

**BNEI
AKIVA**
UNITED KINGDOM



*The Hanhalla of
Bnei Akiva UK presents:*

Haggada Companion

5781

*A collection of writings and thoughts to
enhance your Seder*

Dear Chaverim,

The past 12 months have turned our world upside-down. This Pesach, as with last year, the question 'Why is this year different from all other years?' is painfully rhetorical. We are agonisingly cut-off from sharing our Sedarim with family and friends; "Whoever is hungry, let them come and eat" will have a different meaning than in years gone by.

However, despite all this, we will be unifying on Seder Night, collectively re-living our past, and looking towards our shared future. By journeying through the same Haggada, with the same stages, we display a great deal of unity, showing that whilst we may be physically separate from each other, our people is spiritually together.

Pesach celebrates the birth of our nation, the origin of our independence, our transition from slaves to a free people. It is puzzling, therefore, that so much of our commemorative celebration is purposely designed to not make sense, to invoke questions (some of which will be answered in this Haggada Companion). The solution to this conundrum is that education is the lifeblood of our people; without it, we remain stagnant and eventually lose our identity.

In this vein, the Hanhalla of Bnei Akiva UK presents its Haggada Companion. We hope it will be thought-provoking and Seder-enhancing, offering new and refreshing ideas, and we are confident that there is something for everyone within its pages. Chazal teach us "In each and every generation, a person must view themselves as if they went out from Egypt" – we hope this helps.

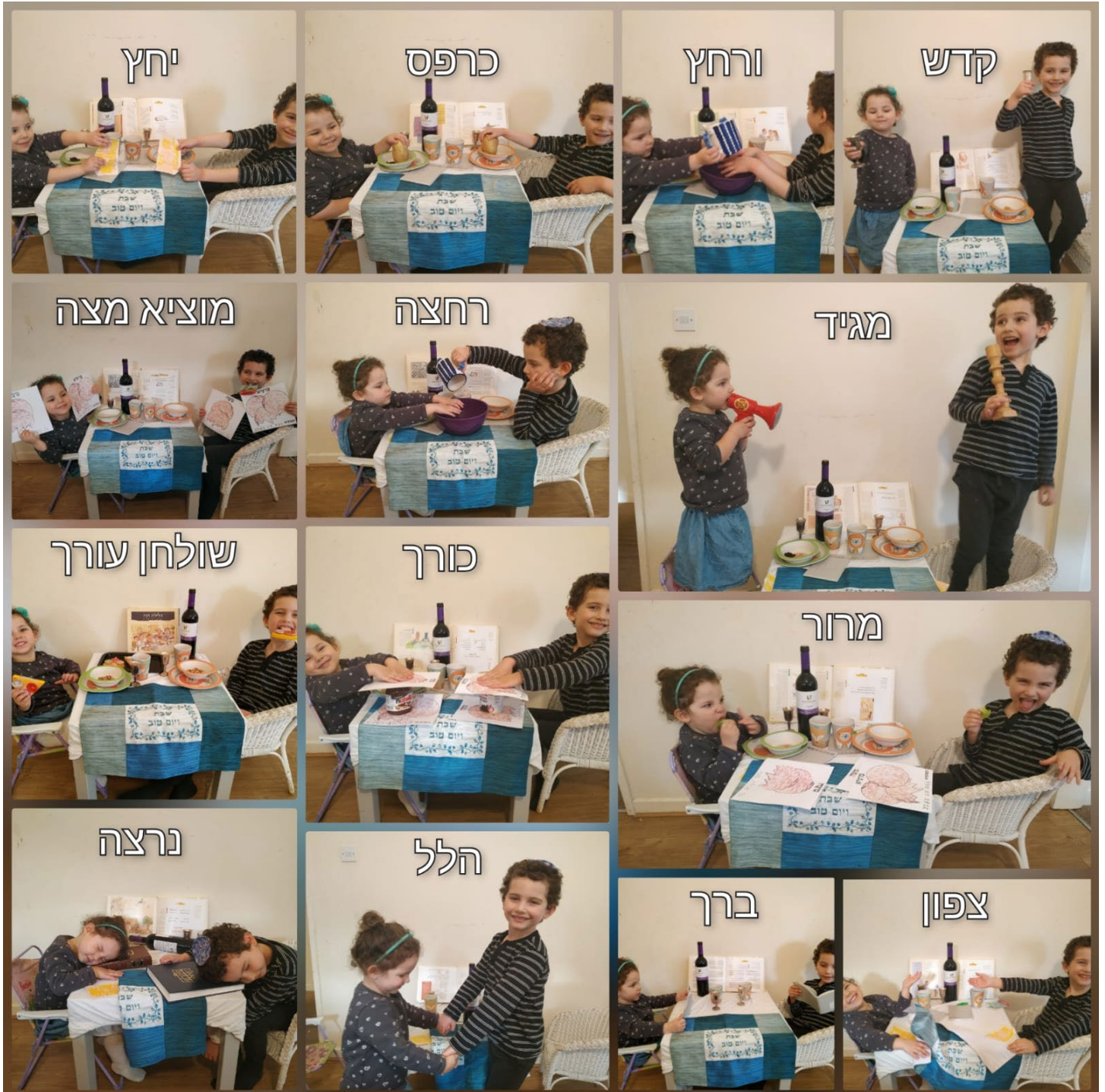
Bevirkat Chaverim l'Torah v'Avodah

Bnei Akiva UK Hanhalla 5781



The Order of the Seder

Shachar and Maor Milner (Junior Northern Shlichim)



קִדְשׁ Kadesh: Cheers to Redemption!

וְרַחֵץ

Rav Joel Kenigsberg (Rav Shaliach)

כַּרְפֵּס

Chazal¹ tell us that the four cups of wine were instituted "דרך חירות" – as a symbol of freedom. Wine is a luxury, drunk by nobles. By drinking these cups on the Seder Night, we demonstrate how far we have come from the lowliness of slavery in Egypt. But why specifically four?

