



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON PESACH - 5786

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Zmanim for Pesach 2026 in NYC Metro area

The following times are for the NYC area (including Teaneck, 5 Towns, etc with a 1- or possibly 2-minute variation). One should confirm precise times.

- Tuesday night Bedikas Chametz March 31, 2026 after dark.
- Erev Pesach Wed. Apr. 1 Latest time to eat chametz (Gra): 10:52 AM
- Latest time to burn chametz (Gra): 11:55 AM (say full Kol Chamira)
- Eruv Tavshilin: Necessary on Wednesday, April 1, to allow cooking on Friday (2nd day Yom Tov) for Shabbat
- First Nigh Pesach Apr. 1 Candle lighting: 7:03 PM
- Sof Zman Kriyas Shma (Gra) over Pesach 9:49-9:43 AM
- First Day Pesach Candle lighting (2nd night, from existing flame): after 8:12 PM (Reb Moshe's zman)
- Second Day Friday Apr. 3 Candle lighting: 7:05 PM
- Shabbos Chol Hamoed Apr. 4 ends: 8:15 PM (Reb Moshe zman)
- Seventh Day Tues April 7 Candle lighting (Yom Tov NO SHEHECHYANU): 7:10 PM
- Eighth Day April 8 Candle lighting (from existing flame; no shehecheyanu): after 8:19 PM
- Yom Tov Ends – Thursday, April 9: 8:19 PM (Reb Moshe)

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ספר התודעה by R' Eliyahu Kitov

Translated and summarized from the section dealing with Leil Haseder (with some help from AI)

מעוות מצוות הלילה — Structure, Experience, and Growth

Sefer HaToda'ah explains the Seder night in a very clear way. At its core, there are **two mitzvos התורה מן that apply nowadays at night: אכילת מצה** and **בעבור זה** “בעבור תאכלו מצות” based on the pesukim **סיפור יציאת מצרים** and **עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים**. Chazal learn from “בעבור זה” that the mitzvah of sippur is not just telling a story. It must be done **when the matzah (and originally Pesach and maror) are in front of you**. The telling is tied to what you are doing. In fact, “בעבור זה” means: because of these mitzvos that are before me—I tell the story.

This leads to another important point. The mitzvah of haggadah is not just about teaching others. It is something a person must experience himself. Even if someone is alone, “אפילו יושב לבדו... חייב להוציא הדברים בפיו” —he must say it out loud. And if there is no child, “חייב לספר לעצמו” —“אם אין לו בן... חייב לספר לעצמו.” The speaking itself is part of the mitzvah. A person is not just remembering—he is reliving.

In terms of structure, the night divides into two parts: (i) **מזמור התורה**—matzah and haggadah; (ii) **מדרבנן**—maror nowadays and the **ארבע כוסות**. So we end up with **four mitzvos on this night: two from the Torah and two from Chazal**. But the Seder is not just these mitzvos. Chazal built an entire system around them—**טיבולים**, **יחזק**, **כרפס**, **הסיבה**, the set text of the Haggadah, **הרוסת**, and **אפיקומן**. All of these help us feel both **the slavery and the redemption**. That is why the rule is “מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח”—we begin with the low point and end with praise. That is not just how we tell the story; it is how we experience the night.

The **ארבע לשונות של גאולה** show this idea clearly. They match the **ארבע כוסות**, but more than that, each cup is tied to a moment of **ברכה** or **הלל**—**הלל**—**קידוש** or **ברכה** or **הלל**, the end of **המזון** or **הגיד**, **מגיד**, and **הלל**. The main idea is that the wine is not the focus. **The focus is praising Hashem, and the wine comes along with it**. Each cup marks a stage in that praise, turning the night into a step-by-step experience of thanking Hashem.

Even the order of the mitzvos teaches something. Although maror used to be **מצה קודמת למרור**, matzah still comes first—**מצה קודמת למרור**. The Seder shows that we understand the suffering through the redemption, not the other way around. Similarly, haggadah is delayed on purpose. Even though it is a Torah mitzvah, we first do unusual actions like **כרפס** and **יחזק** to get children to ask questions. And even if they do not ask, we act in a way that makes questions possible. The mitzvah is built as a back-and-forth—question and answer—not just a speech.

The **אפיקומן** at the end of the meal also carries meaning. Chazal wanted the taste of matzah to remain, so nothing is eaten afterward. This way, **the last taste of the night is matzah**, leaving a lasting impression of geulah.

The **סימנים**—**קדש ורחק**—are not just a memory aid. *Sefer HaToda'ah* explains that they have a certain **קדושה** and are part of the structure of the Haggadah itself. There are fifteen steps, which match **מעלות** **המש עשרה מעלות**, showing that the Seder is like a ladder. Each step moves a person higher.

This idea becomes even stronger when the sefer connects the **סדר** to **Dayeinu**. Each step in the Seder matches a stage in the process of redemption—from the punishments in Egypt, to the miracles in the desert, all the way to entering Eretz Yisrael and building the Beis Hamikdash. The Seder is not just telling what happened. It is **walking through the whole process of redemption again**, step by step.

There is also a deeper explanation brought from the Alshich. He explains each step as part of a person's **avodas Hashem**. “קדש” means to make yourself holy. “ורחק” means to purify yourself. “כרפס” teaches how to handle material things properly. “יחזק” represents what you use now and what you save for later. “מצה” brings out the good side in a person, while “מרור” shows how even challenges can be part of serving Hashem. The later steps continue this path. In this way, the Seder is not only about the past—it is also a guide for a person's growth.

Putting it all together, the Seder is many things at once: (i) a set of mitzvos with clear halachos, (ii) a way to relive Yetzias Mitzrayim, (iii) a method of teaching through questions and answers, and (iv) a step-by-step path of growth. The key idea remains “בעבור זה”—everything comes from what is in

front of you. Through these actions, done in the right order and with understanding, the story of Yetziyas Mitzrayim becomes something a person does not just remember, but actually lives.

<https://baltimorejewishlife.com/03/28/26>

Rabbi Moshe Taragin:

We Are Living the Haggadah

We are a nation of memory. We hold tightly to our past, marking the great turning points of our history. That past is not a relic of culture. It lives within us

No night is more saturated with memory than Pesach. We do not merely recall events. We relive them. The Seder gathers memories across generations and weaves them into identity. "In every generation, a person must see himself as if he left Mitzrayim." Freedom, faith, and human dignity, first formed when we left Mitzrayim, are not abstract ideas; they are re-experienced each year and settle back into our shared consciousness.

When Rambam cites this halachah, he adds a striking word: a person must see himself leaving Mitzrayim now. We revisit the past and translate it into the present. The story of Yetziat Mitzrayim is not sealed in the past. It reaches into the reality we are living through.

This year, that demand feels immediate. The Seder becomes a lens through which we can better understand the history that is unfolding before us.

Here are six moments within the Seder that carry deep resonance and shape the flow of the night. This year, they invite a more immediate reading, grounded in the struggle we currently face.

The Fifth Son

The list of four sons reminds us that there are many ways to enter this story. Not every child, not every Jew, relates to identity in the same way, and the Seder must hold space for different voices and different questions. The four sons reflect the scene at our Seder table, families of varied temperaments and perspectives gathered around a shared memory.

This year, there is also a fifth son. The one who is not here to ask at all.

Across Israel, there will be empty chairs. Some belong to those who fell and will not return to the Seder table. Others belong to husbands, sons, and fathers still serving, still defending our people, absent from their families on this night of gathering.

As we speak about the four sons, we should also think about the fifth, the one whose chair is empty, whose voice we miss, but who remains part of our Seder.

In every generation...

