osos different from the Makos? **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita**[[66]](#footnote-66) explained that the signs given to Moshe were primarily there knock off the hubris of the Egyptian ruler and to rebuild the spirit of the oppressed Jewish nation. The oppressed hangs onto the hope that there is an end to oppression and seeing the water from the Nile which ran clear of the blood of their children turn into blood on the land was a sign to them that what goes around comes around. The Makos demonstrated that Hashem is in control of nature. Hence, the Makos challenged the very nature that the Egyptians had assumed was commonplace and predictable.

**U’b’Osos Zeh HaMateh** – See Yalkut Shimoni who traces the development of the staff from its genesis on the original Erev Shabbos Bein HaShmashos to Moshe’s time**. HaGaon HaRav Eliyashiv Shlita** asks where it is today? Wouldn’t such a power be something quite beneficial in the world we live in? He answers that the power is not in the staff but rather in the joining of the staff to the hands of the right person to possess it. It only works for someone worthy of holding it. It is like the LaHat Cherev HaMishapechet. Today we all sorts of power in the world that is used the same way.

**Rav Lamm** used to note that we spend too much time looking for the Matteh—the magic wand-- instead of realizing that it is B’Yadeicha that makes it work. If we are worthy…

**Behold the hand of Hashem will attack your cattle in the field** – **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** asks how we use this as a proof to the Yad Hachazaka of the Seder. After all, the Makka of Dever was only at the halfway point to Geulah? Why was Dever singled out with the phrase Yad HaChazaka? **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita, Chevron Rosh HaYeshiva,** explains that the first 5 makkos broke the spirit of Pharaoh and he would have let the Jews go. Thereafter Hashem hardened his heart in order to punish him. This is why it is referred to as “Yad HaChazaka” it is a five fingered punishment that destroyed the economy.

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**באותות זה המטה** – **Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** notes that the Mateh – passed down from generation to generation of leaders from Adam to Moshe was transformed immediately. The Lubliner Rav noted that even the holiest of objects is affected by its surroundings. In Egypt, even the Mateh turns into a snake!

**The Maakos** – The Mishna in Avos (5:4) notes that there were 10 miracles that were done for our forefathers in Mitzrayim. **Rav Yisroel Meir Lau Shlita** notes that this seems somewhat odd – the miracles were done to the Mitzrim – not our forefathers. And why bother to call them miracles anyway? Rav Lau explains that miracles are things that bring one to a better awareness of Hashem’s presence in the world. Although the miracle happened to the Mitzrim, the ones who seemed to get the message were the Jewish people.

**The Makkos – The Ran (Derashos 6)** notes that when Hashem promises that he shall not put any of the punishments of Egypt on Bnei Yisrael, what kind of promise is it, not to punish an Oved Hashem simply by keeping from the punishments of sinners? Ran explains that the promise was not limited to the maakos but rather that the Egyptians got EVERY Machala in Mitzrayim. **Rav Mattisyahu Salomon Shlita** explains how each Makkah was actually representative of multiple makkos – Dam caused a cessation of fluid in the land and consequently in the people – it affected the kidney and urinary tracts. Those who drank the blood suffered gastro-intestinally, the smells caused fainting or asthma. Tzfardeia caused ulcers and complex gastro difficulties, the noises causing hearing difficulties and loss of sleep and madness. Kinim caused fatigue. Arov brought about anxiety and traumatic stress not to mention resulting toxins from poison and potential sclerosis if bitten. Shechin brought forth all the dermatological illnesses and the psychological complexes that came with it. Barad destroyed the roof over the head of the Egyptian and exposed him to the respiratory illnesses of collapsed buildings…the list is endless.

**Dam tzefardeiya: Rabbi Lamm** pointed out the divine irony in the Maakos. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile for its ability to provide for them and it threatened to kill them. They worshipped frogs for their fertility and the frogs grew so fast, that the people went out of their minds. Rav Lamm added that we too, tend to put our faith in foreign elements (science etc.) and need to know that behind it all is Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

***Additional Thoughts on the Makkos***

**Pharaoh’s heart is too hard (7:14**) – What Was Pharaoh thinking when he wouldn’t listen to the obvious messages to be found in the Makkos or even in the words of his advisors? What was HIS logical flow? The author of the **Teshuvah MeiAhava** explains that although Pharaoh had heard the rumors that Hashem promised Avraham that his children would be enslaved and then released with great reward, he lived with the premise of the rumors of the Leitzanei HaDor that Yitzchak was sired by Avimelech.  Therefore Bnei Yisrael could not have been the nation Hashem prophesized about. He adds that this is the idea in the Haggada that B’Tzeis Yisrael ..Me’Am Loeiz – from a nation that offered and spouted rumors that we were not legitimate Bnei Avraham.

**Tzfardeiya**

**And in your ovens (7:29) – The Talmud (Pesachim)** learns from here that the frogs even went into the hot ovens despite their danger. In fact, the gemara notes that Chananiah Mishael and Azaria made a Kal VaChomer to determine that they too, must go into the oven at the time that they were tested**. Tosafos** asks why we needed a Kal VaChomer for this if it is a clear Halacha? **Rav Schachter Shlita** cited Rabbeinu Tam who noted that perhaps the Avodah Zara that they were supposed to bow to was not a real Avoda Zara and in the face of torture, they could have been lenient. Therefore they used a Kal VaChomer. Rav Schachter added that many of the other Rishonim were not happy with this explanation but it demonstrates the lesson that one can learn issues of sacrifice for Kiddush Hashem from animals too.

**And Aharon raised his hand over the waters of Mitzrayim and the frog infestation arose and covered the land of Egypt (8:2) – Rashi** notes that the plague began with a single frog. The Mitzrim hit it until swarms sprung forth and covered the land. In 1986, **Rav Pam ztl** recognized that the splintered groups of terrorists from the PLO would grow in number with the retaliatory attacks to them. He added that Terrorism seemed to grow with every military response to it. Rav Pam noted that despite the need to combat terror, the best way to end it is to do what Moshe and Aharon did in order to end the terror epidemic – Tefillah.

**And he said “tomorrow” (8:6)**– Why would Pharaoh ask to remove the frogs tomorrow instead of immediately? Or HaChaim offers a perspective but **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** suggested that based on **Rashi’s**comment that Moshe davened immediately for an event to happen later, we learn that the magicians only had the power of immediacy. By requesting the change to  “tomorrow” Pharaoh hoped to catch Moshe in an old sorcerers trick. Alas he was not to be fooled. (Parenthetically, we see the lesson of immediacy as an Egyptian trait as opposed to patience which is a Jewish virtue)

**And Moshe cried out to Hashem on the matter of the frogs (8:8)** – On the matter of Moshe’s **Rabbi Akiva Sofer ztl.** impassioned Tefillah noted here as Tzaaka one becomes aware of Moshe’s roused compassion for the Egyptians. Why? Was he so aggrieved about their plight? explained that Moshe was concerned lest the full Kiddush Hashem due to be achieved through the 10 Makkos not be achieved if Pharaoh listened to the messages of the frogs. Thus he cried out Al Divar – on the words of the frogs – lest he hear and the Kiddush Hashem not be actualized.

**Kinim**

**And the Kinim were found in man and animal (8:13)** – The **Rambam** (in his Pirush to Avos) notes that unlike all the other Makkos which seem to differentiate between the Maaka’s effect on the Egyptian and its lack of effect on the Jew, in regard to Kinim no such reference is present. Rambam explains that in fact, Kinim were found within the camp of both Jew and non-Jew but it only affected the Egyptian. **Rav Sorotzkin ztl**. finds proof from the fact that Yaakov asked not to be buried in Egypt. Rashi explains that he was worried that his body would be affected by the Makkah of kinim. If Kinim were not to be found in Goshen, why would he simply request to be buried there – unless Kinim were to be found there as well. But why would Hashem have this makka there? Rav Sorotzkin adds that this was necessary because it was the last Makka of brick requirement. Had kinim not been in the Jewish camp the Egyptians might have moved the brick operation to Goshen and the Jews would have had to continue working.

**It is the finger of Hashem (8:15)** – The **Vilna Gaon** points out that the difference between the finger and the hand (which was seen at the shores of Yam suf) is that a finger warns and the hand strikes. **Rav Yaakov Galinsky ztl**. adds that if the 10 makkos were merely a warning – we need to accept the warnings of OUR lives and engage in Teshuvah for OUR misdeeds.

**We shall travel 3 days into the desert and bring a sacrifice to Hashem (8:23)** – At the beginning of the Parsha Moshe was told that this was to be emancipation and suddenly he is turning it into some kind of Shabbaton**? Rav Belsky Shlita** suggested that perhaps the Bnei Yisrael were incapable of comprehending the idea of full emancipation and thus Moshe spoke of a 3 day “break” to warm them to the idea of freedom, to warm them to the idea of freedom. At the same time, the idea of a 3 day excursion allows one to contemplate kedusha independent of secular responsibilities. It affects the preparations for the moment and the relations from the time spent and how it is taken into the rest of the year. This too, was part of Moshe’s desire for the people.

**Dever**

**Behold the hand of Hashem will attack your cattle in the field (9:3)** – **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** asks how we use this as a proof to the Yad Hachazaka of the Seder. After all, the Makka of Dever was only at the halfway point to Geulah? Why was Dever singled out with the phrase Yad HaChazaka? **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita,** Chevron Rosh HaYeshiva, explains that the first 5 makkos broke the spirit of Pharaoh and he would have let the Jews go. Thereafter Hashem hardened his heart in order to punish him. This is why I is referred to as “Yad HaChazaka” it is a five fingered punishment that destroyed the economy.

Barad

**He who feared the word of Hashem from the servants of Pharaoh (9:20)** – How could the concept of “Fearing Hashem” enter the discussion when we are speaking about the Egyptians? The fearing of Hashem should have made them change their minds which is something that would not happen for another 3 Maakos? **The Steipler ztl.**explains that Yiras Shomayim is not an intellectual concept. One can see proof that there is Hashem and come up with all sorts of alternative explanations for the proof. True Yiras Shomayim is a desire to see the obvious. **Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl.** adds that this is why the Jewish survival in the Galus, a concept that clearly proves Ki Lo Yitosh Hashem Amo is not widely seen by humanity as a proof to Hashem and a calling to be close to him.

**The wheat and the spelt were not destroyed since they are late in sprouting (9:32)** **– Rashi** cites the Tanchuma which explains that it was a miracle (Pele) that these types were not destroyed. Why were the Wheat and spelt deserving of a miracle**? Rav Bauch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explains  that there was a lesson here to Pharaoh – to be flexible instead of brazen – like the wheat and spelt whose flexibility kept them alive. The Pele is a reference to the fact that the miracle was performed for Pharaoh and he STILL didn’t want to learn it.