יַחַץ

מִגִּיד

Several explanations have been given, but probably the most famous is that of the Yerushalmi² (and quoted by Rashi and Rashbam³) that the four cups correspond to the ארבע לשונות של גאולה - the four expressions of redemption found at the beginning of Parashat Vaera:

רַחֲצָה

"והוצאתי, והצלתי וגאלתי ולקחתי"

מוֹצִיא

The Torah Temimah⁴ points out that the Yerushalmi refers to these 4 not as "expressions of redemption" but rather as ארבע גאולות – four redemptions. He explains that each one signified a different stage and further easing of slavery. והוצאתי refers to the lessening of the burden of slavery itself. והצלתי refers to the cessation of physical labour altogether. וגאלתי refers to the fact that we were no longer subjugated to Paroh and ולקחתי refers to the idea of being designated exclusively as Hashem's people. Each one of these steps – although not a complete redemption in and of themselves – are worthy of thanksgiving and celebration. At each and every stage we raise a glass דרך חירות and thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for bringing us one step closer to redemption.

מִצָּה

מְרוֹר

כּוֹרֵךְ

שֵׁלַח

עוֹרֵךְ

צִפּוֹן

בִּרְדָּ

הִלַּל

נִרְצָה

¹ Pesachim 117b

² Pesachim 10:5

³ Pesachim 99b

⁴ Commentary to Shemot 6:6

קִדְשׁ

If that was the case regarding the four stages of redemption back in Egypt, how much more so in our days when we have seen the fulfillment of the fifth expression too - וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ - "and I shall bring you to the land".⁵ The Gemara⁶ notes a disagreement as to whether one should in fact drink a fifth cup of wine, paralleling this fifth expression, and from here we have the source for the cup of Eliyahu which we don't drink from, but pour at our Seder tables.

וּרְחֵץ

כַּרְפֵּס

יַחַץ

מִגִּיד

רְחֵצָה

מוֹצִיא

מִצָּה

מְרוֹר

כּוֹרֵךְ

שְׁלֵחוֹ

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צָפוֹן

בִּירֵךְ

הֵלֵל

נִרְצָה

After the miraculous establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher suggested that the time had now come to drink a fifth cup on Seder night. He writes in his commentary to the Haggadah that since we have witnessed the fulfillment of the promise of וְהֵבֵאתִי it would be appropriate to drink this cup and recite the great Hallel over it. Ultimately his suggestion was not accepted into normative Halachic practice. But whether we drink from the fifth cup or not, we can and should certainly give thanks for the redemption which our generation has been privileged to witness.

Speaking on Shavuot 1967, just a week after the six-day war, Rabbi Norman Lamm said the following:

"If we open our eyes we will realize that a revelation has taken place... Before our very eyes there has unfolded a miracle of a very special kind: a true giluy shekhinah."

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים

"In each and every generation, a person must view themselves as if they went out from Egypt."⁷

As we drink the four cups on Seder night let us reflect on the miracles which brought about our redemption stage by stage - בימים ההם ובזמן הזה - back in those days and in this time too.

⁵ Shemot 6:8

⁶ Pesachim 118s (according to the edition of the Geonim)

⁷ Pesachim 116b

קִדְשׁ וְרַחֵץ Urchatz: A Reminder of What Will Be

כַּרְפֵּס

Avishai Marcus (*Shevet Zion*)

יַחַץ

For most households, this is that part of Seder where people aren't really sure what to do. Do we wash now? Do we make a bracha? Do we go to the sink or do we wash at our seats? These are all valid questions. However, the question that should precede the 'how' is the 'why'.

מַגִּיד

רַחֵץ

There is a discussion about the 'why' in the Gemara.⁸ Rabbi Elazer states in the name of Rav Oshia "any food item that is dipped in a liquid (*davar hateebulo b'mashkeh*) requires handwashing before eating". There is a dispute amongst the Rishonim regarding the applicability of this ritual. Rashi says that it is still necessary today as it is similar to the rule of washing your hand before bread. We are more concerned with Tosafot who say that it is not necessary, since we no longer have the Temple, ritual purity laws do not apply.

מוֹצֵיא

מִצָּה

מְרוֹר

כּוֹרֵךְ

Tosafot is correct for 363 days of the year.⁹ What makes Seder night different from all other nights? The Netziv answers by saying that on Seder Night there is a theme of '*zecher l'mikdash*' – remembering things as they were done in the Temple. The most evident example of this is the Korech sandwich, where we explicitly say that we are doing this to replicate how Matzah was eaten in those times. It is in this vein that we have a shank bone, an egg and wash our hands at the Seder Table.¹⁰

שְׁלַחן

עוֹרֵךְ

צִפּוֹן

The concept of making Seder night different from other nights is not just a ritualistic gimmick, it is a meaningful stock-take of our reality. Pesach is there for us to acknowledge that we are not where we want to be, both as an individual and as a nation. May we merit to celebrate Pesach the proper way with the 3rd Bet HaMikdash in Yerushalayim!

בִּרְדָּ

הִלֵּל

נִרְצָה

⁸ Pesachim 115a

⁹ Or 364 if you are Zocheh to be in Eretz Yisrael!

¹⁰ Based on Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein Haggadah

קַדֵּשׁ וּרְחֹץ כַּרְפָּס יַחַץ מִגִּיד רְחֹצָה מוֹצִיא מִצָּה מְרוֹר כוֹרֵךְ שְׁלֹחַן עוֹרֵךְ צָפוֹן בִּרְדָּ הַלֵּל נִרְצָה

Karpas: The Beginning of the Journey

Tammy Kwartz (Shevet Zion)

The karpas that sits on our Seder plates every year is known to represent the arrival of the springtime, with a reminder of the renewal and hope that is to come with the promise of a new season. Dipping the karpas in the salt water is another reminder of the bitterness that the Bnei Yisrael have gone through and the saltiness of the tears the Jewish people wept as slaves in Egypt, is another addition to the symbolism that surrounds us throughout the Seder.

The concept of dipping has many connotations in both Judaism and the Seder itself. It plays a part in the cleansing and purifying that comes with a ritual trip to the mikveh. It is a part of the story of Yosef where his brothers dipped his coat in the blood of a slaughtered animal in the faking of his death; an event that ultimately led to the Bnei Yisrael ending up in Egypt where the story told in Maggid starts!