This is an obvious moment to connect to our condition, as we face enemies who have once again risen to annihilate us. On this night of faith, we are certain that these criminals will meet the fate of those who rose against us in the past. Many already have, and others will follow.

We recall the first who rose in hatred, Lavan, the father-in-law of Yaakov. His assault may not have been the most violent, but it revealed something enduring about antisemitism. Hatred is always corrosive, but antisemitism defies logic. It is psychopathic and it drives people toward self-destructive behavior. Lavan was prepared to destroy Yaakov and his entire family, including his own daughters and grandchildren. He was not thinking; his hatred consumed him and led him toward the unthinkable.

History has seen this pattern before. Even as Germany faltered in war, trains carried Jews to their deaths instead of soldiers to the front. Hatred of Jews overrode national survival.

We see it again today. Our enemies invest in tunnels and terror while abandoning their own people and their own future. Their hatred distorts judgment and ultimately turns inward. These cultures of hate will all self-implode.

Lavan also introduced another pattern, false accusation. Despite Yaakov's integrity, Lavan projected his own corruption onto him. That pattern endures. Modern antisemitism uses updated language and categories, but the

accusations themselves are familiar. Once again, our enemies project their own moral failures and insecurities onto the Jews.

Dayeinu

When we receive repeated divine kindness, we often take it for granted. We feel gratitude, but it becomes general and unfocused. Dayeinu forces us to pause and name each kindness, allowing gratitude to deepen and faith to increase.

As we recite the fifteen stanzas of Dayeinu, tracing the miracles of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we might also think of the Dayeinu we would offer for the past two and a half years. Without softening the pain or ignoring the strain, we can still give thanks for Hashem's care and protection.

As I write these lines, a week and a half before Pesach, we have just endured a difficult night. Two direct Iranian missile strikes caused more than 150 injuries. Someone asked me whether this war is still worth it. I answered simply: those missiles were coming regardless. Without intervention, without Hashem granting us the wisdom and strength to defend ourselves, it would have been dozens or hundreds at a time. The number of injuries would have been far more severe.

Gratitude is not reserved for easier moments. It must be found even when deliverance arrives alongside hardship.

Chizkiyahu Hamelech did not fully give thanks after the Assyrian siege of Yerushalayim was miraculously lifted. The moment was too heavy. The northern kingdom had already fallen, and deliverance came mixed with loss.

We are still struggling. But Dayeinu teaches us to mark each stage.

Redemption unfolds step by step, and each stage calls for recognition.

A Mixed Bread

Matzah carries a double meaning. It is lechem oni, the bread of poverty, which we break in half to place ourselves back into the cramped, dirty conditions of Mitzrayim, squalid spaces without dignity or freedom. We have lived through similar conditions more than once in our history.

Matzah is also the bread that did not have time to rise, a reminder of how quickly we were taken out of Mitzrayim.

When we eat matzah, we hold both meanings together. Jewish history asks us to carry different emotions at once, to remember hardship while also recognizing redemption.

This is a night to feel the bitterness, of Mitzrayim, of our long history, and of these past two and a half years. But that bitterness does not cancel the other side. Alongside it stands the reality of redemption, the endurance of our people, and the strength of the State of Israel.

As you eat the matzah, make room for both emotions in your heart and on your tongue.

Afikoman Deferred

The final and ultimate matzah, the afikoman, is deferred until the end of the meal. That moment is called Tzafun, hidden. Hiding the afikoman reminds us that as much as we try to decipher history, it remains partly concealed.

We have a general awareness that history has shifted. These past two years have not been local geopolitical conflicts, but events with broader historical weight. Yet the arc of history remains tzafun, hidden. We may sense general direction, but the details are still hidden.

We know we are moving somewhere, but the timing and the unfolding remain beyond us.

The Father Returns

Late in the night, as the Seder draws to a close, we gather to sing the story of a small goat purchased by a father. That goat is struck, and each act of violence gives way to another. The song traces the arc of Jewish history, cycles of harm followed by more violence.

Until the end, A Heavenly Father brings that chain to a halt, dismantling each force, even the angel of death.

We are living through the final stanza of the song. Our Father has returned.

We are no longer a small defenseless goat. We stand with the strength of a roaring lion, able to protect and respond. Our Avinu Shebashmyim stands behind that strength and guides it.

In the Babylonian Talmud, however, there is a strange statement: “The fifth cup: over this one completes Hallel and says Hallel HaGadol (Tehillim 136, ‘Give thanks to Hashem, His love endures forever’). These are the words of Rabbi Tarfon.”

Rashi is puzzled by these words. Thus far, the discussion has been about four cups, not five. He is therefore driven to the conclusion that the text is a scribal error. It should say, ‘the fourth cup.’

Rambam, however, accepts the text as it stands. After drinking the four cups and completing Hallel, he writes: “One may pour a fifth cup and say over it Hallel HaGadol... This cup is not obligatory, unlike the four cups.”

Ra’avad (R. Avraham ibn Daud), contemporary of Rambam, takes a slightly different view. For him it is a mitzvah to drink a fifth cup. There is a difference between mitzvah and chovah. The latter is an obligation, the former an act which, though not obligatory, constitutes a positive religious deed.

Two questions arise on the views of Rambam and Ra’avad. The first is: why does the Mishnah speak about four cups if there are in fact five? To this the answer is straightforward: The four cups are obligatory, unlike the fifth. That is why the community must provide the poor with the means of fulfilling their obligation, but they do not have to make provision for the fifth cup, which according to Rambam is optional, and according to Ra’avad is desirable but not absolutely necessary.

The second question seems stronger. When G-d speaks to Moshe, He uses four expressions of deliverance, not five. Hence, the four cups. Asking this question, however, takes us back to the text at the beginning of Va’era. It is then that we discover, to our surprise, that there is in fact a fifth expression of deliverance:

“And I will bring you to the Land I swore with an uplifted hand to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Ya’akov. I will give it to you as a possession. I am Hashem” (Shemot 6:8)

The drama of the fifth cup now becomes apparent. Pesach represents the start of the great journey of Jewish history, from slavery to freedom, Egypt to the promised land. What then became of it after the destruction of the Second Temple, the failure of the Bar Kochba rebellion, the Hadrianic persecutions and the long, tragic series of events that led to the greatest exile of Jewish history? Could Jews celebrate freedom under such circumstances?

The pathos of this question is evident in the opening words of the Seder: “This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.” The very festival that spoke of liberty gained became – for almost 2,000 years – a poignant reminder of what the Jewish people had lost: freedom, a land, a home. A new phrase was born: next year. “This year we are slaves; next year we will be free. This year we are here; next year in Israel.” The past became the future. Memory was transfigured into hope. It is not too much to call the Jewish people “the people of hope.” What had happened once would happen again. As the prophets of exile – Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel – said: there would be a second exodus. The loss was only temporary. The Divine promise was forever.

It was in this context that the debate over the fifth cup arose. Jews could speak about the four preliminary stages of redemption – but could they celebrate the fifth: “I will bring you to the land”? That is the debate between Rashi, Rambam and Ra’avad. Rashi says one should not drink a fifth cup; Rambam says one may; Ra’avad says one should.

Hence the extra cup at the Seder table. Out of respect for Rambam and Ra’avad, we pour it. Out of respect for Rashi, we do not drink it. According to the Sages, unresolved halachic disputes will one day be resolved by Elijah (the word teyku – ‘Let it stand [undecided],’ refers to Eliyahu: ‘The Tishbite [Eliyahu] will come and answer questions and problems’). Hence the fifth cup became known as ‘the Cup of Eliyahu’.

In our times, the Jewish people have returned to the Land. According to the late Rabbi Menahem Kasher, we should now drink the fifth cup. Be that as it may, it is no less moving to think back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries – the age of Rashi, Rambam, and Ra’avad – and know that in the darkest night of exile, the only question was: how far, in the present, do we celebrate hope

for the future? Four-fifths? Or all five? The promise G-d gave Moshe spoke not just to that time, but to all time.