Arbeh

**And he chased them from in front of Pharaoh (10:11)**– after all of the Makkos and the semi-mutiny, how could he flippantly chase Moshe and Aharon away? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that when he saw the Mazal of Raah suggesting embarrassment for the Jews in the future, he thought that the Jews too were going to get it in the end. The idea that they would be embarrassed too, was enough for Pharaoh to be brzen enough to throw Moshe & Aharon out knowing that they too would experience the shame.

**And Hashem sent a strong western wind which lifted the Arbeh (10:9)** – Why did Hashem need a strong east wind to carry the Arbeh away if he didn’t need it to bring them? The **Ohel Yitzchak** explains that the Arbeh enjoyed the opportunity to take Hashem’s vengeance to those who deserved it and so didn’t need such strong prompting. However, once the Makkah was done, their removal required more effort as the motivation was no longer there. **The Otzros HaTorah** explains that we can learn how excited we should be when coming to Shul or the Beis Hamedrash and how longingly we must feel when being forced to leave it.

Chosheich

**A heavy darkness (10:21)** – **Rashi** notes that this Makka affected the Jewish population as well. For during this time 4/5 of the population died—those who didn’t want to leave**. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky ztl.** estimates the loss of life at above 2 million. This certainly must have impacted the Jews as well. Still, while we become troubled by Hashem’s challenges in the dark times, they can be a clear indication that we are quickly coming close to Geulah. The same can hopefully be said today…

**But to the Jews there was light in their abodes (10:23)** – **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that we learn a valuable lesson from this experience – that two people can be in the same place and experience the experience through each of their unique world views. He calls this part of man’s obligation to state B’Shvili Nivra HaOlam. He questions how this was possible to have one person experience darkness and the other one next to him be a beacon of light – unless one only sees darkness while the other allows himself to BE a beacon of light.

**Ditzach Adash B’Achav** – Why is this such a significant idea that it appears in our Haggadah**? Rav**

**Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** explains that if we count the different opinions about the makkos Al HaYam (250, 200 & 50) it adds up to 500. Ditzach Adash B’Achav also adds up to 501 but the one refers to the Etzba Elokim. Rav Yehudah gives a siman to tell us that they got all the makkos listed.

**The makos and the debate about how many** – The Mishnayos in Pirkei Avos (Avos 5:5-6) note the Nissim done to the Jewish people in Egypt (10) and the parallel on the shore of Yam Suf (10). The very next Mishna adds that there were 10 makos against the Egyptians in Egypt and ten on the shore of Yam Suf. **Rabbi Dr. Reuven Bulka ztl.[[67]](#footnote-67)** noted that these are the same. The Makos against the Egyptians were sent as a punishment to them. But that could have been localized. The miracles were necessary so that Bnei Yisrael would be able to slowly detach from their oppressors, leaving in stages, the slave mentality that had been foisted upon them so that they could now refocus their inclination to serving a higher purpose, serving Hashem.

**Finger and hand** – What is the difference between Etzba and Yad**? Rav Belsky ztl.** noted that a finger guides and a hand hits. The early makkos were designed to direct Pharaoh to the proper path. Hence, there was a respite between the maakos to allow the Egyptians a chance to contemplate the truth and correct themselves. The later Makkos at the sea were there to show all the Great hand of Hashem. There was no need to separate the makkos. All fifty came at once.

**V’Al haYam Laku –** What was the purpose of the makos in the Red Sea? After all, knowing Hashem when you are going to die is not the biggest deal is it? **Rav Leib Chasman** learns that the last Egyptians to perish learned the value of the moment. The moment before death can change one’s life from darkness to great awareness.

**Maakos in Mitzrayim and on the Sea** – Why were the Maakos on the Sea even needed? After all, didn’t the Jews already get out**? Rav Dovid Winiarz ztl. (the self-declared Facebuker Rebbe)** explained that when Moshe stood at the burning bush, HaShem gave him four different promises of redemption to deliver to the Jewish people. In Shemos 6:6-7, HaShem states, "And I will take you out of the burdens of Egypt; I will save you from their work; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great judgments, and I will take you to Me as a nation. ("Vehotzeisi, Vehitzalti, Vegoalti, Velokachti") The Seforno assigns a chronological order to these expressions. The burdens eased when the plagues began and they were saved from their work as they exited the borders of Egypt. They were redeemed when the Egyptians drowned in the sea, and became a nation at Mount Sinai. At the third step of the drowning of their captors, the Seforno comments that this is characterized by the word redemption because from that point forward, the Jews were no longer fleeing slaves.

Rabbi Winiarz added that it seems that in order to undergo the complete transformation from slaves to free men, seeing the ten plagues and actually escaping was not enough. There was an additional need for the Jewish people to personally witness their dead captors or they would have still viewed themselves as slaves on the run and not fully redeemed. A person's perception of his own realty is so often based on an inability to let go of a past mindset or ingrained personality traits. How we view ourselves is often the cause of much stress and dissatisfaction and we must work to overcome those toxic feelings and redeem ourselves to be truly free people.

**Kama Maalot Tovos Aleinu** – On the one hand, one has the obligation to offer and express Hakaras HaTov but does one need to get into the details as much as we do at the Seder? **Rav Mordechai Gifter ztl**. explains that we most certainly need to do so. Only by getting into a full evaluation of the good performed will we truly get the essence of the favor received. If we paid more attention to the totality of the experience, we might fully appreciate the present.

**How many Maalos Tovos** – **The Malbim** explains that after we finish the prose of the Yetzias Mitzrayim story, we must begin to recite the Hallel. In order to inspire that Hallel, we note every aspect for which we owe him thanks. This is one long continuation until the end of Maggid.

**Dayeinu -** What is the meaning of Dayenu? Why does it play such a central role in our Pesach Seder? **Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis A”H** explained that the word “dayenu” means “sufficient” – if G-d would have only done this or that for us it would have been sufficient for us to say “thank you” and remain eternally indebted. So rather than declaring a general expression of gratitude, we enumerate every act of kindness in all its fine details – thank you, Hashem; thank You, Hashem; thank you, Hashem! And we focus on the many kindnesses our Heavenly Father has extended to us and continues to extend every day of our lives. Despite the fact that in life we generally prefer that which is “kurez un sharf” – “brief and to the point” when it comes to expressing thanks, the more expressive that you are, the more meaningful the thanksgiving. She compared the issue to the Bar/Bat mitzvah speech The answer is simple. Think of a bar mitzvah boy addressing the guests at his celebration and thanking all the people who are important in his life. His comments usually go something like this: “I wish to thank my parents for everything they have done for me.” What does that really mean? Does that touch anyone’s heart? More important, does that touch the bar mitzvah boy himself? Does that very general “thank you” inspire him to appreciate the love and sacrifice his parents have made and continue to make on his behalf? Would it not be so much more meaningful were the young man to say the following?“I wish to thank my mother for always being there for me, for giving me comfort and courage when I felt down and was upset. Thank you, Mom, for helping me with my homework. Thank you for your patience when I asked you a thousand and one questions. Thank you for allowing me to invite my friends over and making them feel so special. Thank you for never leaving my bedside whenever I was ill.” And what about the father? “Thank you, Dad, for being such a great father and a great friend. Thank you for taking me on special father-and-son trips. Thank you for coming home from the office to say the Shema with me every night. Thank you for telling me bedtime stories. Thank you for teaching me how to ride my bike. Thank you for teaching me how to play ball. Thank you for taking me to buy my tefillin and for showing me how to put them on. Thank you for always finding time for me, even on your busiest days.”

Wouldn’t such a detailed expression of gratitude be more powerful and meaningful and inspiring to that young bar mitzvah boy and his listeners then just a general “thank you”?

**Had he brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah it would have been enough** – Why would that have been worth it? Who goes to the park and watches without playing and being happy with the experience? **Rav Dovid Kav Shlita** explained that even if we had not received the Torah we would have been obligated in the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach – 9at least like the nations of the world). By coming to Har Sinai, those Seven Mitzvos would not merely have been an obligation of civics – they would have reflected the unique relationship we have with Hashem – as it was there that we were told והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים. For that alone, Dayenu would suffice.

**Had He brought us close to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah** – It is a well known difficulty with the Haggada, What good would coming to Har Sinai have been without receiving the Torah? And more so, what was added when we received the Torah in the Sinai that that it deserved special mention? **Rav Yaakov Rabinowitz Teomim ztl**[[68]](#footnote-68). noted that the process of Geulah involved the three methods that a couple engages in Erusin – Kessef, Shtar and Biah. The taking of the spoils of Egypt especially at the shores of Yam Suf provided the Kesef as it established the Kinyan Haguf by alleviating the pressures of working from the Jewish people giving them the time to serve Hashem all the time. Maamad Har Sinai was like the Biah as it was a process of bringing them closer (Vo”Avee Etchem Elai) and Hashem demonstrating and showing them things He shows no one else in the world (by opening the Rakeyiim). And in giving the Luchos, we had the Shtar which established the terms of the relationship by which it could grow – through Mitzva observance.

אלו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה - What is the point? **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**, “Rav Chaim” explains that had we gotten close to Har Sinai and not gotten the total Torah -- but gotten the 7 Mitzvos -- that would have been enough. **Rav Dovid Kav ztl**[[69]](#footnote-69). explained that there is a higher appreciation for the total context of a Mitzva. The Torah’s completeness gives meaning and purpose to each Mitzva but also within a wider goal for life. Still, receiving some of the Mitzvos without the complete context of the Torah system does have value. However, the idea of creating a context of Torah and Kedusha? This can only happen when there is a Matan Torah.

**Eilu Kervanu Lifnei Har Sinai** – Why would that have been enough? **Rav Hershel Schachter** Shlita pointed out that the sign of the Jewish people is Rachmanim Baishanim Gomlei Chassadim. This is learned, says the Gemara, from the experience at Har Sinai. In other words, the mere experience of Mamad Har Sinai brought about the middos that serve as the signs of Judaism. It would have been enough to thank Hashem just for showing us that.

**Eilu Hachneesanu L’Eretz Yisrael - Naftali Lau-Lavie a”h** used to recall the charge his father Hashem Yinkom Damo instructed him and young Luluk (RavYisrael Meir Lau): If you ever get out of the Tzaros of Europe go only to Eretz Yisrael. Even if you need to acquire it with Yissurim – those Yissurim are Yissurei Ahava. He made his younger brother (5 at the time) promise the same thing when he thought his time was up on Chol HaMoed Pesach in Buchenwald in 1943.