After the dipping and eating of karpas, it is traditional for the four questions to be asked out loud through the singing of Ma Nishtana. During the Seder in the section of Maggid, most of the questions asked in Ma Nishtana get answered, however one particular question is not answered within the Maggid portion of the Seder:

שְׁבֻכְלֵי־הַלֵּילוֹת, אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אֶפְלוּ פַעַם אֶחָת; הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה, שְׁתֵּי פְעָמִים
 “On all other nights, we don't dip even once. Why on this night do we dip twice?”

There does not seem to be an overt answer given to us as to why this constitutes such a big part of our Seder. Looking deeper for answers, the Ben Ish Chai¹¹ explains that the two types of dipping we perform are a representation of the full circle that encompasses the story of Pesach. The origin of our move into exile starts with the dipping of Yosef's coat into blood where the brothers' hatred towards Yosef saw him be taken to Egypt where the family of Yaakov and the Bnei Yisrael would ultimately follow.

During the final plague of makat bechorot, the Jewish people experienced a unique moment of solidarity in exile by dipping leaves in the blood of the

¹¹ Parashat Tzav

קִדְּשׁ

Korban and applying it to their doorposts so G-d would spare the lives of the firstborns as he passed over the houses that night. These two events symbolise the official beginning and the official ending of the time of the Bnei Yisrael in Egypt.

וּרְחַץ

כֶּרֶפֶס

Dipping our vegetable into the saltwater and then later on dipping our bitter maror into the sweet charoset, we can remember the full circle that our ancestors took. We must be mindful of the bitterness and tears of exile and the perseverance of the sweet release of freedom from slavery and gault.

יַחַץ

מִגִּיד

With all this in mind, on this joyous chag of Pesach, let us not forget the tragedies that are engrained within our history and heritage and whilst we are remembering the despairs and traumas of the Bnei Yisrael, we can still look into our future with hope and strive for the day that we also end our personal exile.

רְחֻצָּה

מוֹצֵיא

מִצָּה

מְרוֹר

כוֹרֵךְ

שְׁלֵחוֹ

עוֹרֵךְ

צָפוֹן

בִּרְךְ

הַלֵּל

נִרְצָה

קִדְשׁ Yachatz: A Reassuring Symbol

וְרַחֵץ *Rabbanit Sarah Kenigsberg (Rabbanit Shlichah)*

כַּרְפֵּס Every Shabbat and Yom Tov meal begins in the same way – after Kiddush we wash our hands and make Hamotzi over lechem mishneh - two complete loaves which form the centerpiece of the table.

יִחַץ But Pesach is the obvious exception to the rule. Why is this night different from all other nights? Not only do we substitute matzah for bread, not only do we substitute 2 loaves for 3. But we also do away with having complete and whole matzot and instead break the middle piece – an act so significant that it bears the name of one of the 15 stages of the Seder – Yachatz.

רַחֲצָה The Gemara¹² explains the need to have a broken matzah. It is referred to as “lechem oni” ie. “poor man’s bread”. On Seder Night as we begin as poor and lowly slaves, we find ourselves presented an incomplete matzah:

מִצָּה “לֶחֶם עוֹנֵי” – עֲנִי כְּתִיב, מָה עָנִי שֶׁדָּרְכּוֹ בַּפְּרוּסָה

מְרוֹרַךְ But why is the act of breaking part of the Seder service? Why not just begin with two and a half matzot on the Seder plate?

כּוֹרֵךְ Rabbi Ron Eisenman suggests that the public nature of snapping the matzah in half comes to reveal a profound message. There is a human tendency to present an image of security, confidence and self-assurance to the world around us. No one likes to put their imperfections on show. However, as we prepare to tell the story of the Exodus and reaffirm our belief and conviction that we are entirely dependent on Hashem – just as our ancestors were on the night of the plague of the firstborn - we must recognize that we are incomplete. The act of breaking the matzah is just as symbolic as the fact that a broken matzah adorns our table. By breaking the mitzvah in full view of all around us, we show we are willing to shed the external façade that we normally work so hard to maintain.

הַלֵּל A related idea regarding Yachatz connects not just to slavery but to the path to freedom too. The journey towards freedom that we relive on Seder Night is not always straightforward. It can often be fraught with hardships along the way. The two halves of the matzah that we break correspond to the poor

¹² Pesachim 115b

קִדְּשׁ

man's bread – the matzah eaten in Egypt – but also to the Afikoman, the Korban Pesach and the matzah eaten on the journey to freedom. By hiding away this latter portion we show that the ultimate goal is not always easily in sight or even within reach. Nonetheless we have faith that we will get there in the end.

וְרַחֵץ

כִּרְפֵּס

יִחַץ

מְגִיד

The broken and hidden matzah represents the difficulties and the obstacles on the path towards redemption. Sometimes the end goal can be seen, sometimes it cannot. On the seder of all nights, when we experience a taste of the ultimate freedom, we make a point of hiding the matzah away – to show that even when things seem dark, we remain steadfast in our faith that the greatest light is closer than we realize.

רַחֲצָה

מוֹצִיא

מִצָּה

מְרוֹר

כּוֹרֵךְ

שְׁלַחֵן

עוֹרֵךְ

צִפּוֹן

בִּרְךְ

הִלֵּל

נִרְצָה

קִדְשׁ וְרַחֵק כְּרַפָּס יַחַק מִגִּיד רְחֹצָה מוֹצִיא מִצָּה מְרוֹר כּוֹרֵד שְׁלֶחַן עוֹרֵד צָפוֹן בִּרְדָּ הִלֵּל נִרְצָה

Maggid: Playing Our Part in Redemption

Matan Milner (Northern Shaliach)

In the Exodus from Egypt, Am Yisrael were privileged to see and experience a rare and historical phenomenon: how G-d Himself, struck Pharaoh and Egypt and brought them out of slavery to freedom.

But in the process of the redemption from Egypt, Am Yisrael were required to do almost nothing. They received very specific and minor orders. Am Yisrael are almost like spectators in the stands who see everything from the side, G-d is the one doing all the work, G-d is the one who brings them out of the land of Egypt. Although towards the end the "spectator" is asked to take a Korban and sacrifice it at night and eat it in a hurry, this is only it's near the end on the story.