Pesach kept hope alive. Hope kept the Jewish people alive.

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Mishnas Avraham - From the Torah of **Rav Avraham Pam** ztl

Translated and summarized from the Hebrew text with help from AI The Haggadah Maaseh Hashem explains that had HKBH not taken us out of Mitzrayim with a strong hand, but rather in a peaceful way and through Pharaoh’s goodwill, for example by causing him to favor us and send us out willingly just as He gave us favor in the eyes of Mitzrayim when they lent us vessels, then we and our children would have remained subjugated to Pharaoh. Meaning, we would have felt an obligation of hakaras hatov toward him forever, and that is not true and absolute cheirus. For this reason, Hashem did not want Pharaoh to send us out willingly; rather, He took us out against his will, with כוח and with unusual and severe makos, so that we should not remain beholden to him at all. Based on this, רבי שלמה קליגר explains the pesukim at the beginning of Parshas Va’eira (Shemos 6:6-7): והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים... והצילתי אתכם מעבודתם... וגאלתי אתכם בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים גדולים... ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם... וידעתם כי אני ה' אלו-קייכם. When the pasuk says גדולים... it refers to being freed even from the need to feel indebted to them. Therefore, the geulah had to be בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים גדולים, by force and not by Pharaoh’s consent, so that we would be לי לעם, servants only to Hashem and not to others, and וידעתם כי אני ה' אלו-קייכם, that I alone took you out. One can add that this was essential because hakaras hatov is deeply embedded in the nature of Klal Yisrael, and had Pharaoh released us willingly we would have felt ongoing obligation toward him for generations, so the geulah had to come against his will so that no such bond would remain.

The Gemara (Yoma 35b) says that in the Beis Din shel Maalah they ask the rasha why he did not learn Torah, and he answers נאה נישט ווען לערנען, than being overcome by the yetzer, איז א גרעסערער בויין. The Gemara continues by asking whether he was more handsome than Yosef, and R’ Itzele Petersburg asks how we know Yosef was learning Torah at that time. The answer is from Chazal (Kiddushin 30b) בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, that Torah is the antidote to the yetzer hara, so since Yosef overcame his yetzer it is clear that he was engaged in Torah. Sometimes it occurs to me that the United Nations was created as preparation for the geulah, perhaps to serve as a ספר זכרון in which the conduct of the nations toward Klal Yisrael is recorded, and as was once remarked, there is no other benefit. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 2a) teaches that in the future the nations will claim they acted for the benefit of Yisrael, but at that point the record of their own words, their speeches, resolutions, and accusations, will testify against them and silence them. Reliance on the nations is a major impediment to geulah, as it says על מהאז תצאי וידיך על (Eichah 1:2), and Yirmiyahu says על ראשך כי מאס ה' במבטחך ולא תצליחו להם (2:37), which applied to Mitzrayim and applies today as well. We are approaching the recognition that we rely only on Avinu shebashamayim, and through that the geulah comes closer.

When Yosef presented his brothers to Pharaoh, one would have expected him to elevate their honor and standing, yet he did the opposite, presenting only some of them and instructing them to say אנשי אנשי מקנה היו עבדיך... כי תועבת מצרים כל רועיה צאן shepherds, something despised by the Egyptians. Yosef’s intent was that they

be settled separately in Goshen and not become integrated with Mitzrayim, and he was willing to sacrifice his own honor for that goal. Today we often see the opposite tendency, where one seeks favor and recognition from the nations, sometimes even at the expense of Klal Yisrael. Yosef teaches that true leadership is to put the needs of Klal Yisrael first, and so too we should seek our identity and honor within Klal Yisrael and the beis hamedrash rather than from the outside world.

The mefarshim ask what value there would be in coming close to Har Sinai if we would not receive the Torah. A משל is given of one who enters a perfume shop, that even if he buys nothing he leaves with a pleasant fragrance clinging to him. So too, עצם הקרבה to Har Sinai, the place where the Shechinah was revealed, had a profound spiritual effect on our neshamas, and even that alone is דיינו. From here we learn that every place has a spiritual atmosphere, and one who seeks kedusha must place himself in places of kedusha such as the beis hamedrash or gatherings of תלמידי חכמים and יראי שמים, where the very air carries kedusha. It is told that when the Chazon Ish visited the Brisker Rav he remarked that they had been in a house full of kedusha and yiras shamayim, and the Brisker Rav responded that this was because the Chazon Ish himself was there. Conversely, places lacking kedusha are not neutral but can be spiritually harmful, and one must distance from them, especially on Chol Hamoed, which are days of real kedusha called מקרא קודש. The Mechaber writes, לא נצטוונו אלא על שמחה שיש בה עבודת היוצר Hashem and not ראש, and just as food must be prepared for a seudah, so too בני תורה must prepare divrei Torah so that the seudah has substance and kedusha.

The Midrash (Tanchuma Ki Sisa 16) says היה לומד ביאור נוסף – מתנת התורה, that Moshe Rabbeinu would learn and forget, showing that no human being, even Moshe, can naturally contain the entirety of Torah. On the final day, when he needed to transmit the Torah, he said he did not remember everything, and then ריחן אל משה ככלו לדבר אתו, that Hashem gave it to him as a complete matanah, engraved in his memory. The Alshich asks why, if the Torah was ultimately given as a gift, Moshe needed forty days of fasting and effort, and explains that Torah requires a level of kedusha attained only through עמל and יגיעה, and only after a person exerts himself to his full capacity does Hashem grant it as a matanah. This explains the phrase ולא נתן לנו את התורה, meaning not as a gift, which would still have been sufficient since each person would learn according to his natural capacity, but now we have a טובה כפולה ומכופלת that Hashem נתן לנו the Torah as a matanah, allowing us to reach beyond טבע through siyata dishmaya.

The Inner Structure of Maggid - מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח from **Haggadah Yesamach Av** - by **Rav Eli Baruch Shulman** (2025)

This piece was translated with assistance from AI. The original is available on YUtorah and on Amazon.

The Inner Structure of Maggid – מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח
There is a striking feature in the structure of the Haggadah that is easy to miss. We tend to think of Hallel as something recited only at the end of Maggid, but in truth, elements of shevach and hoda'ah appear throughout the earlier sections as well.

we say ששמחה לאבותינו ולנו והיא שעמדה לבנותינו ולנו – which is itself a declaration of praise and recognition of Hashem's protection. The minhag to lift the kos at that point reflects this: it is treated like a moment of shirah, since אין אומרים שירה אלא על היין. Similarly, after completing the derashah of ארמי אובד אבי, we continue with אילו הוציאנו ממצרים... which is again a form of shevach. And finally, after Pesach, matzah, u'maror, we conclude Maggid with full Hallel—בצאת ישראל.

A Structural Question

This raises a basic question: if both והיא שעמדה and כמה מעלות טובות are expressions of shevach, why do we lift the kos for the former but not for the latter?

A second question comes from the Rambam's nusach of the Haggadah. The Rambam includes והיא שעמדה, but omits כמה מעלות טובות entirely. That suggests that והיא שעמדה is an essential form of shevach, while כמה מעלות טובות is not. Why should that be?

What Counts as Shevach

The answer seems to be that the parsha of ארמי אובד אבי is itself inherently a passage of shevach and hoda'ah. It comes from Mikra Bikurim, where the person recounts Yetzias Mitzrayim not just as history, but as an expression of gratitude—culminating in thanks for the land and its produce.