**Had he given us the Torah and not brought us to Eretz Yisrael – Dayeinu – Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl**. notes that the phraseology here is a reminder to a secular movement of nationalism without care for Torah. Such a situation is not ideal. In fact, it would be better not to be in Eretz Yisrael and be with Torah than otherwise. He adds a story **from Rav Kook** who once met a bunch of kibbutzniks who loved to work the land but had little regard for Torah and Mitzvos. He told them a story of a man who lost his ability to study when he suffered a head injury. The doctors told him that he had no choice but to go into the classroom with the children and learn anew. Soon, the Rebbe reported that the man was acting like a child in the class. He chided the man and told him, “even if you need to learn at a child’s level you shouldn’t ever forget that you are a certain age.” Rav Kook told the kibbutzniks that since the galus, we lost our ability to learn and to work the land. However, as we return to relearn, we mustn’t ever forget that we are part of a certain wise, aged nation.

**Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth ztl.** offered a parallel thought. While Torah is valuable, The value of Toras Eretz Yisroel cannot be minimized ever. When one learns Torah in Eretz Yisrael s/he is adding to the protective measure that already exists as a result of its citizens and inhabitants. Thus, in any war-like situation, learning there protects all of the citizens. Avraham was punished (Says the Ramban) for not realizing this and leaving Eretz Yisrael during a famine. We doubly thank Hashem, for giving us the Torah and for bringing us into Eretz Yisrael on what will hopefully be a one way ticket.

**V’Nasan Lanu es Mamonam** – How could Hashem give us the commandment to take something that we never intended on returning? **Rav Sorotzkin (HaShir v’Hashevach**) notes that after they left EGYPT the families of the Egyptians (Meegaras Beisa) took the furniture and other stuff that the Jews left behind. The gold, silver and clothes was a down payment on that repossession.

**על אחת כמה וכמה**– It is well known that Moshe did not start the first few Makos because of the sense of Hakaras HaTov he felt to the Nile and the ground that he could not strike either one. Of course what Hakaras HaTov does one owe an inanimate object? Rav Dessler explained that it was not the object but rather the subject that was Moshe’s concern. It was not the ground or the Nile Moshe needed to be concerned with, it was himself. He did not want to take anything – or anyone – for granted. For when one thinks about all of the great gifts one has – primarily when he sees how easy that they can be lost – one becomes filled with Hakaras HaTov in exponential proportions. Rav Yaakov Edelstein ztl[[70]](#footnote-70). adds that this is the reason we are not responsible merely to be Oseh Chessed but Gomel Chessed – that we need to fill in our obligation to Hashem because it is the least we can do for all of the things He does for us in the world constantly.

**Pesach** – The passing over was not the main part of the holiday, the killing of the Egyptian first born was/ Why call the korban and the holiday, Pesach? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide** notes that once the Middas HaDin is activated, it is ruthless. Whatever saved the Jews from the same fate, is certainly the main part of the story – not just the death but the survival.

**Pesach – Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** notes that the role of the command of eating the Pesach in a Haurah was to show the former slave that whatever material possessions the s/he has is too much to consume on one’s own. Their only value is in the formulation of a Chessed community.

**The Pesach sacrifice that our fathers ate when the Bais Hamikdosh was standing; for what reason? Because Hashem passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt. - Rav Wolbe** explains that throughout the entire year we must be careful not to leap and jump in our service of Hashem, lest we fall flat on our faces. We must serve Hashem on a level that is appropriate for our spiritual standing. However, on Pesach we have an opportunity to grow by leaps and bounds. **Rashi** (Shemos 12, 11) explains the reason Bnei Yisroel in Egypt were commanded to eat the Pesach sacrifice in a hurry: "Just as Hashem jumped and skipped over the houses of Bnei Yisroel when He slew the firstborn, so too, you should "jump and skip" (hurry) in your service of Hashem (eating the Pesach night, we can "jump" in our level of service of Hashem in a manner that is not possible on any other day of the year.

**Because he passed over – Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita (RY YFR**) asked why the passing over was such a big deal. After all, the death of the Bechorim was a punishment for the Egyptians – of COURSE Hashem had to skip past the Jewsh homes? Rav Perr answered that the Bechorim were not deserving of death any more than any other Egyptian. Therefore, their deaths were not merely a punishment but rather an opportunity for Kiddush Hashem. The Kiddush Hashem moment was opened to affect everyone present including the Jews. Hence the need to thank Hashem.

**מצה זו**– Rav Shmuel Auerbach[[71]](#footnote-71) understood the speed of Yetzias Mitzrayim here not to be a panicked push but rather a critical statement about the relationship the Jews have with Hashem – that we are not bound to the rules of time. If time demands a measured pace, Jews can leave whenever Hashem wants. He utilizes this to note a comparison between two disparate but often connected ideas: מצוה הבאה לידך אל תחמיצנה and the concept of Chometz and Matza. In the same way one cannot have Chometz in his Matza because it shows that the Matza has been ruined due to the constraints of time, Mitzvos too, cannot be allowed to be bogged down by the drag of time. Rav Shmuel adds that when one is weighed down by time obligations s/he is still in Shibbud Mitzrayim and this prevents one from being Oived Hashem in the way that one should. By suspending non-Avodas Hashem obligations in favor of service to Hashem, one is able to really experience freedom in his life.

**מצה** – Rav Yehoshua Maman [[72]](#footnote-72) tried to explain why we refer to the holiday as Chag Hapesach and Hashem calls it Chag HaMatzos. He explained that when you want to consolidate a relationship and mutual commitment with someone, you must look for the good points in them. Therefore in the Torah, G-d calls Passover "The Holiday of Matza", in order to publicize our walking after Him in the desert out of great faith with only Matzas, without having prepared food for the road. But in the Oral Torah, our Sages already call this holiday Passover, to remind us of the fact that G-d passed over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. It is as if both sides remind each other of the kindness that they did to each other.

**Matza Zu – the theme of Chipazon** – of speed pervades the Pesach Seder and exodus. Why? **Rav Chaim Sabato Shlita** explains that you only get one chance to make a first impression. Since the Jews didn’t have the Torah, Hashem had to grasp the first opportunity to impress faith in Him on them. To waste the opportunity would be akin to not making a child’s first opportunity to communicate congruent with the study of Torah. The lost chance is hard to make up.

**Matzah ZU - Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel**, late Rosh HaYeshiva of Mir, used to note that the Seder needs to be brought into the present – We say Matzah Zu and lift it etc. in order to bring a strong connection to it. This is in contrast to Aharon HaKohein would separate for 7 days prior to Yom Kippur. Rashi explains that when things are too comfortable or prevalent, the spirit of Kedusha is lost. This is the uniqueness of the Seder night. No matter how familiar we are with Pesach, we never seem to lose focus in it.

**וגם צידה לא עשו להם**- When we touch the Matzo we recall this great sacrifice that Bnei Yisrael made when leaving Mitzrayim. Rashi comments that the reward for the faith they displayed is “Kodesh Yisrael L’Hashem” (Think Yirmiyahu 2:2-3). What is the connection between Bitachon and Kedusha? **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl**[[73]](#footnote-73) explains that Kedusha is the process of being devoted to Hashem in an absolute manner. One dedicated to Torah is a Kadosh and one dedicated to hedone is called a Kadeish. Hashem is the ultimate Kadosh because He is separated apart from human behavior. Bnei Yisrael are to strive to be like Him by being absolutely dedicated to Hashem. Where does that dedication come from? It comes from Bitachon. When we are completely devoted to Him, raises us to the status of Kedoshim and the Matzo is the symbol that reminds us that we had attained that level once before.

**B’Chol Dor VaDor – The Rambam** has a different language wherein he requires one not only to see himself but rather to be seen as if he is now leaving Egypt. **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** notes that these are two distinct issues. One speaks to an inner sense of experience Zecher l’Nes. The other – more demonstrative – is Pirsumei Nissa. Two aspects exist in Hodaah – a personal one and a national publicity one.

**In every generation a person needs to see himself as if he personally came out of** Mitzrayim – **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.[[74]](#footnote-74)** noted that the Rambam (Hil. Chometz U’Matza 7:6) adds one word – Atah – now. In other words, if we want to affect our children not only must we externalize our Yiddishkiet, we also need to show that it is not a nostalgic experience of years ago but it is alive right now. **Rav Zecharia Senter ztl**[[75]](#footnote-75). added that it is not enough to mumble “I’m proud to be a Jew.” Rather, our every word and deed should show the world that our yiddishkiet is our life, now and forever. Rav Senter added that one way a believing Jew demonstrates his pride is in the area of Kashrus. When travelling on planes and the stewardesses give out the “special kosher” meals, the travelers are proclaiming, “Yes, I eat Kosher” so even above the 35,000 feet a Jew acts differently and shows that he is a member of an Am Kadosh.

**B’Chol Dor VaDor** – The Rambam notes that one not only must see himself but must appear as if he was leaving Egypt now. **Rav Soloveitchik** noted that memory is not only the process of recall but also the reliving of the event. Re-experiencing has to be that which is so overwhelming that we act on it.

**B’Chol Dor VaDor**: How can we relate to the Seder as if WE left Mitzrayim? It seems impossible! We weren’t there? **Rav Shimon Schwab** used to answer by noting that in a human being there are thousands of cells. The cells present at the time of birth are likely all dead by the time one has hit adulthood. Still, people have no problem pointing to an arm or a leg and referring to it as the arm or leg “I broke way back then” even though the arm is, on a cellular level, a different one. This is because it is the same arm connected to one body. The same is true about Bnei Yisroel. The individuals may change but to those who pledge allegiance to the team, the experiences relate to US. Maybe that is why the Rasha is removed – since he does not include himself, he would not have joined in order to get out.

**Galus (Hotzeeyanu Miyagon l’Simcha; Me’Avel L’Ym Tov etc.):** Why the three descriptions? The **Nesivos Shalom** notes that Galus is experienced by different Jews in different ways. Shevet Levi did not do the Avoda – but were still in the darkness of Egypt enslaved. Similarly today some of us are enslaved to life – doomed to work endless hours with no real point in the work. When we get to the purpose that will be Heirus. Some are enslaved to the Yetzer HaRa – That is Shibbud – no real personal goals. The antidote is Geula. Some lack the ability to see where they are and how to persevere – their redemption comes with the Ohr Gadol. Each piece is a different type of Geulah and worthy of expression but only after Daas – awareness that the antidote comes from Hashem.