This is how G-d's desire for His name to be spread throughout the world is fulfilled: "בְּעִבּוֹר הָרְאִיתָהּ אֶת-כְּחֹי וְלִמְעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ" *I have spared you for this purpose: in order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world.*¹³ And we even write this in our tefillin, "לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְּיַד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאתָהּ מִמִּצְרַיִם" *In order that the Torah of Hashem may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand Hashem freed you from Egypt*.¹⁴

Precisely in light of this, G-d's commandment to Am Yisrael, who had just left Egypt is especially surprising: "דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשׁוּבוּ וְיַחֲנוּ לִפְנֵי פִי הַחִירֹת" *Tell the Bnei Yisrael to turn back and encamp before Pi-hachiroth.*¹⁵ Am Yisrael leave Egypt with great excitement, and suddenly, surprise! G-d tells them to return, to turn back. What? Why?

The surprise is twofold, even in light of the change in the word of G-d, which does not command them as usual ("אָמַר / צוֹ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"), but is softer: "דַּבֵּר" *"אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשׁוּבוּ"*. Sounds like G-d is asking them to do it on their own. Why rotate an entire nation?

¹³ Shemot 9:16

¹⁴ Shemot 13:9

¹⁵ Shemot 14:2

The Sfat Emet, offers an interesting and deep answer.

קִדְשׁ

וְרַחֵץ

כְּרַפֵּס

יִחַץ

מִגִּיד

רַחֲצָה

מוֹצִיא

מִצָּה

מְרוֹר

כוֹרֵךְ

שֶׁלֶחַן

עוֹרֵךְ

צִפּוֹן

בִּרְךְ

הַלֵּל

נִרְצָה

The plagues and the Exodus were one-time miracles. An extraordinary historical event. But G-d wanted redemption to remain engraved within(/among) Am Yisrael, so that the memory and feeling would be fixed within(/among) the soul and not just as an external event that they witnessed from the side. He wanted to make Am Yisrael part of redemption.

But how will that happen if they have not done anything active so far?

Therefore, in the Exodus, G-d offers us a real partnership, that we too will be a part of. But it has to come from us. Because redemption that comes from G-d is certainly impressive, but according to the Sfat Emet, it doesn't leave an impression and memory in the earth below.

Therefore, G-d asks the People of Israel to do one deed themselves now. They will go back, in this deed they will bait Pharaoh, confuse him, and for a short time they will be the leaders. The main thing for them is to do a deed themselves! Take part. Now the responsibility is on them too.

Real redemption is not necessarily just a change in the situation - until now I was a slave and now a free man. Real redemption will be in the transition from a passive state to an active state. It is a redemption that takes responsibility and causes one to become a partner with G-d.

And so, in fact, the Sfat Emet teaches us an important lesson for life. Know how to act in reality and be active, do so also in small deeds, in our ability to do great things and ultimately be partners in the world of G-d.

קִדְשׁ וְרַחֵץ כְּרַפֵּס יַחַץ מַגִּיד רְחֻצָּה מוֹצֵיא מִצֵּה מְרוֹר כּוֹרֵךְ שְׁלֵחוֹ עוֹרֵךְ צִפּוֹן בִּרְךְ הַלֵּל נִרְצָה

Maggid: The Questions on Questions

Josh Daniel (Shevet Avichai)

There's a bit of a paradox at play when children ask, "why do we do X at the Seder Night?" and parents reply "ummm to get you guys to ask questions!" It is in fact no secret that some parts of the seder were at least partially instituted purely to arouse the curiosity of those on the younger side of life.

Children seem to be quite intrinsic to the festival in general. Rav Hirsch describes Seder Night as "the night which G-d has appointed for the dedication of your little ones, those little ones upon whose consecration depends on the eternity of your people." Pesach itself is in fact described as "the birth of our people". Rav Chaim gives some symbolic meaning to the order of the shalosh regalim: Pesach, then Shavuot, then Sukkot. Pesach comes first because it represents the infancy of one's Jewish life. It is an internal festival, that takes place within home, surrounded by family and focuses on teaching and being taught core Jewish values that form an intrinsic part of our identities.

So, we don't just want to keep the kids up till 1am so they can have four cups of wine; on Pesach we wish *to awaken a striving for knowledge within the people we gave birth to by reflecting on our own birth as nation*. We want to arouse curiosity and awaken the 'simple son' in every child asking "ma zot" – why are we doing this?

Let's attempt to take this one step further:

"Yachil Hashem Midbar Kadesh."¹⁶ This pasuk we say at Kabbalat Shabbat every week can be translated as **"G-d makes the desert of Kadesh give birth."** Strange one.

There were five different names for the desert: Midbar Sinai, Paran, Kadmut, Tzin and Kadesh. Rav Hirsch explains that each of these names designate both localities within the desert as well as the desert as a whole. An analysis of the Jewish journey through the midbar will reveal that "Kadesh" was by far