This explains why Chazal chose this parsha for the mitzvah of sippur yetzias mitzrayim. The mitzvah is not just to tell what happened, but to tell it in a way of shevach v'hoda'ah. Once one completes the derashah of ארמי אובד אבי, the essential shevach has already been accomplished within the narrative itself.

Revisiting “כמה מעלות טובות”

כמה מעלות טובות. Since the core shevach has already been fulfilled through the derashah, this section is not essential, but an additional, later-developed expression. This fits well with the Rambam, who omits it. There is also a practical point: during the derashah itself, we cannot lift the kos, because the Haggadah must be said over the matzah—להם שעונן עליו דברים הרבה. Lifting the kos would detract from that focus.

Returning to the Mishnah: What is “מתחיל בגנות”?

The Mishnah teaches: מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור. כל הפרשה. The Gemara records a dispute:

At first glance, it sounds like they argue only about the gnus. But the Rambam seems to incorporate both approaches. He writes that we begin with the fact that our forefathers were ovdei avodah zarah and conclude with ועכשיו קרבנו המקום, and also that we begin with avadim hayinu and conclude with the geulah.

One Parsha Contains Everything

The key is that when the Rambam says ודורש מארמי אובד אבי, he is referring not only to the shevach, but also to the gnus. That parsha contains the entire story—both the suffering and the redemption. In fact, it presents the suffering in more detail than the brief phrase עבדים היינו.

So when the Rambam says we must begin with gnus, he does not mean those exact words, but the idea: the full picture of what was done to us. And the shevach—the nissim, the geulah, the cheirus—is also contained in that same parsha.

In other words, everything is built into that one derashah.

Rav and Shmuel Revisited

With this, the dispute becomes clearer. According to Shmuel, the Mishnah is describing a single, integrated process: ארמי אובד אבי itself contains both gnus and shevach.

According to Rav, however, there are two stages. First, one fulfills מתחיל בגנות and concludes that section with ועכשיו קרבנו המקום לעבודתו. Only afterward does one proceed to the derashah of ארמי אובד אבי.

This is exactly how the Rambam structures the Haggadah—following Rav, while still including the full derashah that contains the story of the geulah.

The Role of “עבדים היינו”

It is not the formal fulfillment of מתחיל בגנות, but rather a hakdamah. Its purpose is to make the story personal: had Hashem not taken us out, we—and even our children and grandchildren—would still be enslaved.

That is why it leads into the key themes of Maggid: (i) that the story is personally relevant, (ii) that even great scholars must tell it, (iii) that it must be taught to each child according to his level, and (iv) that it must be said when matzah and maror are before us.

Only after that does the formal structure begin with מתחיל בגנות ועבדים היינו אבותינו.

A Unified Vision of the Seder

What emerges is a deeper understanding of the Seder. The mitzvah of sippur is not just to recount events, and not even just to move from gnus to shevach. It is to tell the entire story within a framework of recognition and gratitude. That is why the Haggadah is built around Mikra Bikurim. Just as the one bringing Bikurim tells his story as an act of thanks, so too on the Seder night we turn memory into avodah—history into hoda'ah. And that is the deeper meaning of מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח: not just a structure, but the way a Jew tells his story.

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Halachic Insight into the **Maggid Section from Rav Soloveitchik**
Excerpted from **Batei Yosef Inyanei Leil Haseder (2026)** editor Rav
Michael Taubes

Ha Lachma Anya - The passage Ha lachma anya does not appear in either the Mishna or the Gemara, but it can be found in the Haggadah of Seder Rav Amram Gaon, as well as in the Rambam's nusach of the Haggadah at the end of Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah. Why do we recite this passage? Rav Soloveitchik explained that matzah embodies two distinct ideas. First, matzah is called lechem oni in a pasuk in Parashas Re'eh (Devarim 16:3). Rashi explains there that this refers to bread that reminds us of the suffering we endured in Mitzrayim; according to several meforshim, this was the type of bread they actually ate there. This interpretation comes from the Sifrei. The Gemara in Pesachim (115b) offers another derasha: matzah is lechem she'onin alav devarim harbeh—bread upon which many ideas are recited. Rashi explains that we complete Hallel over it and recite the Haggadah over it. The Rema rules (OC 473:7) that the matzah must remain uncovered during the recitation of the Haggadah. The Bei'ur HaGra notes that this derives from the derasha, suggesting that reciting the Haggadah over matzah is part of the mitzvah of matzah. If all the derashos of lechem oni are complementary, it makes sense that at the beginning of the Haggadah—recited over the matzah—we first say Ha lachma anya to clarify what the matzah represents: that it reminds us of the poverty in Mitzrayim. However, there is another dimension. The Rambam writes that before Ha lachma anya one should say bevehilu yatzanu MiMitzrayim—we left Mitzrayim in haste. Rav Soloveitchik explained that matzah reminds us not only of slavery but also of geulah. The Mishna in Pesachim teaches that matzah is eaten al shem shenigalu avoseinu MiMitzrayim. Thus, matzah represents both affliction and redemption. The Ramban explicitly states that matzah commemorates both (i) leaving Mitzrayim in haste and (ii) eating poor man's bread in Mitzrayim. The term b'chipazon is translated by Onkelos as bevehilu, reinforcing the Rambam's formulation. Therefore, before beginning the Haggadah, we highlight both themes: affliction and redemption.

Mah Nishtanah - The Mishna (Pesachim 116a) states that the son asks his father questions; if he lacks understanding, the father teaches him. The Gemara adds that even scholars ask each other. The Rambam codifies that after pouring the second cup, the son asks. The Shulchan Aruch rules similarly. From this, it appears only one person must ask (son, wife, or the individual himself). The Rema states that when someone asks, the baal habayis need not say Mah Nishtanah. However, the Rambam writes that "the reader says" (omer hakorei) Mah Nishtanah. This implies a different structure: the child asks his own questions, but Mah Nishtanah is a formal text recited by the reader of the Haggadah. These are two separate halachos: The child must ask questions according to his understanding (vehaya ki yishalcha bincha). The Haggadah requires a formal question-and-answer structure. Therefore, even when everyone reads the Haggadah individually, each participant should recite Mah Nishtanah. Rav Soloveitchik reported that this was the practice in the home of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. Furthermore, Mah Nishtanah is not merely a question expressing confusion. The Rambam's language ("says" rather than "asks") suggests it is an expression of wonder—like mah rabu ma'asecha or mah nora ma'asecha. The Aruch HaShulchan similarly explains that it expresses amazement at the night's changes.

Thus, Mah Nishtanah serves a dual role: It fulfills the requirement that sippur be in question-and-answer form. It functions as the father's initial response to the child's questions, introducing the narrative that begins with Avadim Hayinu.

Lifting the Matzah and Maror -- The Gemara (Pesachim 116b) states that one must lift the matzah and maror when reciting Matzah zu and Maror zeh. Rashi and Rashbam explain that this is to display them to those at the table. According to the Rashbam, only the leader must lift them, since he is showing them to others. However, Rav Soloveitchik reported that in his father's home, everyone—including children—lifted the matzah and maror. He explained that since everyone recites the Haggadah, each participant should perform this act.

Uncovering the Matzah for Hallel - The Rema rules that the matzah should remain uncovered during the Haggadah because it is lechem oni—bread over which things are recited. However, when reaching Lefichach, we cover the matzah and hold the cup, since shira is recited over wine. This follows the concept of shelo yirah hapas boshto—that the bread should not "see its shame," since ordinarily HaMotzi precedes wine. Rav Soloveitchik noted a tension: Hallel must also be recited over the matzah. Therefore, he explained that the matzah is covered only during Lefichach, but immediately uncovered again for Hallel. Even though there is a temporary "shame" to the bread, the requirement to recite Hallel over lechem oni overrides that concern.

