



A Bisl Torah

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Our Place in פסח

Ozzie Vidan, Grade 11

When entering a יום טוב, it is critical to figure out where we stand with regard to the approaching holiday. It is necessary to determine how this point in time for the Jews, and עם ישראל's place in society, are relevant to the upcoming חג in order to broaden our understanding and communal connection with the holiday. To discover this, the essence of פסח must first be established.

In הגדת חזון לימים, Rabbi Yonason Sacks brings down a fascinating Abarbanel, which expands on the rather simplistic view of פסח. On סדר night, the emphasis seems to be placed on the freedom of the Jewish people from מצרים as we are now "בני חורין." In fact, in the famous four questions, the distinction between פסח and all other nights becomes abundantly clear: Through all the unique factors of the סדר, the Jewish nation's very being is presented as that of royalty and supremacy. For example, tonight is the night where we dip twice like kings at their feasts, when normally there is no חיוב to even dip once; and tonight is the night where we display our freedom with the obligation to lean in comfort and luxury while eating.

However, claims אברבנל, the remaining two questions, regarding מצה and מרור, do not symbolize our liberty. The תורה describes מצה in an almost pessimistic manner as it is explained to be "לחם

עוני," literally meaning a poor man's bread. On פסח, unlike other days, we are commanded by the תורה to eat bread meant for the poor, clearly indicating our inferiority and servitude. Additionally, מרור is another indicator of our lowliness, as its bitterness represents the harsh slavery our ancestors endured.

Therefore אברבנל writes that פסח has two contradictory sides: One portrays עם ישראל's characteristics of עבדות and שפלות, whereas the other depicts us as בני מלכים, the children of the king. This highlights the true עיקר of the יום טוב פסח. Although we were miraculously saved from the hands of the evil Egyptians by Hashem, we were freed for a purpose. As the פסוק states, "וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא" "לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים" "and you shall explain to your child on this day saying, 'it is because of this Hashem did for me when I went free from Egypt'" (שמות י"ג:ח). This is perhaps one of the most critical yet ambiguous פסוקים in the חומש: The מצוה to explain to the children that because of "this," Hashem did "it" for us.

The אבן עזרא suggests that the meaning of the פסוק is that Hashem performed all the wonders and miracles in Egypt in order for us to serve Him in the future, to repay our ever-growing debt to הקדוש ברוך הוא for the abundant protection, kindness, and benevolence constantly

shown to us. We were not freed from the chains of פרעה to continue idly with our lives. Rather, Hashem gave us a fulfilling purpose: Serving and completing His מצוות with love and reverence.

פסח serves to publicize the fact that only through 'תורת ה' truly set free. The תורה and its מצוות not only guide us to live a meaningful and just life, but also shield us from harm, make us better people, and infuse our very lives with the utmost joy and pride. Even though we are no longer slaves, we nonetheless humble and lower ourselves before the masterful Creator, presenting ourselves as mere faithful servants to the living G-d. Nevertheless, as the chosen nation, the Jewish people remain elevated and exalted above others and continue to act as an אור לגויים — a role model unto the nations (ישעיהו מ"ט:ו).

This combination of exaltation and degradation is also reflected in a מדרש on בית הלוי by the מדרש in שמות רבה (כ"ג:ג'). There, the מדרש recounts משה's strange repentance before Hashem. משה says, "אז"—when I blamed You for the affliction dealt upon the Jews (שמות ה':כ"ג), so now I will praise You with the word אז. Unsurprisingly, the תשובה בית הלוי questions this form of repentance; just because משה reused the same word, once in a bad context and another in a good, does not mean he has repented. A single, seemingly irrelevant word should not be sufficient to rectify משה's misdeeds.

The בית הלוי then offers a beautiful explanation that touches upon the deeper meaning of the story. There are two very distinct forms of praise given to Hashem following a great pain or loss, רחמנא ליצלן. Normally, a person thanks Hashem exclusively for rescuing him from his problematic predicament. If he experiences שמחה and gratitude at this level, meaning his joy and appreciation for Hashem only stem from the fact that he has now recovered, it will never surpass his previous level of appreciation of Him.

However, a more dignified level of gratitude is not solely brought forth from the mere recuperation but also from the fact that, through this loss, the רבונו's power has been publicized. Thanking Hashem for being His tool in an act of קידוש ה', and for acting as the object through which Hashem's great name was exalted, is the greatest honor and accolade, and one's שמחה and feeling of indebtedness towards Hashem mainly arise from this factor.

Therefore, the בית הלוי asserts that אז falls under the second category of שמחה. בני ישראל and משה were praising Hashem not only for the גאולה but also for the preceding slavery. Their extreme happiness and joy were because they were זוכה to be the people chosen to sanctify His name through the giving of the מכות and other miraculous wonders performed in מצרים. They embodied the חייב אדם לברך על הרעה: "ברכות in משנה —one is obligated לשם שמברך על הטובה

to bless Hashem for the bad just as he does for the good.