¹⁶ Tehillim 29:8

קַדֵּשׁ	the place they stayed in for the longest – 19 years. It was from Kadesh that the spies were sent to spy out the land of Israel. It was from Kadesh that the Jewish people could have immediately entered in the land were in not for their sin. It was in Kadesh that the generation that forfeited entering the land had to wait for a long and painful 19 years with that holy land in sight, knowing they could never enter. It was at Kadesh the older generation passed away, filled with regret, their dreams unfulfilled. It was at Kadesh that young couples got married and brought children into the world to fulfil the dream they never could. It was at Kadesh that penitent parents decided to raise and train a new generation of Jews hopefully worthy of a better future. It is midbar Kadesh that “G-d causes to give birth” – to give birth to a Yisrael that can be morally trained and matured in kedusha (Kadesh) ready for a better tomorrow.
וְרַחֵץ	
כַּרְפֵּס	
יַחַץ	
מִגִּיד	
רַחֲצָה	
מוֹצִיא	There are always parallels to draw between the Jewish desert experience and our own experience in exile, the “midbar haamim”. ¹⁷ Every generation has the potential to bring redemption for our people and perfection to the world. If G-d decides a particular generation forfeits our complete redemption, then it is that generation’s responsibility to raise children that will be worthy of it. We live in a constant state of “Yechil Hashem midbar Kadesh” – giving birth to children we hope we will raise in kedusha to bring our redemption and heal our fractured world.
מִצָּה	
מְרוֹר	
כּוֹרֵךְ	
שֵׁלַח	Pesach is not just about an event in our past; like all festivals and fasts, it should allow us to reflect on our present to create a better future. And our future lies in youth - something Bnei Akiva realised a long time ago but that we all forget every now and then. If we remember saying Leshana Habah BeYerushalayim last year but still not being there now, don’t lose hope – take refuge in the fact that every Seder Night children are asking questions. Curiosity is being sparked, even if answers can’t always be provided. Jewish identity is being transmitted through practices and discussions with inner spiritual meaning, as opposed to the transmission of mechanical externally acquired habits. We reflect on our birth as a nation whilst simultaneously reflecting on the birth of the children around us – our nation’s future, raised in our very own “midbar Kadesh.”
עוֹרֵךְ	
צַפּוֹן	
בִּרְךְ	
הִלַּל	
נִרְצָה	

Keep your younger siblings, your children, your chanichim, asking away over Pesach – we might get to Yerushalayim sooner than we think.

¹⁷ Yechezkel 20:35

קִדְשׁ וְרַחֵץ כַּרְפָּס יַחַץ מִגִּיד רַחֲצָה מוֹצֵיא מִצָּה מְרוֹר כּוֹרֵד שְׁלֵחוֹ עוֹרֵד צָפוֹן בִּרְדֵּי הַלֵּל נִרְצָה

Rachtzah: How to Experience Seder Night

Daniel Ross (Shevet Morasha)

The Rabbis throughout the ages were puzzled by this stage of the Seder. Rachtzah, literally 'washing', takes place just before we make the bracha of 'Hamotzi' on the Matzah. On face value, therefore, it seems straight-forward and unremarkable: just as we wash our hands before Hamotzi on Friday Night, for example, so too on Seder Night we do the same.

However, we've already washed our hands by this point in the Seder! The second stage of the Seder is Urchatz where we wash our hands before eating the Karpas. Why then do we need to wash our hands again before eating Matzah?

The answer to this question is dependent on the answer to a more fundamental question: why do we wash our hands in this ritual manner in the first place? In Judaism, we have the concepts of ritual purity - 'tahara' - and ritual impurity 'tuma.' Before eating bread and vegetables which have been dipped in a liquid the Halacha dictates that we must wash our hands in a ritual manner (although nowadays we are lenient regarding dipped vegetables, Seder Night excluded). The notion of ritual purity is metaphysical and therefore whenever we ritually wash our hands it is not because of physical dirt or even pathogens, but rather because we have touched something which is unclean in the metaphysical, spiritual sense. Whilst we are careful to pay attention to what we touch in the physical sense, we do not afford the same considerations to spiritually unclean things, and therefore assume that our hands are in a state of tuma, ritual impurity.

Consequently, we (ritually) wash our hands before eating Karpas, since it is a vegetable which is dipped in salt water, and therefore we must have 'clean' hands for it. Given that we must also have clean hands for Matzah, can we not simply ensure that we do not touch anything which will render our hands unclean or impure between Urchatz, the first hand-washing, and Motzi-Matzah?

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The Gemara¹⁸ tells us that the Sages also raised this question, concluding that it is specifically on Seder Night that we are obligated to wash our hands in this manner.

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How did they reach their conclusion? The Gemara teaches “Since a person needs to recite the Haggada and Hallel [part of which is recited in Magid] in between, perhaps they will divert their thoughts and their hands will touch a ritually impure object.” In other words, we are obligated to wash our hands twice on Seder Night because we have gotten so caught up in the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we’re enraptured by our commemoration of the Exodus to such an extent that we simply forget to pay attention to what we touch.

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Based on this, we can understand the obligation that “in each and every generation a person must view themselves as though they personally left Egypt”.¹⁹ We must become so absorbed in the Seder, and its story of Exodus from Egypt, that we are no longer consciously focusing on the physical items which surround us; Seder Night must be a totally immersive experience.

Moreover, perhaps an even more extreme way of understanding this obligation is to translate it slightly differently: in each and every generation, a person must imagine themselves as though they personally left Egypt.” Despite our attempts to recreate the bitterness of our slavery through the Maror and salt water, we must acknowledge that we will not physically experience the story of the Exodus. Rather, we must imagine ourselves going through it. In light of this, it is even more likely that a person will become distracted with regards to what they touch, for the entire Seder Night experience is elevated beyond merely the physical experience but becomes much, much more.

¹⁸ Pesachim 115b

¹⁹ Pesachim 116b. See also Rambam Mishna Torah Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 7:6

קִדְשׁ וְרִחָק כְּרִפּוֹס יַחַץ מְגִיד רְחֻצָּה מוֹצִיא מִצָּה מְרוּר כּוֹרֵךְ שְׁלֵחוֹ עוֹרֵךְ צָפוֹן בְּרֵךְ הַלֵּל נִרְצָה

Motzi-Matzah: Can You Fulfill the Mitzvah of Matzah Without a Sense of Taste?²⁰

יַחַץ *Daniel Ross (Shevet Morasha)*

מְגִיד The starting point for this question, must be another question: what is the role of taste in the mitzvah of matzah?

רְחֻצָּה מוֹצִיא מִצָּה We learn in Masechet Pesachim²¹ that according to Rava, "If one swallowed matzah [without chewing it], they have fulfilled their obligation]." Rashbam²² explains that this is true as the way we perform the mitzvah (in other words, the *ma'ase mitzvah*) is by eating. However, he adds that ideally one should also taste the matzah. This is the accepted halacha, as codified in the Shulchan Aruch.²³

מְרוּר This is in contrast to another Gemara in Masechet Brachot²⁴ where we find a machloket (dispute) between two Tanaaim. Rabbi Meir believes that one

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²⁰ This Dvar Torah is based on a shiur by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

²¹ Pesachim 115b

²² *ibid.*

²³ Orach Chaim 475:3

²⁴ 38b

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fulfils their obligation with boiled matzah, whereas Rabbi Yosei disputes this since “we require the taste of matzah, and it is lacking” when boiled. Indeed, the opinion of Rabbi Yosei is also accepted as halacha!²⁵

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How do we then resolve this contradiction? If you swallow matzah and therefore don't taste it, you've fulfilled your obligation, but if you boil matzah (as the cooking method) and therefore don't taste it, you haven't?