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Hallel in Shul on Seder Night: Is Less More?
R' Yaakov Hoffman

Some Jews just can't get enough Hallel. Not only do they say it during the Seder; they say it beforehand as well, at the end of Maariv. Doing so, however, is not a universal practice. Many Jews recite Hallel on Pesach night only during the Seder. What is the rationale behind each of these customs? While the Mishnah clearly references the Hallel that is part of the Seder,[1] it never mentions Hallel being recited at nighttime prior to the Seder. The practice to say Hallel beforehand first appears in the Tosefta,[2] which rules that people who do not know how to recite Hallel themselves may recite it in shul before going home for the Seder. By reciting it at that time, they fulfill the mitzvah of reciting Hallel on Pesach night – even if not at its ideal time (which is during the Seder).

The Tosefta's ruling, however, reflects the fact that in ancient times, written texts of any kind were scarce. Today, punctuated, printed Haggadot are ubiquitous; many even feature a vernacular translation. Since virtually everyone can read Hallel from a printed text, the Tosefta's suggestion to recite Hallel in shul should seemingly no longer have occasion to be followed.

Furthermore, according to the Tosefta, reciting Hallel in shul is in lieu of reciting it at the Seder. Thus, the contemporary practice to say Hallel after Maariv in shul is doubly surprising. Not only is the entire congregation – all of whom could read it on their own – saying it; they are saying it in addition to the Hallel said at the Seder. How do we explain this practice? The first explicit mention of a general custom to say Hallel in shul is in Massechet Sofrim, a post-Talmudic collection of liturgical and scribal laws:[3] "It is a preferred practice (mitzvah min ha-muvchar) to recite Hallel on both nights [of Pesach] celebrated in the Diaspora, to recite the blessing on it, and to recite it pleasantly, to fulfill that which is said 'let us exalt His name together.' [4] And when one recites it at home, one need not recite the blessing since one already recited the blessing publicly." [5] It is curious that Massechet Sofrim is so enthusiastic about everyone reciting Hallel twice – in shul and at the Seder – despite the fact that the Tosefta considers reciting it in shul to be a less-than-ideal remedy for those incapable of doing so at home. Indeed, early codes of Jewish law, including those of the Rif and Rambam, do not mention saying Hallel in shul on Pesach night at all. Ashkenazic Rishonim similarly ignore Massechet Sofrim's opinion on the matter.

But beginning around the 13th century, Spanish authorities eagerly adopted the custom to recite Hallel communally before the Seder.[6] They note that in addition to constituting a public glorification of God (“let us exalt His name together”), Hallel in shul also has an added benefit:

Poskim disagree about whether or not one should say a blessing – i.e., *lignmor* (or *likro*) *et ha-Hallel* – before Hallel at the Seder. However, everyone agrees that one should recite the *beracha* if one says Hallel in shul (for whatever reason) and that this blessing would cover the Hallel said at home as well. Thus, reciting Hallel with a blessing after *Maariv* in shul allows one to avoid taking sides in the dispute over saying the *beracha* at the Seder.

Over time, reciting Hallel in shul on Seder night became the widespread Sefardic practice, codified by *Shulchan Aruch*; Ashkenazim, however, retained the custom to recite Hallel at the Seder only.[7] But since there appear to be some advantages to everyone reciting Hallel in shul, why don't all Ashkenazim adopt this practice? Is there any downside to doing so? Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch cogently explains the logic behind the Ashkenazic practice:[8] The ideal way to fulfill the mitzvah of reciting Hallel on Pesach night is in conjunction with the third cup of wine at the Seder. If one has already fulfilled one's obligation to recite Hallel prior to the Seder – i.e., in shul – the Hallel one says over the third cup won't be the one that discharges his or her obligation to say Hallel on Seder night. Thus, this person's primary fulfillment of the mitzvah will not be in the preferred manner – accompanied by the third cup of wine.[9]

There are also more pedestrian reasons not to recite Hallel in shul: First, it's proper to begin the Seder as early as possible to ensure that children (and adults!) remain awake for as much of the Seder as they can. Second, reciting Hallel twice in quick succession can result in familiarity breeding contempt – “liturgical overload,” if you will – and a lack of *kavvanah* during its recitation. (On the other hand, reciting Hallel before the Seder is useful for those who tend to doze off during its recitation at the Seder.)

Nevertheless, many Ashkenazic congregations do recite Hallel in shul nowadays. Chassidim, in particular, do so, having adopted many Sefardic practices endorsed by the Kabbalistic approach of the *Arizal*. [10] In Israel, the vast majority of Ashkenazic congregations recite Hallel in shul on Pesach night due to the influence of Sefardim and Chassidim. In addition, students of the Vilna Gaon formed the nucleus of the modern-day Ashkenazic community in Israel, and some report that the Vilna Gaon observed this practice.[11] The *Brisker Rav*, however, refused to recite Hallel in shul even in Israel.[12]

In the *Chazon Ish*'s minyan, Hallel was recited, but without a *beracha* – presumably so as not to totally do away with all aspects of the traditional Ashkenazic practice not to say Hallel. A blessing-less Hallel, however, poses a serious difficulty: one fails to take advantage of having the *beracha* on Hallel in shul cover Hallel at the Seder while simultaneously losing out on the advantages of reciting Hallel only at home.[13]

Interestingly, a good number of mainstream American non-chassidic Ashkenazic synagogues have also adopted the custom of saying Hallel in shul on Seder night. In many cases, this practice is due to the influence of Rav J. B. Soloveitchik,[14] who encouraged his students in the pulpit to introduce the evening Hallel in their congregations if they could do so without causing strife.[15]

Rav Soloveitchik's suggestion to alter the traditional Ashkenazic custom is puzzling. The antiquity of this practice gives it much weight; the idea that it may be changed based on novel conceptual analyses of halacha is very difficult. Furthermore, Rav Soloveitchik's position is diametrically opposed to that of his uncle the *Brisker Rav*, who insisted on maintaining the Ashkenazic practice even in Israel.[16]

It should be emphasized that if an Ashkenazi is in a shul on Seder night that recites Hallel, it is imperative that he or she not show any disrespect to the local custom. One should listen to the *berachot* of the *shliach tzibbur* and recite Hallel with the congregation.[17] If one is uncomfortable doing so, another option is to recite other prayers while giving the impression of participating in the Hallel, or to slip out of shul very inconspicuously.

To sum up: Talmudic sources indicate that, originally, Hallel was generally recited on Pesach night during the Seder exclusively; only in extenuating circumstances was it instead recited in shul beforehand. A post-Talmudic document, *Massechet Sofrim*, indicates a preference for the community reciting Hallel in shul in addition to everyone reciting it during the Seder. Beginning around the 13th century, Sefardim put into practice the directive of *Massechet Sofrim*. Ashkenazim, however, retained the apparently older practice to recite Hallel only at the Seder. Eventually, Chassidim and some other Ashkenazim, especially in Israel, adopted the Sefardic custom. Congregations that still maintain the custom not to recite Hallel in shul should not change their practice, since it is very ancient and eminently reasonable.