Lefichach – It is interesting that we note that the obligation to see oneself as if s/he left mitzrayim is stated in the singular while the responsibility to recite Hallel in response is noted in the plural. Why? Perhaps one could suggest based on a comment of **Rav Simcha HaKohein Kook[[76]](#footnote-76)** who, at the wedding of his grandnephew and niece – Yedidya and Sivan Rahav-Meir -- spoke of the Gemara in Sanhedrin which described a final discussion between the evil king of the ten tribes Yerovam Ben Nevat who had split the Jewish kingdom away from the unity under the Davidic line led by Rechavam ben shlomo. The Gemara describes how Hashem grabbed his garment and tried to get him to change his mind and his path. If Yerovam would return to the proper path, then Hashem and Yerovam and Ben Yishai (the Davidic leadership) would stroll together in Gan Eden. To this Yerovam asked: Who will go first? G-d answered that the Davidic king would go first. Yerovam responded: If so, I do not need to go. And so, instead of walking in Gan Eden together with Hashem and the Jewish leaders, he chose Gehinnom. Rav Kook told the young couple, “Ego is an enemy. The desire to prevail over the other person and prove that you are better, can spoil and destroy everything. This is true in marriage, in children's education, and in all areas of life.” Similarly, while the individual needs to recognize that s/he left Mitzrayim this evening and needs to see himself that way, the Hallel is recited in its greatest glory when it is said in a group – egoless. That, is true recognition of freedom.

**לפיכך** – Maggid ends not with the end of the story but with the praises that we offer as Hallel to Hashem because he took us from Avdus into Cheirus. Why is the fitting end of the story the recitation of Shirah? Daily, Rav Itamar Ben Gal z”l HY”D[[77]](#footnote-77) would begin his classes singing songs in order to enter learning from a perspective of Shirah. One of his favorites was a song based on the poetry of Rav Kook ztl. that was [popularized](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ0AbR4a_KY) after the Purim massacre in Merkaz HaRav 10 years ago. The poetry read:

בֶּן אָדָם, עֲלֵה לְמַעְלָה עֲלֵה.

כִּי כֹּחַ עַז לְךָ יֵשׁ לְךָ כַּנְפֵי רוּחַ, כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים אַבִּירִים.

אַל תְּכַחֵשׁ בָּם פֶּן יכחשו לְךָ.

דּרושׁ אוֹתָם – ויימצאו לך מיד

“Son of man, strive to move upward and keep moving, you have special talents and strength, you have wings! Do not fail them lest they fail you – seek them and they will become apparent to you immediately.”

I believe that this is the secret of the Seder night. We need to understand that the ultimate goal of the Seder night is for us to realize that we need to grow from the Seder experience – and that Hashem believes we can – so should we.

לפיכך אנחנו חייבי**ן Lefichach Anachnu Chayavim** -- This section too, is part of the obligation of Rabban Gamliel. This section highlights all of the benefits not only of the physical Yetzias Mitzrayim but also the changeover in the psyche of the Jewish nation. Where they had been on the bottom, they were now on top. But when it comes to our relationship with Hashem, the story does not END when we are on top, it BEGINS at that point. The same thing happens at our Seder as well -- we don’t END Maggid with the Jews living happily ever after in the desert, WE are the next chapter in the story. WE finish this section singing the Hallel because we now sing it not only out of obligation but also out of recognition of the joy of the season. It is reminiscent of a thought expressed by the late **Rav Chaninah Herzberg**[[78]](#footnote-78) who told a tall guy, 6'5, who was that way since 8th grade “hey buddy your height is really based on how high you can lift someone not based on how many times you have to look down to them.”

**Asher Pasach** – Why is the idea of Pesach (passing over) so crucial to the holiday? **The Tosher Rebbe ztl. (Rav Meshulam Feivish Lowy)** noted that when the Jews left Mitzayim, their spiritual level was low. They could not merit spiritual salvation in the normal course of events. It was the action of Pasach – Dilug – that helped get them out of Mitzrayim. It is the same type of opportunity at the beginning of Shabbos when the detachment from the mundane is difficult and without the assistance of Hashem in the process, we would lose the spiritual awareness (itarusei D’Lieila) of Shabbos at the outset. Perhaps, suggests the Rebbe, this is why the first day of Pesach is referred to, as Shabbos.

**מוציא מצה מרור** – Shouldn’t the order be Marror and then Matza? Why is it the opposite? Rav Soloveitchik[[79]](#footnote-79) noted that first we need to extol the good. Only then do we tell the person to go back and go over the negative.

**Maror** – It sounds as if we eat Maror in order to remind us of the bitterness. Yet, they didn’t need a reminder in Mitzrayim! Why did they eat it there? **Rav Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** (brother of the late Rav Meir Soloveitchik ztl. Rosh Yeshivas Brisk) suggested that simply, they had stopped working and did not feel the slavery the same way. He added that the entire section would not have applied in Pesach mitzrayim – the Pesach of Pasach and the Matzo of being sent out quickly also had not happened yet. This underscores the essential message of the Jew. We perform Mitzvos because we are commanded to. The future reasoning will become apparent as it did but first and foremost the reason we do things is because of the command.

**L’iros Es Atzmo/L’Haros Es Atzmo** – What is the difference between our version and that of the Semag (“leharos”)? **Rav Shach** explained that for the purpose of hallel and hodaah it would be enough for one to see himself. For it is not the fanfare and demonstration that shows someone what he feels. However, because of the Possuk of V’Heegateta which is brought as a proof, one could/should be more demonstrative.

**Hallel** – The Ran to Pesachim identifies 2 distinct types of Hallel. The first, is called Hallel D’Kriyah (The read Hallel) and the second is the Hallel of Shirah **Rav Shlomo Fischer ztl.**[[80]](#footnote-80) explained the difference. The former is sung like the national anthem – it is formal and needs to be recited by day while standing. The Hallel of Shirah, which is the Hallel of the Seder night is one that is spontaneous and is a response to the short answer of Maggid (Avadim Hayeenu) and the end of the longer one (MeTichilah Ovdei Avoda Zara).

**Hallel –** Generally we know that it is Assur to speak or interrupt in the middle of Hallel. Yet, on the Seder night we intentionally split the Hallel into 2 distinct parts – the part at the end of Maggid which we separate from the other half with Rachtza, Motzi Matza, Marror, Koreich, Shluchan Oirech, Tzafun and Bareich – intentionally! How can we do that? How does it make sense? **Rav Simcha Hakohein Kook[[81]](#footnote-81)** explained that all of our meal on the Seder night is part of a Mitzva – albeit a Mitzva Kiyumis (not the obligational Mitzva but the fulfillment mitzva. The entire meal is one big Seudas Hodaah (thanksgiving meal) and therefore is not a Hefsek (interruption of Hallel) but rather a fulfillment of the purpose of Hallel – thanksgiving. (Rav Kook added that therefore it is incumbent upon us to make sure that our Seder conversations are focused on thanksgiving and Seder-related talk instead of political endeavors).

**בצאת ישראל ממצרים- Rabbi Ozer Glickman ztl.[[82]](#footnote-82)** noted the fact that a clear indication of Galus or even the Galus Mentality is nowhere more apparent than in the language that the people speak and express themselves in. He added that we tend to settle for precision in the language we know best while being aware that it developed in a cultural milieu foreign to us. That considered, as wonderful as it is to express our philosophical, legal and Halachic discussions in the language we think best, ideas, we need to recognize that English as a language does not accurately portray the Jewish experience -- and the nuance of language is lost. On the seder night we can fully appreciate the excitement the language component adds.

**Eim HaBanim Semaicha** – See Sotah 11a about how Miriam fought her father and convinced him to remarry her mother. The end result was Moshe who led the Jews out of Mitzrayim. At the wedding the scene is described with people calling out the possuk “Eim HaBanim Semaicha”. **Rav Lamm** points out that this is what is needed if we want nachas from the generation growing up – faith even in the face of doom; courage even when it seems ludicrous and trust in Hashem’s goodness even if it seems impossible. This is the legacy that we need to leave and lead within our children and theirs if we are to raise a generation that will avoid the vortex of assimilation. If we have the courage to see that future already in the present, it will be Eim HaBanim Semaicha.

**4 expressions of Geulah:**  The Baal Haturim associates these expressions with the 4 exiles (Egypt, Babylonia, Greece and Rome). The Midrash notes that the exiles were linked as a result of Moshe’s complaint at the end of Parshas Shemos as to why Hashem increased the severity of the slavery. Hashem yielded and the Jews were released earlier and paid back the time of history with the other exiles. Rav Gedaliah Schorr explains that there are no free rides in history – if time is lessened

**Asher Kideeshsnu B’mitzvosav: Rav Wolbe** (Daas Shlomo) noted that we are surrounded by magnetic fields in this world. Money is magnetic, desire, is magnetic, Kavod and status are all magnetic issues in our world. They pull us away from our focus and drag us in many different directions – often against our will. Torah and mitzvos repel the magnetic pull. They allow man not to be compelled but rather place him in control of his destiny to be able to direct how and where s/he wants to utilize all of that which exists in his/her power – toward a higher divine purpose. Food, drink, etc don’t become that which I “Have to do” or “need” but rather become tools to be used in the service of Hashem.

**Marror** – It seems strange to eat the Marror AFTER reciting and experiencing the process of Geulah. Why recall and consume the bitter AFTER having recited the blessing of Asher Gealanu? The **Chasam Sofer** (Shut Chasam Sofer O.C. 132) notes that the different vegetables mentioned as ideals for Marror include the primary Chasa and Tamcha. Chasa stands for “Chas RAchmana Alan” or that Hashem shows compassion for us while Tamcha stands for “Tamid Misaprim Kevod Keil” or that the world always speaks the praise of Hashem. **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** explains that the Chasam Sofer was not simply offering a “good vort.” Rather, it is incumbent upon every Jew to recognize and sing the praises of Hashem even in the tough times – and to know that whatever Hashem does –L’Tav Avid (who better to make that point than Rabbi Akiva? <see Berachos 60b>). Thus, only AFTER reciting Asher Gealanu do we fully appreciate our jobs to recite Kol D’Avid Rachamana even on the Marror.

**Marror** – **Rav Schachter Shlita** would remind us yearly that the purpose of Charoses was either as a medicinal agent for the Marror or a reminder of the mortar in Mitzrayim. That being the case, we do not have a Beracha with it for as he would quote from Rav Soloveitchik ztl., Charoses lacks a Maaseh HaMitzvah – it does not have a specific Mitzva action associated with it. It merely needs to “be there”. Accordingly, the Beracha cannot and does not exist.