A first solution is presented by the Taz, the 17th century halachic commentator. He answers²⁶ that you don't need to sense the taste of the matzah, but the matzah itself (i.e. the *cheftza*) must have the taste of matzah. Similarly, the Magen Avraham²⁷ writes that it is no longer considered matzah if it has been boiled, but baked matzah retains its status as matzah regardless of whether you taste it or not. Based on this answer, so long as the matzah tastes of matzah you can fulfil your obligation, even if *you* are unable to taste it.

However, Rabbeinu Manoach, writing in 13th century Provence, offers an opposing solution.²⁸ He answers that the fulfilment of the mitzvah of eating matzah is not dependent on the matzah possessing the correct taste, but rather on the person eating it having the ability to sense the matzah's taste (i.e. it is a *din* in the *gavra*). Therefore, in the case of swallowing matzah although you didn't taste it, you could have and therefore you fulfil the mitzvah, but if matzah is boiled it is impossible to taste the proper taste of matzah when eating it and thus one cannot fulfil the mitzvah in this manner.

One *nafka mina* (practical difference) between these two answers is our case of a person without their sense of taste. The Taz and the Magen Avraham would see no issue with this so long as the matzah possessed the correct taste. However, according to Rabbeinu Manoach a person who has lost their sense of taste and therefore doesn't have the capacity to taste the matzah cannot fulfil the mitzvah of matzah.

Ultimately, the halacha²⁹ doesn't follow Rabbeinu Manoach and therefore a person who has lost their sense of taste would still be able to fulfil their obligation of eating matzah.

²⁵ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 461:4

²⁶ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 461:2

²⁷ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 475:11

²⁸ Sefer haMenucha on Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 6:2

²⁹ Mishna Berura 475:29; Aruch haShulchan 445:14

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Maror: How to Experience Seder Night

Ben Rothstein (Shevet Avichai)

The next part of the Seder is the consumption of maror, the bitter herbs. I would like to clarify exactly what the status of eating maror is, as well as its relation to the *chiyuv* (obligation) of eating matzah.

Instructive in this question is the Gemara³⁰ that discusses alternative methods of ingesting the matzah and maror. Rava states: (1) one who just swallows matzah (i.e. without chewing it) **has** fulfilled his or her obligation, (2) one who just swallows maror **has not** fulfilled his or her obligation,³¹ (3) one who just swallows matzah and maror together (i.e. at the same time) **has** fulfilled his or her obligation with regard to matzah, but **not** with regard to maror, (4) one who wraps matzah and maror together in the trunk of a plam tree and then swallows it has **neither** fulfilled his or her obligation of matzah **nor** of maror. In reference to cases (1) and (2), Rashbam explains that whereas the commandment to eat matzah is simply its consumption, the commandment to eat maror requires us to actually *taste* the bitterness, in commemoration of the *pasuk* 'And they made their lives bitter with hard work'³² and therefore one cannot simply swallow the maror without allowing the taste to permeate the mouth.

Rambam records the above statement of Rava as the halacha, but adds a few words of explanation for rule (3). Rambam quotes Rava verbatim, then adds: שְׁהַמָּרוֹר כְּטַפְלָה לַמִּצָּה, 'because the maror is like secondary to the

³⁰ Pesachim 115b

³¹ There is a textual variant of this passage which states the opposite; however, we shall be working with the text as present in our editions, in accordance with the Rashbam, against Rabbeinu Chananel and Rashi.

³² Exodus 1:14

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matzah'.³³ According to the Maggid Mishna, this is intended to explain why, in this case, one still fulfils the obligation of matzah: unlike case (4), where something alien (palm trunk) interposes between the matzah and the throat of the one swallowing, in this case maror is actually considered secondary to matzah, and thus incapable of serving as an external imposition between the matzah and the throat. This suggestion is perplexing - from where does the Rambam see that the maror is secondary to matzah?

Rav Soloveitchik³⁴ ingeniously answers this by, in typical fashion, directing our attention to another Rambam. Before examining this answer though, it is necessary to note several aspects about the mitzvot of eating matzah maror. The Torah instructs that we eat the Korban Pesach (Pesach offering) 'upon matzot and maror'.³⁵ With the cessation of the Korban Pesach, the commandments of eating matzah and maror became divorced of their original context; hence the Gemara raises the discussion as to what the status of eating matzah and maror is now. It concludes that matzah has a separate Torah commandment even without the Korban Pesach, as the Torah specifies in another location 'in the evening you shall eat matzot'.³⁶ Conversely, Maror, which has no additional source, is only Rabbinic.

Rav Soloveitchik quotes the Rambam elsewhere that 'eating maror is not a *mitzvah* from the Torah in and of itself; rather it is dependent upon the eating of the Pesach [offering]'.³⁷ This already portrays maror as something not primary in position, but rather accompanying another mitzvah in order to enhance it. Rav Soloveitchik suggests that when the Rabbis instituted the new commandment of eating maror, the commandment to eat it despite lacking the Korban Pesach, they retained its secondary status, but instead transferred its subsidiary function onto the single surviving Torah obligation, that of eating matzah. Thus the Rabbinic mitzvah of maror echoes the Biblical one, in a quasi-invocation of the principle כל דתקון רבנן בעין דאורייתא תקון,

³³ Mishna Torah, Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 6:2

³⁴ Harerei Kedem, 2:91

³⁵ Numbers 9:11

³⁶ Exodus 12:18

³⁷ Mishna Torah, Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 7:12

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'anything that the Rabbis instituted, they did so in the manner of the Torah'.³⁸

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Thus the maror would not serve as an interposition between the matzah and the one consuming it, as the entire mitzvah nowadays of eating maror is in order for it to enhance the mitzva of matzah, in lieu of achieving the same effect by the Korban Pesach.