Endnotes 1 Pesachim 10:6-7. 2 Pischea 9:4 3 Rabbenu David (Pesachim 118a) claims the Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:1) references a custom to recite Hallel in shul regardless of whether or not it will be recited again at home. However, it is more likely that the the passage in question is simply referring to the practice mentioned in the *Tosefta* (*Bei'ur Ha-Gra*, *Orach Chayim* 487:4). 4 Psalms 34:3. 5 *Massechet Sofrim* 20:7. 6 *Rashba*, Pesachim 11b; *Ritva*, *Haggadah*; *Rabbenu David*, Pesachim 118a; *Tur Orach Chayim* 473. 7 *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema*, *Orach Chayim* 487:4. 8 *Haggadah Mo'adim U-Zmanim* pp. 50-51. 9 See also *Responsa Meishiv Davar* 1:13. 10 See *Kaf HaChaim* 487:40-42,45. 11 *Iggerot Moshe*, *Orach Chayim* 2:95. This report, however, is difficult to accept since the classic works describing the practices of the Vilna Gaon omit any mention of it, and *Bei'ur Ha-Gra* seems to agree with the *Rema*. 12 *Haggadah Mo'adim U-Zmanim*, op. cit. 13 See R. M.M. Karp, *Mishmeret Leil Shimurim*, p. 52. 14 In other cases, it probably has to do with the fact that some founders of the synagogue were of Chassidic extraction but partially assimilated into mainstream American Orthodoxy. 15 R. Hershel Schachter, *Nefesh Ha-Rav*, p. 183.

16 The position of Rav Soloveitchik's revered grandfather Reb Chaim is subject to dispute: Some say that he opposed Hallel in shul (*Ibid.*, p. 184); others report that he ruled that it should be recited (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi-Beit Levi* pp. 65-66 in the footnotes). The matter requires further investigation, because it is difficult to imagine either Rav Soloveitchik [who did recite Hallel in shul] or the *Brisker Rav* [who refused to recite Hallel in shul] taking a strong stand against Reb Chaim in this matter. 17 *Responsa Iggerot Moshe*, *Orach Chayim* 2:94. However, others rule that one should absolutely avoid reciting Hallel in shul. See R. Daniel Kleinman, **Kovetz Halachot**, *Hilchot Pesach* 18:4 [quoting Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky that since the *ויצא בדיעבד* Hallel is to say it on the Seder, and if he says Hallel in Shul he is *יוצא בדיעבד*, he will lose the ability to recite the optimal Hallel at the Seder if he recited it in shul, and the *Kovetz Halachos* derives this from the *Gra* (O.C. 487:4). The *Kovetz Halachos* also brings from the *Briksker Rav*, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and YB"L Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky, that if one's *minhag* is not to say Hallel in shul and he is in a shul where Hallel is recited, he should try to walk out quietly before Hallel.]

<https://yated.com/emunas-chachomim-the-great-partnership-of-yetzias-mitzrayim/>

Emunas Chachomim: The Great Partnership of Yetzias Mitzrayim
Rabbi Yaakov Feitman

March 18, 2026

One of the most surprising aspects of the *Haggadah Shel Pesach* is the apparent absence of Moshe Rabbeinu. He is mentioned only once, somewhat tangentially, when Rav Yosi Haglili quotes the *posuk* that Klal Yisroel believed in Hashem and His servant Moshe. It would certainly seem that Moshe, who took us out of Mitzrayim and is mentioned countless times in the Torah regarding this seminal event, should be acknowledged in the *Haggadah* for his pivotal role. Over the centuries, this omission has been discussed many times. Let us review some of the answers before we attempt any new approaches.

The Gra, in his commentary to the Haggadah, suggests that on Pesach night, when we reach the tenth of the makkos, we recite the famous words at the Seder, “It was I, not an angel...no other shliach (agent).” Moshe Rabbeinu did nothing on his own. He acted purely and completely as the great servant of Hashem that he was. Therefore, he is not mentioned in the Haggadah, which celebrates the fact that Hashem Himself took us out of Mitzrayim. It is quoted in the name of Rav Moshe Soloveitchik that the source of this concept is rooted in a Medrash (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 3:1). The posuk (Shir Hashirim 3:1) states, “As I lay upon my bed in the night of my desert travail, I sought Him Whom my soul loves. I sought Him but I found Him not...” The Medrash explicates that “the night” refers to the night of Egypt. “I sought him” refers to Moshe Rabbeinu. In other words, according to Chazal, it was not Hashem Whom we were seeking. It was Moshe Rabbeinu. However, he was behind the scenes and not actively visible, so as not to interfere with our total focus upon the actions of our Father in Heaven, Who was redeeming us miraculously and personally. This Medrash a bit later (3:4) adds that “the posuk (3:4) adds that ‘I found Him Whom my soul loves...until I brought His Presence to the Tabernacle of my mother and to the chamber of the one who conceived me.’” The Medrash once again states that “the one whom my soul loves” is Moshe Rabbeinu. “The house of my mother” is Har Sinai” and “the chamber” is the Ohel Moed. If we understand the Medrash to be referring to Moshe Rabbeinu’s absence from the Haggadah and the formal sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim, then what does it mean that we found Moshe? Perhaps we can suggest that there are two stages to our awareness during the exodus. Initially, we are unaware of Moshe Rabbeinu because Hashem wanted to establish His intimate relationship with Klal Yisroel, His nation and children. However, after we have established this affinity in our hearts, we realize that for the privilege of having merited this connection, it is Moshe Rabbeinu whom we must thank for his mesirus nefesh and extraordinary leadership. Therefore, at the moment that we are imagining ourselves back in Mitzrayim (k’ilu hu yotza miMitzrayim), we must glorify not only the presence of the Shechinah. After we have fully realized that incredible moment, we are allowed and even mandated to remember Moshe Rabbeinu as we soon declared at the Yam Suf, “We believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant” (Shemos 14:31). This process is mirrored also in the Medrash Tehillim (107), where Yeshayahu Hanovi is quoted as saying, “Then the redeemed of Hashem will return and come to Tzion with song” (Yeshayahu 35:10). The Medrash again elucidates, “The redeemed of Hashem, not the redeemed of Eliyahu, nor the redeemed of the Melech HaMoshiach, but only the redeemed of Hashem.” Here, too, the Medrash reminds us that although we have many wonderful human redeemers, we must keep in mind that it is ultimately Hashem Who is saving us. Interestingly, the Chofetz Chaim (quoted in HaSeder Ha’aruch 2:3) attributes Moshe’s absence to his own will. Since he was such a humble person (Bamidbar 12:3) and “Hashem does the will of those who fear Him” (Tehillim 145:19), Hashem ordained that he should not be mentioned and thus allow Klal Yisroel to enjoy the moment of Hashem’s exclusive presence in our lives. As always, Moshe Rabbeinu did everything for our benefit. He was abnegating his own role, colossal though it was, so that we could focus on the primary and eternal relationship between ourselves and Hashem. The current Belzer Rebbe’s father, Rav Mordechai Rokeach, rov of Bilgorai, offers another answer that in fact enhances the Chofetz Chaim’s explanation. He notes that there are two ways in which Hashem brings us geulah and yeshuah. One is called isarusa dele’eila, which means that when we are found unworthy, Hashem takes it upon Himself to save us despite our deficiencies. The second is when we have uplifted ourselves to the point where we deserve Divine intervention. This is called isarusa delesata. At the time of Pesach, as is well known, we, as a nation, were immersed in the forty-ninth level of defilement. Hashem reached down and lifted us out of both our slavery and out of our poor spiritual level. On the other hand, Moshe Rabbeinu had elevated himself to the level of prophesy and other