**Charoses - Rav Pinkus ztl**. notes that Charoses is a contraction of the words Chas and Rus. Chas is the value of Chaim and Rus was the woman who revealed the Kavod Shomayim that was later brought to full realization in the Davidic line. Rav Pinkus explains that Maror which is like death (numerically =Maves) is stopped by those who put themselves out to be as complete as possible – who live and thrive despite obstacles that life throws their way. These people are those who demonstrate that a Torah life is a resilient one.

**Koreich – Rav Schorr** notes that the uniqueness of Koreich is in the fact that the marror liberates us from the constraints and impediments that prevent us from latching on to the spiritual. Only through the marror we experience the matza and its spiritual significance.

**Koreich** – Is the language “Pesach Matza U’maror” or just Matza U’Maror”? **R. Yochanan Sofer, the Erloi Rebbe ztl.** explained that the 2 languages seem dependent on the difference between the obligation and the personal practice of Hillel. The learning from the Possuk included the idea of only Matza and Maror while the personal practice of Hillel was to eat them all together. Hillel id so since he saw the eating of all three as one large mitzvah – consistent with his concern that if one ate the Pesach alone he might come to think one could eat matza and marror alone. The critical differential in the paragraph is the issue of whether the what we do now is the focus or is it what Hillel did personally. This would explain the machlokes.

**Shulchan Oreich** – People have a minhag to eat an egg at the start of Shulchan Orech to remember the Beis HaMikdash. Why do we use an egg? **The Imrei Emes** quotes that in Halacha it is known that an egg that is born today was completed yesterday. The same can be said both for preparing for the Seder and for the Geulah. One who prepares gains. This is likely the intention of the Possuk הזורעים בדמעה ברנה יקצרו.

**Afikomen: Rabbi Wein** notes that Afikomen food is eaten after a satisfying meal. This is because we do not eat it out of hunger – rather out of holy responsibility to the word of Hashem. He tells the story of a Holocaust survivor who bought an apartment in Israel prior to the war which he sparsely furnished in comparison to the large home he had in Hungary. However, when the war came and he was in the concentration camps, the survivor survived by regularly concentrating on that apartment and furnishing and refurnishing it in his mind. That was the Afikomen he would “hold on to” no matter the cost of the exercise. Afikomen reminds us to have a taste that stays will us and lasts a lifetime.

**Bareich - Rabbi Avrohom Herman Shlita** explained the concept of Mussar based on the writings and Schmoozin of **Rav Henoch Leibowitz ztl.** as containing three components: Chochmas Hamussar – the basis for the mussar a person learns, Chinuch HaMusar or the practical steps that the Chochma leads to and Hisbaalus Hamussar – or owning it completely and including the emotional component.

In reflection, I realized that we do the same three steps in bentching --- Achalta (the impetus of blessing Hashem) Savatee (the practical moment of bentching – why I should offer blessing) and Beracha – the Hisbaalus of bentching – Kol Atzmosai Tomarna. This can explain why we put the :kitchen sink” into our Hodaah of Birkas HaMazon – including Yetzias Mitzrayim, Bris, Eretz Yisrael Torah etc. It is these components that give Us Baalus over the world.

**לא לנו** – Why do we say this section if we are breaking up the Hallel anyway**? Rav Yisrael Meir Heiman ztl**. noted that without this, there is no Hallel at all. For one who depends on Avodah Zara fails while he who believes in Hashem never falters**. Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** added that this is why we say Einayim Lahem v’Lo Yirau even though it is not true – the Avodah Zara lacks real eyes. Rather, at the end we say כמוהם יהיו עושיהם and those who make an Avoda Zara are indeed walking blindly even if they have eyes.

**Nirtza – Rav Chaim Poupko Shlita,** Assistant Rabbi Ahavas Torah, President of the RCBC shared the thought of Rav Kook that Nirtza is the only step of the Seder that has a verb that is in the passive voice. Rav Kook explained that once we get to that pinnacle, the Ritzui and love bubbles over – hence the passive voice. He then added that in his opinion this is the reason why Nirtza contains so much music and latent spiritual practice as opposed to that which has Halachic order to it – until we get to the point of the relationship with Hashem where it is intuitive, Halacha guides us exactly how to live and follow every step of our lives. Once we get there, the Halachic process can be more intuited and the focus of our work – more spiritual.

**L’Shana HaBaah B’Yirushalayim** – Why is it that at the beginning of Ha Lachma Anya we also note where we ARE but at the end of the seder we only note where we are going**? Rav Simcha Sheps ztl.** explains that the Seder is so transformative an experience that when done right, we are transported to a time and place wherein we know not a “Hacha” by the time it is over.

**Sefiras HaOmer** – When one makes the Beracha with the wrong intended date in mind but ultimately makes the correct count why is there any discussion as to whether he fulfilled his Halachic obligation? **Rav Yosef Weiss ztl**. debated the issue of whether the Mitzva of Sefirah is a mitzvah of completing a necessary count of 50 days in which case he did what he needed to, or whether each day of the Sefirah is specific and part of the mandatory self improvement process or connection process toward the 50 days.

**Tzom L’Shaleish B’Pesach –** The connection between Purim and Pesach is quite apparent. In fact, Mordechai and Esther removed the opportunity to keep the Seder and eat Matzah and Marror as commanded by declaring a three day fast-- a theme we highlight in the Piyutim of Nirtzah. **Rav Levi Rabinowitz ztl (author of Maadanei HaShulchan and father of Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlita**) noted that Esther’s request – Tzumu Alai V’Al Tochlu V’Al Tishtu has an inherent redundancy – why tzumu AND not eat or drink? He answered that when one eats, s/he should not eat to excess or even to fulfillment (See Mogen Avraham 571:1 who quotes this idea from the Raavad). Hence one can technically be eating and still be considered a Taanis as he starves the soul from full fulfillment. Esther and Mordechai didn’t even want that during the fast of Pesach night.

**Chad Gadya:** The Talmud Berachos (5a)notes that one who feels he is losing in his battle against the Yetzer HaRa should remind the Yetzer of the day of death. Why does this work? **Rav Evli Passveller** (Ga’Avad Vilna) used to note that the Satan, Yetzer HaRa and Malach HaMaves are all the same thing. By calling him out on the carpet and recognizing what he tries to do and where he ends up driving us, it stops us from going all the way. (cognitive labeling technique)

**וְאָתָא חוּטְרָא וְהִכָּה לְכַלְבָּא** And the stick came and hit the dog - In Chad Gadya, everything naturally makes sense in the sequence of events. Cats eat goats, dogs eat cats, water extinguishes fire, cows drink water and so on. But how did the stick hit the dog? Sticks don’t walk. It should have said that a person came with a stick and hit the dog. But it doesn’t say that.” Rav Zechariah Wallerstein[[83]](#footnote-83) suggested that the Haggadah was written in this way for a reason. When you read the story of Chad Gadya, everything appears to occur naturally. But there is something the author of the Haggadah put into the middle of the story that doesn’t make sense at all. A stick appears on its own and hits the dog. When you read this, you immediately raise your eyebrows and say, ‘Wait a second! How did the stick get there?’ And then you realize that it must be Hashem holding the stick. And if that is so, the same is true of all the other ‘natural’ events. Even the cat eating the goat and the water extinguishing the fire is the hand of Hashem. Nothing is natural and happens by itself.” Throughout all the hardships in our lives, we can never think it is natural. At the end of the Haggadah when we read about the events of Chad Gadya, we are meant to think of all the incidents in our own personal lives. And then we are to realize that even the stick that hits and the hardships that confront us are from Hashem. He is behind our lives every step of the way.