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³⁸ This also explains the Rambam's odd terminology of the maror being '*like* secondary' to the matzah - like secondary, but not exactly secondary, as its real secondary status is to the *Korban Pesach*, but currently has been conferred Rabbinically upon the matzah.

קִדְשׁ Korech: What is True Freedom?

וְרַחֵץ *Shira Collins (Shevet Ne'eman)*

כַּרְפֵּס We know from the Haggada that Hillel combined matzah, bitter herbs and the korban pesach to make a sandwich, but it can also symbolise something much bigger, teaches Rav Kook.

יַחַץ There is a machloket (dispute) over how to fulfil the mitzvot of eating the korban pesach, matzah and maror. The Gemara in Masechet Brachot³⁹ teaches us explicitly that mitzvot should not be performed 'bundled' together. However, Hillel's custom was to combine the pesach, matzah and maror and eat them together. But why? Surely he knew that we can't bundle mitzvot together!

רַחֲצָה Rav kook explains that to truly understand why this was so, we must first examine the significance of the different elements of the sandwich. Firstly, matzah is the symbol of freedom, but a true freedom. A freedom that allows for opportunity to grow and develop according to one's true inner nature, without interference of foreign influences. This is symbolised by matzah, a simple food consisting of only flour and water, unaffected by other ingredients and chemical processes.

מוֹצִיא In comparison, maror is the opposite of matzah - it symbolises servitude. We all know by this point about the negatives that bitter maror represents but even servitude can have some positive value. If someone has an aim for a career path, they must endure long years of concentrated effort which require great dedication and discipline. This also is a form of servitude, but servitude that serves for your own inner goal, which also compliments the true expression of freedom. This is the essence of Maror – acceptance of the bitter side of life, with the knowledge that before us lies a higher objective.

מִצָּה Both freedom and servitude need to act without interference from one another. When freedom is appropriate it should not be restricted with a servile approach; and when discipline and a sense of obligation is needed, they should not be distracted by a desire for freedom. Therefore, we can understand the side of the argument against combining the two mitzvot of matza and maror in one sandwich.

מָרֹר However, the final goal is achieved only with the recognition that the two elements do not contradict each other. Joined together they present the

³⁹ 49a

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highest freedom, the kind of freedom that is only shown when it bears the weight of servitude and control: *"then one finds in his soul true independence, benefiting for one who is truly free: when one can control even the greatest of his powers - the power of freedom."*⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Olat Re'iyah vol. II, pp. 287-289

קִדְשׁ Shulchan Orech: Food Glorious

וְרַחֵץ Food

כַּרְפֵּס *Daniella Wieder (Shevet Ne'eman)*

We have finally reached Shulchan Orech, famished and ready to eat! The Chatam Sofer explains that the Seder was organized in such a way that we would perform almost all of the mitzvot of the evening before the meal. By delaying the meal, we are demonstrating to the children and to each other how we are to perform the service of Hashem, and how we are to desire redemption. We show that the service of Hashem comes first, before our needs. We further show that we wait patiently (yet actively) for our redemption. This is unlike the Bnei Ephraim, a group of Jews who the Midrash tells us left Egypt on their own accord, as they became impatient while waiting for Hashem to redeem us. For this lack of patience, they were met with their death. Fortunately, we've all learnt to have a bit more patience this year!

מְגִיד The Ma'ainah Shel Torah says in the name of the Admor M'Gur that one may wonder how we can split the Hallel into two parts (one part at the end of Maggid, and the rest in Hallel), with a meal in between. Isn't the meal considered a *hefsek*, an impermissible interruption? The answer lies in how we conduct ourselves during the meal. Our eating of the meal is supposed to be a spiritual experience as well as a physical one, in which case the meal can be considered further praise to Hashem. Hence, there is no interruption in our expression of Hallel (praise).

צִפּוֹן Other festivals mentioned in the Torah have an explicit commandment of *simcha*, rejoicing. However, there is no such commandment by Pesach, as pointed out by the Chatam Sofer. The reason for this lies in the meaning of *simcha*. In Moed Katan,⁴¹ we are told אין שמחה אלה באכילה ושתייה – *there is no rejoicing without eating and drinking*. On the other holidays, the main mitzvot are purely spiritual, leaving a person on a spiritual high. However, we see that to have true *simcha*, we need physical delight as well. Therefore, the Torah needed to add a special commandment of *simcha* so that the rejoicing will be complete.

הַלֵּל However, Pesach is different. Pesach by nature is a time of happiness and rejoicing, since we were released from slavery! Furthermore, eating and

⁴¹ 9b

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drinking – the essentials of rejoicing – are themselves mitzvot we are commanded to perform. Therefore, no special directive of simcha is needed for Pesach.

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So let's make sure we enjoy our food, both physically and spiritually, and let's remember that a little patience goes a long way!

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Tzafun: Why Do We Eat the Afikoman?

Joel Ohrenstein (Shevet Avichai)

Why is this night different? Well, we thought Ma Nishtana covered all the questions earlier in the Seder, but we actually left one reason out:

On all other nights: "Don't fill up on challah. Leave room for your main course!"

On this night: "Don't fill up on main course. Leave room for your Afikoman!"

How can one piece of matzah be so special that it becomes the focal point of our whole meal? There are, in fact, three different answers provided by the Rishonim as to why the Afikoman is so important.

Rashi and Rashbam⁴² write that the matzah eaten at Tzafun is the primary matzah by which we fulfil our obligation to eat matzah on Seder Night. Eating matzah is one of the two mitzvot in the Torah of the Seder.

Secondly, Rosh⁴³ argues that we perform the mitzvah of matzah when we eat matzah at the beginning of the Seder. The Afikoman only serves to commemorate the way we would eat the Pesach sacrifice when we had the Beit HaMikdash. That means that by eating this small matzah, we are simultaneously remembering the sacrifices at the Beit HaMikdash, whilst also asking Hashem for the Third Temple.

Finally, Rambam⁴⁴ says that the Afikoman is eaten in order to end the Seder with a taste of matzah in one's mouth. Even though matzah can be quite bland (it is only flour and water to be fair), on Seder night the matzah always tastes better! And we want to savour this taste and try and enjoy it for long into the night.