spiritual madreigos. He personally could have achieved Hashem’s help through isarusa delesata, but on the night of Pesach, we want to remember Hashem’s incredible kindness when He rescued us despite, not because of, what we deserved at the time. Thus, it would have been inappropriate to mention Moshe Rabbeinu prominently in the Haggadah, so that we would better appreciate the full complement of what Hashem did for us. Additionally, along this vein, we all know that Moshe Rabbeinu initially did not wish to accept the Divine mandate to redeem Klal Yisroel, because this would diminish his older brother Aharon’s stature (see Rashi, Shemos 4:13). Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach adds that this middah of not causing discomfort to someone is so powerful that it overrode Moshe Rabbeinu’s deep yearning to finally free Klal Yisroel from the misery and agony that Paroh was inflicting upon them. By, so to speak, staying out of the Haggadah, Moshe Rabbeinu continued this wonderful trait for all eternity. As the Chofetz Chaim and the rov of Bilgorai taught us, the instilling of proper middos is one of the prime traits of Klal Yisroel and we learned it from Moshe Rabbeinu at the very time of our creation as a people, as the Haggadah declares, “We became a nation [there in Egypt].” We are now in a position to understand a surprising statement in the Rambam, when he speaks of the four sons in the Haggadah. He writes (Hilchos Chometz Umatzah 7:2) that “if the son is an adult and wise, [the father] should notify him of the miracles that occurred for us in Egypt, which were brought about through Moshe Rabbeinu, all in accordance with the intellectual capability of the son.” Many meforshim over the past eight centuries have found these words of the Rambam incongruous with all we have just learned about Moshe Rabbeinu’s apparent nonexistence in the Haggadah. My rebbi, Rav Yitzchok Hutner (Maamorei Pachad Yitzchok, Pesach No. 29), answers in his usual profound way. He cites the Gemara (Brachos 33a) that a prerequisite to receiving rachmonus — compassion — is the trait of daas, having attained a certain level of wisdom. As we mentioned, Klal Yisroel at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim was lacking in their development of this crucial ability to appreciate and understand what was happening to us. Moshe Rabbeinu became our surrogate in this matter. In the rosh yeshiva’s words, “Moshe hu daadom shel Yisroel.” We can now appreciate the powerful forces that were at work in the geulah from Mitzrayim. On the one hand, we were unworthy of salvation, so Hashem had to release us without our full participation in the process. Moshe Rabbeinu didn’t want to intrude upon this new relationship which Klal Yisroel was enjoying, so he not only didn’t take credit, but made sure that he wasn’t even mentioned at all. Yet, it was his daas that substituted for our lack of this special wisdom. As it turned out, Moshe did give us the greatest gift of all, quietly and modestly: the present of himself and his greatness so that we could become great as well. For that, on the night of Pesach, we must thank both our Father in Heaven and our rebbi and teacher forever, Moshe Rabbeinu. I would like to end with a concept of emunas chachomim in our time. A woman in Belgium had hardening of the arteries and was considered in danger. Unfortunately, she was not a great candidate for surgery, but the physicians insisted that she must have an operation. The family approached the famed Rav Itzikel of Antwerp. He inquired about the woman’s middos and discovered that she was a great baalas chesed. The rebbe responded that such a woman is protected by her mitzvot and need not undergo surgery. Although the doctors declared that her rabbi was murdering her, she listened to the tzaddik. Not surprisingly, when the woman developed an infection that caused a high fever, the doctors warned the family that they had been right along. However, the infection and high fever opened her arteries and she went home healthier and more energetic than ever before. If we realize that we must believe in our gedolim as well as Hashem, we will achieve the partnership Klal Yisroel formed in Mitzrayim, which should G-d willing pave the way for the great geulah Micha (7:15) predicted long ago, “As in the days when you left Mitzrayim I will show you wonders.” A chag kosher vesomeiach to all.

מִשְׁנֵה שְׂכִיר Moadim, Haggadah Shel Pesach, Chad Gadya
by Rav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal HYD (author of Em HaBanim
Simeicha) (translated with help from AI)
“Chad Gadya”

1. My grandfather, the gaon hakadosh R' Menachem Katz Prostiz zt"l, av
beis din of Tzehlim, would relate on the night of Pesach a story about the
gaon hakadosh R' Yonasan Eybeschütz zt"l (1690–1764), which he heard
from his rebbe, the Chasam Sofer, who received it from his rebbe the Kohen
Gadol, the gaon hakadosh R' Nossan Adler of Frankfurt. They too would
relate this story on the night of Pesach.

Once, during the period of the dispute with the gaon Rav Yaakov Emden
zt"l, Rav Yonasan Eybeschütz traveled from his home to another city
regarding an urgent matter. Along the way, he stopped at an inn to stay
overnight. This was after Pesach. There he encountered some lowly
individuals sitting at a table, who had involved themselves in a dispute not
their own and were speaking disparagingly about him in his presence, not
recognizing him and assuming he was a simple traveler. Rabbeinu could no
longer restrain himself. He approached them and said:

“Gentlemen! I am a simple villager and not a learned man, but I see that you
are talmidei chachamim, so I will ask you one question that troubles me on
the Haggadah—on the final section, the piyut Chad Gadya. They looked at
him with contempt, yet were very eager to hear a question from a simple
villager on the Haggadah, and they said: “Ask!”

He said to them: “In this piyut, it tells a story: the cat ate the kid that the
father bought for two zuzim, for a great price. If so, the cat did not act
properly in eating it. If the cat acted wrongly, then the dog was justified in
biting it. If so, the stick that struck the dog did not act properly, and the fire
that burned the stick acted correctly. The water, then, was not correct in
extinguishing the fire, and therefore the ox was right to drink the water. If so,
the shochet did not act properly in slaughtering the ox, and the malach
hamaves was justified in killing the shochet. And in the end, HaKadosh
Baruch Hu comes and slaughters the malach hamaves, who acted correctly.
According to this reasoning, it would come out that HaKadosh Baruch Hu
did not act correctly—how can such a thing be said? This contradicts the
explicit pasuk: “צדיק ה' בכל דרכיו”

Now, gentlemen, please answer this question for me.” Those listening were
astonished. They realized from his words that he was not a simple villager,
but someone disguised. They did not know how to answer, and said:

“From this question we see that you are not a simple person. Please tell us
the answer as well, for certainly you know it. Rav Yonasan Eybeschütz
responded:

“Indeed, I will tell you the answer. Let us analyze the piyut. The paytan
relates that the cat did something wrong to the kid. Now, one could say that
if the kid and the cat had a dispute, they could resolve it between themselves,
and perhaps eventually make peace. But you—the dog—who asked you to
step in and administer justice in a dispute not your own? Therefore, the dog
acted incorrectly.

If so, the opposite conclusion follows: the stick acted correctly in striking the
dog, as it deserved punishment. Therefore, the fire did not act properly in
burning the stick, and the water acted correctly in extinguishing the fire.

Consequently, the ox was not justified in drinking the water, and the shochet
acted correctly in slaughtering the ox. Accordingly, the malach hamaves did
not act properly in killing the shochet.

Therefore, in the future, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will bring the yetzer hara—
who is the malach hamaves and the satan—and slaughter him. Thus: “צדיק ה'
בכל דרכיו וחסיד בכל מעשיו”

From this you should understand on your own: if two great talmidei
chachamim have a dispute, what business do simple people have involving
themselves in a dispute not their own?”

At that point they understood that he was no ordinary person, but a great
man. They appeased him and comforted him for what they had said, and
remained silent, speaking no more. Rabbeinu then continued on his journey
in peace.

2. What I heard from my friend, the gaon, a descendant of holy lineage, R'
Asher Anshel Jungreis, av beis din of Tchengen, who was here at the
bathhouse in the year 5691.

“חד גדיא חד גדיא דובין אבא בתרי זווי חד גדיא חד גדיא” The repetition of the phrase
indicates that we are one nation—one “Chad Gadya”—from thousands of
years ago, and we remain one nation forever in ruchniyus, meaning that our
emunah endures. And also in gashmiyus: many nations have disappeared
from the world, while we continue to exist and live forever.

All of this is because “דובין אבא”—we are the acquisition of our Father in
Heaven, as it says: “עם זו קניתי”

“בתרי זווי”—this refers to two Torahs and also the two luchos, for Torah,
HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and Yisrael are one, as stated in the Zohar. Just as He
is eternal, so too we endure. Therefore: “חד גדיא וחד גדיא.”