1. Rav Moshe Landau ztl. was the famed Rav of Bnei Brak. A recognized Talmid Chacham, he was especially noted in the field of Kashrus. In fact, his imprint gave Coca Cola the kosher standing it has in the land of Israel today. He passed just before Rosh Chodesh Nissan (25 Adar II) at the age of 83. 5779 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rabbi Marcus served as the spiritual leader of the Orthodox Congregation Ahawas Achim B’nai Jacob & David in West Orange, New Jersey, from September 1968 to early 1998, when he became Rabbi Emeritus. Rabbi Marcus was president of the Rabbinical Council of New Jersey and a past president of the Council of Orthodox Rabbis of Metropolitan New Jersey. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Harav Yitzchak Feigelstock , a student of Rav Aaron Kotler zt”l, was the long-time Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta of Long Beach where he taught hundreds of talmidim, and a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rav Aharon Kotler ztl. founder of Beis Medrash Gavoha of Lakewood was one of the very few Torah (5782) giants who contributed mightily to the transformation of the face of American Jewry in the middle of the twentieth century from one of Torah ignorance and mourning over the Holocaust to significant progress in Torah knowledge and partial recovery from the tragedy of the Holocaust. When he arrived in the United States in April of 1941, while the fire of Nazism was raging in Europe, he addressed an audience, "For myself, I wouldn't have come. I have come only to help save, with your assistance, American Yidden, the centuries-old Torah centers of Europe."He dedicated his life, night and day, to the building of Torah in America and by leadership of an organization called "Chinuch Atzmai," "Independent Torah Education," in Israel as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita, former Chavrusa of Moreinu Harav Teitz, was a faculty member of [Yeshivat Mir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mir_Yeshiva_(Jerusalem)) before accepting positions at [Yeshivat HaKotel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeshivat_HaKotel) and [Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeshivat_Netiv_Aryeh), where he gives a weekly lecture in English to foreign students. He hosts many of those students in his home for [kiddush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiddush) after [Shabbat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat) morning prayer services. Nebenzahl's scholarly works include a commentary on the [Mishnah Berurah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah_Berurah), books about the laws of [Passover](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover), [Succot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Succot), [Shavuot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot), [The Three Weeks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Three_Weeks) and [Shabbat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat) (on the [tractate Shabbat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tractate_Shabbat)). He is also the author of weekly essays on the Torah portion. Nebenzahl was Rabbi [Shlomo Zalman Auerbach](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shlomo_Zalman_Auerbach)'s study partner for over 40 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Rav Avrohom Erlanger, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Kol Torah was world renown for his 20 volumes on Shas known as the Birkas Avrohom. His Torah lessons were extremely lucid, he would take each sugya (subject) and analyze the various aspects and then connect them afresh giving a new comprehension to the sugya.(5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rosh Yeshivas Mercaz HaTorah who passed this past year 5778 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. **Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu** (27 December 1932 – 24 November 2022) was a German-born British Orthodox rabbi. He served for many years as the head of the London Beth Din in Great Britain (also known as The Court of the Chief Rabbi), serving the United Synagogue Community and those independent Orthodox Congregations that accept the authority of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. He retired from the post in December 2006.He continued to lead the British Jewish community (and beyond) until his death in 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz was an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, author, and founder of ArtScroll Publications. 5778 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Rav Shlomo Zalman was the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Kol Torah yeshiva in Jerusalem, Israel. A world renowned Posek and model of Middos, Rav Shlomo Zalman’s opinion and model for Jews everywhere was well known. The Jerusalem neighborhood Ramat Shlomo is named after him. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Rav Chaim Yisrael Belsky was the Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas and along with Mori V’Rabiho HaRav Schachter Shlita, the senior Poskim of the OU. Mori V’Rabi has often remarked about the genius who was Rav Belsky -- so aware of the intricacies of mathematics, sciences, economics, production, business etc. all necessary for the diversity of Piskei Halacha that Rav Belsky needed to render. He was also a master of Piyut and music. He was a Gaon on so many levels and in his ability to relate to regular Talmidim a Tzaddik as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Rabbi Daniel Stein is a [Rosh Yeshiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosh_Yeshiva) at RIETS where he holds the Perez and Frieda Friedberg Chair in Talmud.He is also Rav the Rabbi of Congregation Ahavath Chesed, known as the Ridniker Shteibel, a historic synagogue on the [Upper West Side](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_West_Side) of [Manhattan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan). Before that, Stein was the founding Rabbi of Kehillas Beis Sholom in [Clifton, New Jersey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifton,_New_Jersey), where he served for four years [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Rabbi Ralph Pelcovitz was the Rav of the White Shul in Far Rockaway and a towering figure in the Five Towns/Far Rockaway community since 1951. He was the translator of the Sforno commentary to Chumash and Pirkei Avos. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Paranthetically, Rav Tzaddok HaKohein of Lublin uses the same Mitzva to teach us that one needs to have אמונה עצמית – for if Hashem believed in us to take us out of Mitzrayim then we must believe in ourselves too. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Harav Avrohom Chaim Levin, *zt”l*, *Rosh Yeshivah*, Yeshivas Telshe Chicago, one of America’s leading *marbitzei Torah* who was a *Rebbi* to generations of *talmidim*, a dedicated leader, and a *Gadol baTorah* who embodied the lofty ideals of *mussar* and *gadlus haadam* was *niftar* on Wednesday, 20 Kislev. He was 86 years old. (5779) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Rav Mattisyahu Salomon is the Mashgiach Ruchani of Beth Medrash Gavoha of Lakewood. Prior to that, he was the Mashgiach at Gateshead Yeshiva for over 30 years. A master theologian, his thoughts and talks are collected in a series of writings called Matnas Chaim. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff is Rebbe & Professor of Rabbinic Literature at Yeshiva University's Caroline and Joseph S. Gruss Institute in Jerusalem. He is a noted scholar, author and teacher who has taught thousands of students throughout his over 55+ years of teaching. He spent four years studying under Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and remained very close to him afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. **Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein** was the founder of Ohr Yitzchak, Ateres Naava Seminary for Girls, and Ohr Naava Women's Institute in Brooklyn, NY. Ohr Naava is a unique program designed for women ages 17 through 120 who are interested in furthering their Torah experience. The program, which was under the leadership of Rabbi Zachariah Wallerstein, started out as a Wednesday evening class in a small classroom known as a "Chabura." It brought together girls who had just returned from studying in Israel, college students who needed a weekly moment of inspiration, and most of all, Jews of different backgrounds with one common goal, to grow and change. The signature of Ohr Naava is to provide a multitude of programs, absolutely free of charge, for women wishing to make the time to grow, change and further their Torah knowledge. He passed in 5782. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Rabbi Jerry Acker was a well known and well regarded Torah teacher in the Kew Gardens neighborhood. A master of Tanach and of Grammar as well as minhag and standard, Rabbi Acker was the go to center for advice for so many who grew up in the greater Queens community where he shared his Torah love and knowledge with anyone and everyone but was specifically talented with the young people of the community. Many continue to think back to him and his teachings as they teach and raise their own families and students. Closer to home, Rabbi Acker graced our community with his greatest treasures – his children Dena & Moshe Ambinder and grandchildren.(5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. My great Rebbe, Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita is Rosh Yeshiva and Rosh Kollel at RIETS, Senior Posek at OU Kosher, noted author and Rebbe to tens of thousands of students. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. My dear friend and Rebbe Rav Shay Schachter Shlita, often comments that his father, our Rebbe was not a big fan of long-winded Divrei Torah during Maggid. Rebbe often focused Maggid to the story of the exodus and the responsibilities of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. He felt that the children needed to be active and awake as much as possible for the elements of the Seder including the 4th cup. “Let the good vortelach be saved for later or for the other Seudos of Yom Tov.” A similar idea was expressed by the venerable Mechanech Rav Yaakov Bender – Rosh Yeshiva of Darchei Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. **Rav Shimon Ba'adani**, was a leading Sephardi rabbi and rosh kollel in Israel. He was the co-founder and dean of Kollel Torah V'Chaim in Bnei Brak, and served as president of dozens of Torah institutions. Baadani was known for his simple lifestyle and demeanor. He made himself available to petitioners at his home and by phone; he had a listed number and answered the phone himself. He did not have his own association or central fund, but assisted widows from his personal bank account and provided tefillin for orphaned boys celebrating their Bar Mitzvah. He was successful in the area of shidduchim (marriage matches); among the matches he suggested are those of Torah leaders, notably Rishon Letzion Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron. He set aside one room of his house for a matchmaking organization and paid the salaries of the shadchanim himself.He was also a senior leader of the Shas political party and a member of that party's Moetzes Chachmei HaTorah rabbinical leadership council which he led after the death of Rav Shalom Cohen. He passed away in 5783 at 95 years old. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Reb Yoel Kahan (February 14, 1930 – July 15, 2021) was a senior Chabad rabbi, who served as the leading Choizer and Meiniach for the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.[1] His position as leading Choizer and Meiniach made him the default authority on the Rebbe's teachings and one of the most universally recognized scholars of general Chabad Chassidic doctrine. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. HaRav Shlomo Fischer served as a dayan in the Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem and was a Rosh Mesivta at Yeshivas Liflagos Reuven prior to being appointed as a Rosh Mesivta in Yeshivas Itri by HaGaon HaRav Mordechai Elefant, z’tl, later becoming the Rosh Yeshivah. He was a well respected and well regarded Torah Personality who would travel to teach Talmidim from all different Torah backgrounds. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. **Rabbi Yosef Liberman** was the Rosh Kollel and Rosh Yeshiva At Shomrei Hachomos and Rabbi of the Sadigura Shul in Jerusalem, Rav Yosef Liberman was the author of Mishnas Yosef, 14 volumes of responsa on issues of Shvi’is and laws of Eretz Yisrael, on which he was considered a world authority, as well as on all other parts of Shulchan Aruch. He also authored three seforim on Shas, two with Torah commentaries and three with Drashos given on various occasions. He passed away in 5783 at 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Rav Yosef Wanefsky was a fixture in RIETS for over 50 years. Officially a research scholar and Shoel U’Mashiv, Rav Wanefsky’s brilliance and his extremely jovial manner made him a magnet for many students. He was both scholar and master teacher. Though his ability to see this world was challenged and compromised, his understanding of it was rich and possessed an insight beyond sight. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman ztl. was the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponoveizh L’Tzeirim and a major Gadol HaDor. His positions on Torah matters were quite nuanced and his sparse needs did not indicate that he was naïve – Rather it demonstrated his recognition of what was important in life. His Seforim, written as the Ayelet HaShachar alluded in the title to his initials and those of his wife, Tamar [AYeLeT = Aharon Yehuda Leib Tamar] in Hebrew, as well as the "morning star" of Psalms 22) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Lazman Hazeh, p. 98 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. **Rav Haim Drukman** was the most senior spiritual leader of the Religious Zionist community at the time of his death, he served as rosh yeshiva (dean) of Yeshivat Or Etzion, and head of the Center for Bnei Akiva Yeshivot.