That is a lot of pressure on such a small piece of matzah. However, if we remember the importance of the Afikoman as we eat it, it will just taste even sweeter. These fundamental ideas demonstrate why this is the culmination of the Seder and the reason we are all here tonight!

⁴² Pesachim 119b

⁴³ Pesachim 10:34

⁴⁴ Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 8:9

קִדְשׁ Barech: Elevating our Meal

וְרַחֵץ *Rafi Kleiman (Shevet Avichai)*

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The 3rd Cup of Wine drunk at the Seder table follows Birkat HaMazon, Grace After Meals. In truth, the association of drinking wine with bensching is not unique to Seder Night. Throughout the year, in the presence of a zimun, one is able to recite 'Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos' - to bensch whilst holding then drinking a cup of wine. However, the difference in the case of Seder Night is, at least, twofold. Firstly, on a regular day, 'Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos' is merely optional whereas on Seder Night, it is obligatory. Additionally, the Mishna Berura⁴⁵ states that even if an individual is spending Seder night on their own, they **still** recite 'Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos', despite not being in the presence of a zimun.

What is the function of 'Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos' and how is it particularly pertinent to Seder Night?

When explaining the difference between Birkat HaMazon and Havdalah as presented by the Rambam, Rav Soloveitchik points out that both brachot take on different functions. Havdalah, not being linked to a particular meal, only requires a 'Kos Shel Bracha' - a cup filled with a significant beverage, not specifically wine. Yet, Birkat HaMazon, which is linked to a meal, necessitates a drink that will elevate the food that has been eaten, sanctified by the praise of Hashem. Indeed, the drink that fulfils this function is wine. Wine elevates our consumed Shulchan Orech.

On Seder Night, when we are already leaning to the left and drinking plenty cups of wine as kings and queens, one may rightfully believe 'Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos' is less significant than usual in the context of the night. However, this assumption is perhaps misguided. The four cups of wine drunk on Seder Night depict our journey from servitude to redemption, the story of our nation up until now. Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos is the 'Cup of Now'. Tangentially diverting from the narrative of the night, this cup describes our gratitude for the meal we eat tonight and by extension, every meal we eat in our state of freedom.

⁴⁵ Orach Chaim 479:1:2

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This is even applicable in the restricted state of freedom we have found ourselves in over the past 12 months. Even the individual experiencing Seder night alone is still able to express gratitude for their Shulchan Orech. And for this alone, Birkat HaMazon Al HaKos has its special place on Seder Night.

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Hallel: Why Is This Hallel Different From All Other Hallels?

Nathan Daniels (Shevet Ne'eman)

A central theme to the Pesach Seder is 'Why is this night different from all other nights?'

We see this most obviously in Ma Nishtana, but we could also be asking the same question about Hallel. What is so special about this Hallel and why is it different from a standard festive Hallel?

Firstly, we don't introduce this Hallel with a Bracha, when every other Hallel starts with a birchat hamitzvah. Rav Hai Gaon suggests there are two types of Hallel; the standard one we say every chag commemorating a special event, and a spontaneous Hallel we say to express gratitude at the exact moment of a miracle. The Rambam says we should view ourselves as being redeemed from Egypt right now, and therefore we have to express a spontaneous type of Hallel. This is not introduced by a bracha as that would suggest non-spontaneity.

Another difference is that the Hallel we say during the Seder is said at night, whereas a normal Hallel is said during the day. Additionally, women are usually exempt from having to say Hallel but during the Seder they are under the exact same obligation as men. In order to explain these two differences, we have to bring in a second approach. Although this Hallel may look and sound a lot like a normal one, it isn't actually Hallel. Both the Rambam and the Ramban make it clear that the mitzvah of telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim is not just the telling of the story, but also giving praise to Hashem for all that He has done for us and continues to do for us. Therefore, Hallel at the Seder is not an independent mitzvah in itself, but rather part of the Mitzvah of the storytelling. As such, it does not have its own bracha and is said at night because that is when the story is supposed to be told. Finally, women are equally obligated in this Hallel because they are also obligated to retell the events of the Exodus.

The overriding message we can take from both approaches is how important it is that we praise and give thanks to Hashem for what He did to redeem us from slavery and what He does for us now too.

קִדְשׁ Nirtzah: Who Knows One?

וְרַחֵץ *Abi Laderman (Shevet Morasha)*

כַּרְפֵּס We spend the whole Seder asking questions, and then giving and
יַחַץ deliberating answers. In fact, by the time we get to the end, אָחַד מִי יוֹדֵעַ just
מְגִיד seems like a bit of fun to round off the evening. However, we may be
רַחֲצָה missing the most important question of all - Who knows one?

מוֹצֵיאַת How are we all able to stand up so confidently and say: "Me! I know one"?
מִצָּה Maybe an answer of 'I think I know,' or 'I want to know,' would be more
מְרוֹר realistic. How can anyone really declare each year at the very end of the
כּוֹרֵךְ Seder that they know Hashem?

שְׁלַחַן The answer may come from within the Seder itself. We spend the whole
עוֹרֵךְ evening questioning, deliberating, debating and ultimately reliving being
צָפוֹן taken out of Egypt.

הַלֵּל Sefer haKuzari⁴⁶ asks; why did Hashem make such a small claim by
נִרְצָה HarSinai when He declared, "I am Hashem who took you out of Egypt"? He
could have said, "I created heaven and earth"!

כּוֹרֵךְ The Kuzari goes on to answer that no one was there when the world was
שְׁלַחַן created. But when the Jewish people left Egypt, an entire nation not only
עוֹרֵךְ witnessed it but experienced it. The whole nation went through it, they felt
צָפוֹן it, they knew it!

הַלֵּל We too by this point in the seder have been through it, we know it. Here at
נִרְצָה the end of the Seder we are finally able to answer the now no longer
seemingly trivial question: Who knows one? It makes perfect sense that this
is how we end our Seder, only after experiencing Hashem's might as He
took us out of Egypt, can we well and truly say: "I know one".

הַלֵּל

נִרְצָה

⁴⁶ 1:25