“ואתא שונרא ואכלה לגדיא” It says: “יִדְכָה יִשׁוּחַ וְנָפַל בְּעֵצְמֵי הַלְּפָאִים” (Tehilim 10;10)
He crushes others, and then crouches low—bending and lowering himself in
hiding so that he will not be detected.)

There is a mashal: once a mouse told its children, “We have an enemy lying
in wait for our lives—guard yourselves from him.” One time they went out
and saw a rooster crowing and making movements, opening its mouth and so
on. They thought this must be the enemy that wanted to swallow them.
They asked their father what the enemy looked like. When they described it,
he said: “This is not the enemy.”

Later they went out again and saw a turkey puffing itself up and standing
before them. They were frightened by its appearance and said: “This must be
the real enemy!” He said to them: “This is also not the enemy—do not be
afraid of it. But if you see one that appears to walk innocently, quietly and
humbly—without drawing attention—that is your true enemy,” as is the
nature of a cat when it goes to hunt a mouse.

This is the meaning of the pasuk: “יִדְכָה יִשׁוּחַ וְנָפַל בְּעֵצְמֵי הַלְּפָאִים” The nations
of the world in every generation rise against us to destroy us, but HaKadosh
Baruch Hu saves us from their hands. This is all because Yisrael hold fast to
the Torah. The nations have tried in many ways to remove the yoke of Torah
from us, but they have not succeeded—like the mashal of the sun and the
wind competing to remove a person’s garment.

It is brought in Ben Melech v’Nazir that when an enemy humbles himself
before you, you must be even more cautious of him, like the mashal above.
When the nations saw that they accomplished nothing through force in
uprooting Torah, they tried instead with friendliness, distractions, and
granting benefits and favors.

This is the meaning of: “ואתא שונרא ואכלה לגדיא”—the approach of the cat,
subtle and deceptive, which then consumes the kid.

Shine, Don’t Rise

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Yated, March 27, 2026

Every *Erev Pesach*, something fascinating happens in frum homes across the
world. Perfectly rational, learned, sensible people—people who can navigate
a *sugya* in *Bava Kamma* or *lehavdil* analyze a spreadsheet—suddenly find
themselves on their hands and knees, peering into crevices they haven’t
thought about since last *Pesach*.

Their wives are even more frantic. They are looking for *chometz*. Tiny
chometz. Invisible *chometz*. *Chometz* that is, in all likelihood, *pachos
m’kezayis, batul*, and halachically irrelevant. And yet they cannot stop
looking.

Like the *lomdus* in the world and all the rationale won’t negate their quest to
rid themselves of those tiny little particles. I used to wonder if General Mills
invented the Cheerio just to have something that rolls under a refrigerator,
forcing the puniest of men to suddenly become supermen in their mission to
move mountains to rid themselves of even the tiniest “O.”

I recently heard a *shiur* in *Menachos* from Reb Sruly Bornstein, who quoted
the Ridvaz, Rav Dovid ben Zimra, the *rebbe* of the *Shitah Mekubetzes* and
the Arizal, who reframed the entire narrative as one of the most profound
yesodos of the entire *Yom Tov*.

In *cheilek gimmel* of his *teshuvos*, the Ridvaz grapples with a question that anyone who thinks seriously about *halacha* must eventually ask. Why is *chometz* so different from every other *issur* in the Torah? Treife meat, *cheilev*, and *yayin nesech* are all subject to *bittul*. A drop of milk that falls into a pot of meat can be *batul b'shishim*. Sometimes you need a hundred times. But there is *bittul*. The *halacha* has mechanisms for dealing with small amounts of *issur*. That is how it works.

Except with *chometz*. *Chometz* on *Pesach* is never *batul*. Not one part in sixty, not one part in a million.

The Ridvaz considered the conventional answers, *dovor sheyesh lo matirin*, and the like. But he is not satisfied. He takes another route, and here the Chida explains that “the *remez* is the *pshat*.”

The answer, says the Ridvaz, is rooted in what Chazal tell us in *Maseches Brachos*. The Gemara describes the *yeitzer hara* as *se'or shebe'isa*, the ferment in the dough. In the new sourdough culture, we all appreciate what that means. That starter—that tiny drop of culture—causes the entire dough to rise. It's the starter, as they call it. It causes the dough to rise. *Chometz* is not merely a beautiful *remez* for the *Shabbos Hagadol drosha*. It is the *yeitzer hara*. And there is no room for even a drop of him.

Just as a single drop of sourdough culture introduced into fresh dough does not stay a drop—it spreads, it permeates, it transforms the entire mass—so too the *yeitzer hara*. Given any foothold at all, even the tiniest one, it works its way through everything. Chazal say, “*Leitzanus achas docheh me'ah tochachos*”—one cynical remark pushes away a hundred rebukes. It's not *batul* one in a hundred. It's not a *drush*. It's a Gemara. This is the actual reason *chometz* cannot be *batul*, because you cannot be *mevatel* a *yeitzer hara*. You cannot say about your inner ferment, “It's less than a *kezayis*. It doesn't count.” It always counts.

I began to understand why there are massive *asifos* on issues for which many would think a simple letter and *shmuess* would suffice. The battle against what many perceive as a tiny drop of *se'or*, a small problem, an insignificant crack, is not merely that. Did physics care that the Space Shuttle Challenger had a hairline fracture in an O-ring seal? A fissure thinner than a sheet of paper caused an explosion that shook the world. The engineers who dismissed it, who essentially said, “It's *batul*. The system is too large for something so small to matter,” were tragically, fatally wrong.

The *yeitzer hara* is the master of appearing small. And then...

We need *biur chometz*. And we need *bedikas chometz*. Active, deliberate, candle-in-hand investigation of every corner, every crevice, every place you'd rather not look. The most dangerous piece is not the loaf sitting on the counter. It's the piece tucked away in a recess. The piece you forgot about, sitting quietly in the dark. You must shine a light on it. Shine before the rise. And if you don't go looking, with the willingness to move heavy furniture, it will find you.

The response must be dramatic. *Bittul* alone is not enough, which is why we both say *bittul* and do *biur*. Because even after you have legally nullified it in your mind, the Torah says: Go find it anyway and burn it. The goal is not just *halachic* compliance. The goal is genuine inner freedom. *Chag Hacheirus* cannot coexist with a *yeitzer hara* that has been granted squatter's rights in a quiet corner of the soul.

We all have our small *chometz*. The little grievance we've been carrying since *Sukkos* that we haven't quite let go of. The habit we know is corrosive, but is, after all, so small. The pride that flares up occasionally, not often, just now and then, nothing serious. The cynicism about *lomdei Torah*, about the *tzibbur*, about our *rov*, or even *gedolei Yisroel*, that we've allowed to settle somewhere in the back of our minds like a crumb behind the stove. We don't think about it much. It's *pachos m'kezayis*. We think it's *batul*.

But *se'or shebe'isa* doesn't need much to work with. It needs one drop, left unaddressed, given a little warmth and a little time. And before long, the dough has risen, and you don't quite recognize yourself anymore.

The *bedikah* is about looking honestly at what has been fermenting. What small resentment has been quietly rising? What minor compromise has been slowly expanding? What bit of *gaavah* has been working its way through the

dough of the personality? The candle of *bedikas chometz*, say the Chassidische seforim, is the *neshamah*—*ner Hashem nishmas adam*. Hashem gave us an inner light specifically so we could search the dark corners. So yes, clean the kitchen. Check the pockets. Move the refrigerator if you must. The *Ribbono Shel Olam* loves a Yid who takes even the smallest crumb seriously.

But while you have that candle lit, point it inward, too. The most dangerous *chometz* is the kind that has been sitting so quietly for so long that you've stopped noticing it's there. Get rid of it. Even the slightest morsel. Just saying.