    He was a founder of Gush Emunim movement and served in the Israeli Knesset as a member of the National Religious Party and Morasha. As director of the State Conversion Authority, he worked to make Jewish conversions more accessible to immigrant Russians of Jewish descent. He was awarded the Israel Prize for his contribution to society and education. He passed away in 5783. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Rabbi David Eliach was the long-time principal of the Yeshiva of Flatbush high school where he continued to teach students and mentor faculty well into his nineties. He was also a devoted faculty member at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish education of Yeshiva University. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Rabbi Glickman was a Rosh Yeshiva at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and taught at Sy Syms School of Business, Isaac Breuer College (IBC), and Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where he served as senior resident rabbinic scholar, adjunct professor of law at the Center for the Study of Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization and was affiliated with its Program in Jewish Law and Interdisciplinary Studies. He was a hero [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. One of America’s great Mechanchim, **Rav Yaakov Bender** is the Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivas Darchei Torah and a master educator whose opinions on issues of Chinuch are sought far beyond his own Yeshiva. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Rav Shmaryahu Shulman was a venerated Rav, originally in Kesher Israel in Washington, later in Jersey City. He lived many years in Kew Gardens as well. Rav Shulman was an Honorary President of the Igud Harabbanim/Rabbinical Alliance of America.. On Igud Beth Din Harabonim,. He was also a member of the Agudas Harabbonim of the United States and Canada. He was a prolific writer who wrote many Seforim. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. **Rav Uri Zohar** was born in Tel Aviv. His parents were Polish Jewish immigrants. In 1952, he graduated high school and did his military service in an army entertainment troupe. In 1960, he studied philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was sentenced to three months of community service on charges of marijuana possession. In the late 1970s, under the influence of Yitzhak Shlomo Zilberman, Zohar turned to religion. In 1977, he began wearing a kippa on the television game show he was hosting. He eventually withdrew entirely from Israel's popular culture scene to become a full Baal Teshuva and began to study in yeshiva. He became a rabbi in Jerusalem and immersed himself in Torah totally.He became active in the Kiruv movement to attract secular Jews to religious orthodoxy, and used his entertainment skills to promote this objective. He later directed a film about a successful dancer who embraces Orthodox Judaism, mirroring his own story. When asked in an interview about how he regarded his former career in entertainment, Zohar said that "I respect it, the way a mature adult remembers his childhood. But there's no escaping the fact that I was a child." Rav Uri passed in 5782. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. My dear friend Rabbi **Moshe Gottesman** was born in Canada and has worked in Israel, Chicago and Long Island, NY. He held the position of [dean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dean_(education)) for the [Hebrew Academy of Nassau County](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Academy_of_Nassau_County) for almost 20 years. Gottesman was also the director of tours for Camp Sdei Chemed International for over 35 years. Gottesman has received many awards, including, the Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from [Yeshiva University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeshiva_University). He (and Yblct his amazing wife Sondra) was an incredible Oheiv Yisrael who loved Torah, Torah leaders, children, The Jewish people and Medinat Yisrael. The idea expressed here is one of many lessons I learned from working with and for him. (5779) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Rabbi Brafman was the longtime Menahel of Yeshiva of Far Rockaway. He was famous for taking chances on kids and having solid success with them. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The application is mine – you are welcome to disagree with it [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Rabbi Yechiel Yitzchok Perr (born 1935)[1] is the founder and rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Derech Ayson (Yeshiva of Far Rockaway) in Far Rockaway, New York. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Rav Willig is Rosh Yeshiva and Rosh kollel Elyon at Riets – Sgan Av Beth Din at the BDA, Rav of the Young Israel of Riverdale and writer and teacher of thousands. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. הרב **שלמה לוונשטיין** (נולד בשנת [תשכ"ז](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%AA%D7%A9%D7%9B%22%D7%96), [1967](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967)) הוא [דרשן](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA) [חרדי](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%97%D7%A8%D7%93%D7%99) ומחבר ספרי דרוש על [פרשת השבוע](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%AA_%D7%94%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%95%D7%A2) ו[חגי ישראל ומועדיו](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%97%D7%92%D7%99_%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C_%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%93%D7%99%D7%95). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Rav Moshe Dovid Tendler Shlita, Son in law of Rav Moshe Feinstein is the rabbi of the Community Synagogue of Monsey, senior Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS and Professor of Jewish Medical Ethics and Professor of Biology at Yeshiva College. He is noted as an expert on Jewish medical ethics and their relationship to Halakha. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Rabbi Shlomo Korach was considered to be the oldest of the Rabbis of Yemen. He was born in Tzan'a, and for decades he educated and taught in Israel, until his passing [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Rav Yitzchok Zev (Velvel) Halevi Soloveitchik (Gri"z), also known as the "Brisker Rav," was the last rabbi of the town of Brisk (Brest, Belarus) before the Holocaust. His father, R. Chaim Soloveitchik, was rosh yeshiva of the Volozhin yeshiva, while his maternal grandfather, R. Rafael Shapira was its long-time Rosh Yeshiva. He was an extraordinary learner, and was said to have memorized the entire Babylonian Talmud, along with Rashi, by age 16. After the closing of the Volozhin yeshiva, the family moved to Brisk, where his paternal grandfather, R. Yosef Ber Soloveitchik, was Rav. The position then passed to his father and later to himself. He Holocaust forced him to flee to Jerusalem, where he maintained a position of non-participation with the Israeli government, including opposition to receiving government funding for yeshivot. His children and followers founded several yeshivas in Jerusalem, all known as Brisk. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Rav Avrohom Erlanger, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Kol Torah was world renown for his 20 volumes on Shas known as the Birkas Avrohom. His Torah lessons were extremely lucid, he would take each sugya (subject) and analyze the various aspects and then connect them afresh giving a new comprehension to the sugya. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Rav Posen was a well-known professor of Targumim in Bar Ilan and the prolific Baal Tefillah in Kerem B’Yavne for many years. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman ztl. was the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponoveizh L’Tzeirim and a major Gadol HaDor. His positions on Torah matters were quite nuanced and his sparse needs did not indicate that he was naïve – Rather it demonstrated his recognition of what was important in life. His Seforim, written as the Ayelet HaShachar alluded in the title to his initials and those of his wife, Tamar [AYeLeT = Aharon Yehuda Leib Tamar] in Hebrew, as well as the "morning star" of Psalms 22) [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The prodigy of the Yeshiva of Slutzsk, Rav Michel Feinstein came to America with Rav Aharon Kotler in 1941. He became Mashgiach in Heichal HaRav Chaim Soloveitchik which opened in Boston (under Rav Soloveitchik ztl.) and later in Rav Moshe’s MTJ in NY. He traveled to Eretz Yisrael in 1946 and married Lifsha, the daughter of the Brisker Rav. He opened Yeshivas Beis Yehuda in Tel Aviv in 1952 and served as its Rosh Yeshiva until his passing. OUr community has a personal connection with him as Moreinu HaRav Teitz Shlita learned with him directly for many years. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Rav Reuven Feinstein Shlita is the Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Staten Island and one of the recognized Gedolei Torah of the United States today. He is the youngest son of Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl. He and his wife were in a terrible auto accident in July 2018 and ultimately his wife, Rebbetzin Sheila Feinstein a”h succumbed to her injuries. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Rav Dov Yaffe, Mashgiach of Knessess Chizkiyahu and Kol Yaakov in Israel passed away this year at the age of 89. A man of truth and ethics, he told his students that to be successful in life they needed to spend quality time studying Mussar. He himself, was a devotee to the writings of Rav Kook despite their general acceptance in the Chareidi world. His positions and thoughts continue to be disseminated widely in the Yeshiva world and beyond. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Rav Nisson Alpert , prime Talmid of Rav Moshe Feinstein was appointed as a Rosh Yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, and later became the first Rosh Kollel of its Kollel L’Horaah— Yadin-Yadin. He was a great Torah scholar and author of Limudei Nissan. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Rav Shmaryahu Shulman was a venerated Rav, originally in Kesher Israel in Washington, later in Jersey City. He lived many years in Kew Gardens as well. Rav Shulman was an Honorary President of the Igud Harabbanim/Rabbinical Alliance of America.. On Igud Beth Din Harabonim,. He was also a member of the Agudas Harabbonim of the United States and Canada. He was a prolific writer who wrote many Seforim. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Rav Dr. Bernard Rosensweig was the long time Rav of Adas Yeshurun in Kew Gardens, Queens and a beloved professor of Jewish history at YU. An active member on the Jewish communal stage, he played many critical roles in Jewish organizations and was a prolific author. He didn’t teach a subject, he taught students. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Rav Ovadiah Yosef was an Iraqi-born Talmudic scholar, a posek, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1973 to 1983, and the founder and long-time spiritual leader of Israel's ultra-Orthodox Shas party. His Psak on so many issues was ground breaking and his ability to teach the masses and bring them close to Hashem was magnificent. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Rav Mordechai Sternberg was one of the Roshei Yeshiva of the Har Hamor Yeshiva. Recognized as a leader in what is commonly known as “Knitted Kippah Hareidi”, he was responsible for the education of thousands and the bringing of a new generation of successful Mechanchim to this sector. His shiurim were known for their clarity and depth and he would regularly give dozens of Shiurim throughout the Dati Leumi community’s Yeshivos. He passed in 5783. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. **Rav Abba Bronspigel**, famed Rosh Yeshiva first of RIETS and then of Beis Medrash L’Torah (Lander’s). He was known among the Talmidim at both Yeshivos for his incredible shiurim and more importantly, his strong love and bond that he shared wth his students. Each felt close to him personally. Although short in stature and mostly soft-spoken, Rabbi Bronspiegel made a very powerful impression upon his talmidim and all who heard his shiur. He radiated a sincere sweetness and Chein. He passed in 5783. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. **Rav Chaim Walkin** was the Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivas Ateres Yisrael and recognized as one of the great Mashgichim of our time. Born in China while the Mirrer Yeshiva was in Shanghai, he was raised under the tuteledge of Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz and adopted his style when reaching students. Walkin developed his signature method in line with the teachings of Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, with emphasis on personal attention to individual students, in groups of six to eight students at a time and short lectures with a clearly defined message. He espoused a way of education through cooperation and not by harsh methods. He passed in 5783. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Rabbi Dovid Grossman (1946 – 5 February 2018) was a well-known Talmudic lecturer and talmid Chacham who had disseminated Torah worldwide. His Chumash and Daf Yomi shiurim were famous and are on dafyomi.org. He was Rebbe and Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva Gedolah of Los Angeles. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Rav Yosef Chaim Shneur Kotler (1918 – 24 June 1982) was an Orthodox rabbi and rosh yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha (also known as the Lakewood Yeshiva) in Lakewood, New Jersey from 1962 to 1982. During his tenure, he developed the Lithuanian-style, Haredi but non-Hasidic yeshiva into the largest post-graduate Torah institution in the world. He also established Lakewood-style kollels in 30 cities, and pioneered the establishment of community kollels in which Torah scholars study during the morning and afternoon hours and engage in community outreach during the evenings. Upon his death, he had served as the Lakewood rosh yeshiva for exactly the same amount of time as had his father, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, the founding rosh yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha: nineteen years, seven months, and one day [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Rabbi Bernard Weinberger was the Rav of Young Israel of Brooklyn in Williamsburg and the author of the famed Shemen HaTov series. I thank my dear friends Marty & Miriam Knecht for introducing me to the brilliant thoughts of Rav Weinberger. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Rav Simcha Krauss studied under Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner and Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. Rav Krauss was a Maggid Shiur at Yeshiva University’s IBC program for over two decades. He was the longtime Rav of the Young Israel of Hillcrest and later a Rosh Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. He served on the political science faculty at both St. Louis University and Utica College of Syracuse University. He also served as the president of the Religious Zionists of America and as a member of the Vaad Harabanim of Queens. Closer to home, he served as Rav Teitz’s Chavrusa in Eretz Yisrael in the last 15 years. (5782) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Rabbi Elyashiv Knohl, the Rabbi of Kibbutz Kfar Etzion, who passed away 5779 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. For Rosh HaYeshiva, President and chancellor of Yeshiva University & RIETS. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ari Fuld, American Oleh, Assistant Director of Standing Together and Israeli Hero was murdered Al Kiddush Hashem as he stopped a terrorist attack in the Gush. This thought is the last one he recorded. 5779 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Rav Chanoch Tzvi Levin was the Chief Rabbi of Bendin. He married the youngest daughter of the Sfas Emes and was close to his illustrious father in law until he died. Feigele, the wife of Rav Chanoch Tzvi once came in to her father for some advice and the Sfas Emes instructed her to take the advice from her husband who, in his assessment was the complete person. Rav Chaoch Tzvi’s insights are preserved in a volume “Yichahein Pe’er” [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Rav Zecharia Senter was the founding Rav of Congregation Beth Abraham of Teaneck and the founder and CEO of Kof-K kosher. An innovator in the field of Kashrus, he was the first to hire a full time food chemist , to log and maintain an active list of ingredients, to formalize contracts between companies and the certifying agencies and to employ experts in the field. Many major players in the field of Kashrus today, got their start at Kof-K. He was approachable to anyone who wanted to meet and talk with him on so many matters. His son in law described him aptly “Rabbi Senter loved learning Torah, loved making people smile, and loved the Brooklyn Dodgers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Derech Ayson, Yeshiva of Far Rockaway in Far Rockaway, NY. A venerable Rosh Yeshiva and disciple of Rav Aharon Kotler ztl. Rav Perr is also a notable personality in the world of the mussar movement. His daily Vaad in mussar and weekly schmoozin in his Yeshiva contain both tremendous depth and organized common-sense approach. Some of these talks have recently been published in the works “Mind over man” and “Faith over Fear” [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Rabbi Dr. Reuven Pinchas Bulka CM (Hebrew: ראובן פנחס בולקא; June 6, 1944 – June 27, 2021) was a Canadian rabbi, psychologist, writer, broadcaster, and activist. He was the spiritual leader of Congregation Machzikei Hadas in Ottawa from 1967, first as Rabbi and then as Rabbi Emeritus, and served as co-president of the Canadian Jewish Congress from 2007 to 2009. Bulka's work with Kind Canada led to recognition the third week of February in each and every year as "Kindness Week" in Canada [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Scion of an illustrious rabbinic family which traces its descent to the Levush, Rabbi Yaakov Rabinowitz-Teomim taught for many years in the prestigious Yeshiva Ketana of Kol Torah in Jerusalem. Realizing that there were few serious works on the parts of the gemara which were studied in Bekius, he decided to write books on those parts, adding in-depth analysis of the views of the Rishonim and Acharonim (early and later commentators). Nine volumes appeared over the years, as well as a classic commentary on the Shev Shma’atsa. Each work demonstrated the efforts invested by the author to illuminate and elucidate every passage of the gemara. About 15 years ago, he was stricken with a debilitating disease which left him completely paralyzed- incapable of moving any part of his body besides his eyes. Most people would have been crushed and disconsolate to suffer such a cruel fate but Rabbi Yaakov, through a special computer-recognition program, was able to continue writing and amazingly produced some of his books even after the disease had set in. His is a lesson in a life where he never gave up. His sister is our Rabbanit, Rabbanit Elisheva Teitz. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Rav Dovid Kav ztl. was a famed Talmid of Chevron and Mir Yeshivos and a former Chavrusa of Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz. An up and coming star in the Torah world, he was recruited by Rav Chaim Goldvicht ztl. to join the cadre of outstanding Roshei Yeshiva at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh where he taught hundreds of Israeli and Chutznik Talmidim. His endearing demeanor and engaging analytic style made many students flock to talk with him “in learning.” Learning and Torah, were at the core of every one of his analyses as was the search for honesty and truth. Many of his shiurim are compiled in the Sefer Birkas Dovid. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Rabbi Yaakov Edelstein was the chief rabbi of Ramat Hasharon near Tel Aviv. An old time, original student of the Ponhevzh Yeshiva (run today by his brother), Rav Edelstein was anything but divisive. He would visit each of the Shuls in the predominantly modern community and each Shul claimed him as THEIR own. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Rav Shmuel Auerbach, Rosh Yeshivas Maalos HaTorah and the Nasi of Midrash Shmuel and Toras Simcha passed away last month prior to Purim at the age of 86. The Bechor of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ztl. Rav Shmuel’s influence on Israel and particularly some of the stronger elements of Yirushalayim/Bnei Brak/Modiin Illit Chareidi Jewry was very strong. His positions on many issues were sought by thousands. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Rav Yehoshua Maman was the leader of Morrocan Jewry who passed this year at the age of 100 this year. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Rav Shlomo Wolbe, famed Mashgiach of Be’er Yaakov and Lakewood East in Eretz Yisrael as well as the founder of the Beis HaMussar in Givat Shaul was an incredible inspiration to the Torah world as an ethical and rational voice on Torah living and life. His work Alei Shor is a must read for all serious students of ethics. He married Rivka Grodzinski, the daughter of Rabbi [Avraham Grodzinski](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avraham_Grodzinski), of the [Slabodka yeshiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeshivas_Knesses_Yisrael_(Slabodka)) (Rivka passed away on October 25, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The Rav ztl. Av Beit Din of Boston and the main Rosh Yeshiva of RIETS/YU. Teacher to literally thousands. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Rav Zecharia Senter, a student of both Rav Ahron and ultimately Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ztl. was the founding Rav of Congregation Beth Abraham of Teaneck and the founder and CEO of Kof-K kosher. An innovator in the field of Kashrus, he was the first to hire a full time food chemist , to log and maintain an active list of ingredients, to formalize contracts between companies and the certifying agencies and to employ experts in the field. Many major players in the field of Kashrus today, got their start at Kof-K. He was approachable to anyone who wanted to meet and talk with him on so many matters. His son in law described him aptly “Rabbi Senter loved learning Torah, loved making people smile, and loved the Brooklyn Dodgers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. **Rav Simcha Hakohein Kook** was Chief Rabbi of the city of Rechovot and the Rav of the Churva Synagogue in the old city of Yirushalayim. He was President of the "Meor Hatalmud" yeshiva in Rechovot and stood at the head of many other educational institutions throughout the years. He was an eloquent speaker who was much sought after by audiences both in Israel and abroad and led many public struggles, especially in building bridges between the non-observant and religious sectors. He was a gem of a person to whom everyone felt close and for everyone he had an open house to. Visits to his Sukkah on Sukkos were made by all different shades and stripes in the city City employees such as firemen and policemen are often among the guests, though the self-effacing Rav Kook says he believes that for the latter group, at least, the visit has more to do with an old legend than anything else. According to that legend, any police officer that visits the Rav’s sukka during Sukkos will receive a promotion.“It’s actually quite an uncanny thing-many of the officers who have come to the sukka are now in the top echelon of the police department,” says Rav Kook with a chuckle, and starts counting them off on his fingers. “They see it as a sort of segula.I think its one of the only places in the country where members of Meretz, the NRP and the religious parties get together under one roof and just relax and talk together,” says Rav Kook. “It’s a very special atmosphere.” It was, because Rav Kook and his Rebbetzin made it that way. He often commented that the way to bridge the gap that is tearing apart the rest of Israeli society: “First,” he says, “one has to learn to understand others-yet without compromising Torah values. And second, the best way to bring people closer to each other, and to Hashem, is by showing them respect, regardless of who they are. When I see a person,” he said simply, “I look for the Jew inside [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Rav Itamar Ben Gal HY”D was a beloved husband, father and teacher who was murdered by terrorists while on his way to a Bris. An inspiring educator he was known for loving his students and wanting the best for them. He would not refer to them as students but rather as Banai – my sons. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Rav Chanina Herzberg was the beloved Menahel of the Yeshiva of South Shore for over 40 years. A special talmid of Rav Shlomo Freifeld, Rabbi Herzberg, using his incredible patience and love for his Talmidim and Yeshiva, managed to raise multiple generations of young men whose dedication to Torah and even more importantly Middos Tovos is astounding. He helped the young men in the 5 towns learn to value that which was really important in life -- doing the Ratzon of Hashem and using all of your given gifts in order to do it. 5779 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The famed doctoral dissertation “Blowing the glass” discusses this as part of post trauma recovery. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. HaRav Shlomo Fischer served as a dayan in the Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem and was a Rosh Mesivta at Yeshivas Liflagos Reuven prior to being appointed as a Rosh Mesivta in Yeshivas Itri by HaGaon HaRav Mordechai Elefant, z’tl, later becoming the Rosh Yeshivah. He was a well respected and well regarded Torah Personality who would travel to teach Talmidim from all different Torah backgrounds. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. **Rav Simcha Hakohein Kook** was Chief Rabbi of the city of Rechovot and the Rav of the Churva Synagogue in the old city of Yirushalayim. He was President of the "Meor Hatalmud" yeshiva in Rechovot and stood at the head of many other educational institutions throughout the years. He was an eloquent speaker who was much sought after by audiences both in Israel and abroad and led many public struggles, especially in building bridges between the non-observant and religious sectors. He was a gem of a person to whom everyone felt close and for everyone he had an open house to. Visits to his Sukkah on Sukkos were made by all different shades and stripes in the city City employees such as firemen and policemen are often among the guests, though the self-effacing Rav Kook says he believes that for the latter group, at least, the visit has more to do with an old legend than anything else. According to that legend, any police officer that visits the Rav’s sukka during Sukkos will receive a promotion.“It’s actually quite an uncanny thing-many of the officers who have come to the sukka are now in the top echelon of the police department,” says Rav Kook with a chuckle, and starts counting them off on his fingers. “They see it as a sort of segula.I think its one of the only places in the country where members of Meretz, the NRP and the religious parties get together under one roof and just relax and talk together,” says Rav Kook. “It’s a very special atmosphere.” It was, because Rav Kook and his Rebbetzin made it that way. He often commented that the way to bridge the gap that is tearing apart the rest of Israeli society: “First,” he says, “one has to learn to understand others-yet without compromising Torah values. And second, the best way to bring people closer to each other, and to Hashem, is by showing them respect, regardless of who they are. When I see a person,” he said simply, “I look for the Jew inside [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Rabbi Ozer Glickman z"l exemplified Yeshiva's ideals of Torah u'Mada. He served as Rosh Yeshiva in the University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary where he taught senior rabbinic students for seventeen years. He also served as Adjunct Professor of Law in YU's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law and Adjunct Professor of Business in its Sy Syms School of Business, where he was a recipient of its Adjunct Professor of the Year Award. At the same time, Rabbi Glickman had a successful career in the world of Finance. He served as Senior Vice President and Global Head of Corporate Treasury at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. He was a member of the Senior Advisory Board of Oliver Wyman & Company, where he advised international financial institutions on issues related to risk management, active portfolio management, and investment analytics. Rabbi Glickman's course on Business & Jewish Law was one of the most popular courses on campus. In addition to rabbinic ordination from senior Roshei Yeshiva in RIETS, Rabbi Glickman received ordination from major poskim in Israel and the United States. A graduate of Columbia University in Philosophy, Rabbi Glickman received his MBA (Finance) from the Stern School of New York University where he was a University Fellow. He also pursued graduate study in philosophy and religion at both Columbia and the University of Toronto. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. **Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein** was the founder of Ohr Yitzchak, Ateres Naava Seminary for Girls, and Ohr Naava Women's Institute in Brooklyn, NY. Ohr Naava is a unique program designed for women ages 17 through 120 who are interested in furthering their Torah experience. The program, which was under the leadership of Rabbi Zachariah Wallerstein, started out as a Wednesday evening class in a small classroom known as a "Chabura." It brought together girls who had just returned from studying in Israel, college students who needed a weekly moment of inspiration, and most of all, Jews of different backgrounds with one common goal, to grow and change. The signature of Ohr Naava is to provide a multitude of programs, absolutely free of charge, for women wishing to make the time to grow, change and further their Torah knowledge. He passed in 5782. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)