However, בני ישראל went beyond this and not only blessed Him for the slavery but also were genuinely joyous that it occurred in the first place. That, he claims, was the תשובה משה רבנו aimed for: "או ישיר"—then he sang; משה was praising Hashem for what happened then, namely, the slavery. Now realizing that the enslavement to מצרים was in fact a great זכות משה recognizes that the opportunity to assist Hashem in glorifying and promoting His name is the highest merit and reward any Jew could ask for.

Similarly, the גמרא in מנחות relates a captivating story, retelling what happened one time when משה went to speak with Hashem. The גמרא tells us that משה found Him “sitting and tying crowns upon the letters of the תורה.” After seeing this fascinating spectacle, משה rightfully asks Hashem about the purpose of the crowns. משה asks Him what the point is of placing them on the letters if the words will remain the same.

In response, Hashem gives a surprising answer: In the future, a man named עקי (רבי עקיבא) בא בן יוסף will expound on כל קוץ וקוץ—each and every protrusion [of the crowns]—mounds upon mounds of הלכות. Rav Soloveitchik ז”ל questions the strange language of כל קוץ וקוץ (literally “every thorn”) and learns an inspiring idea from it. רבי עקי unfortunately lived a very difficult

life. However, through challenge after challenge, setback after setback, he never swayed and never backed down. In fact, he did the exact opposite; he turned all of his difficulties into opportunities to learn and grow. He changed the thorns in his life into flourishing flowers of beautiful חידושי תורה and intellectual insights.

When people come up against rough patches in life, the result depends on what they make of it. רבי עקיבא made his hard times into “mounds upon mounds of הלכות,” which continue to influence all of the coming generations; so too, it is incumbent upon us to act the same. We must not deteriorate when faced with challenges; we are required to hold onto our values of תורה and מצוות, trying our best to glorify and sanctify G-d’s holy reputation.

Likewise, Rav Nota Greenblatt ז”ל, a main student of Rav Moshe Feinstein ז”ל, recounts that when the horrific tragedies of the Holocaust were revealed to the Jews of America, Rav Moshe, amid his tears and deep sorrow, did not lessen his learning for even a second. He knew that the biggest merit for עם ישראל was the תורה, סגולה of תורה, and he was motivated to continue learning, תפילה, and performing מצוות to support and save עם ישראל.

This פסח marks the year-and-a-half point since the war in Israel began. The Jewish people have undergone much loss and pain, facing many challenges. Nevertheless, כלל ישראל is not easily discouraged and never has been. Since

the beginning of our history, we have been sought and singled out, with nation after nation seeking our destruction. However, those evil regimes no longer exist. Their plans to annihilate us have always failed, backfiring on them, with us prevailing.

As learned from the הלוי, the perspective needed when reflecting on past tragedies and considering future hardships (חס ושלום) is ultimately one of optimism and growth. Indeed grief is required when approaching these difficult times, but we must also view them as an opportunity to build ourselves up and to stay true to our morals and תורה values,

even when the other side acts brutally. פסח, a holiday that combines both עם ישראל's suffering and its prosperity, encourages us to keep our heads held high and continue to act as the children of Hashem. עם ישראל is the nation of G-d; we are the tools in the upcoming inevitable salvation, and will be exalted above all nations in the times of משיח.

ברוך הוא אלקינו שבראנו לכבודו, blessed is our G-d who created us for His honor; we have merited to be the generation of redemption, and the difficulties we face are only a step forward towards our ultimate place in the world and our ultimate destiny.

The Names of פסח

By Deena Levin, Grade 12

Although best known as פסח, Passover has several names that relate to the specifics of יציאת מצרים. One of those names is זמן חרותנו, the time of our freedom. While the name פסח commemorates the specific miracle of the Jews being passed over during מכת בכורות, זמן חרותנו commemorates the miracle of the Jews being brought from עבדות to חרות, from slavery to freedom.

Another name is חג האביב, which seemingly does not commemorate a specific miracle. Instead, it relates to the time when פסח falls during each year: During the springtime. Fittingly, the first day of פסח is often seen as the first day of spring in the Jewish calendar.

Initially, these two names can seem rather disconnected from one another, with one referring to a life-saving miracle performed by Hashem and the other referring to the changing weather that happens every year. Living in New England, however, has given us the privilege to understand the concept of חג האביב in a slightly different, and deeper, way.

Every year, just around פסח time, the weather changes and begins to get warmer after nearly five freezing-cold months. The winter months can often leave us feeling pent up, as it is hard to socialize, go outside, or get out of the house because of the weather

outdoors. In fact, according to the American Psychiatric Association, nearly forty percent of Americans experience a notable drop in their mood during the winter. It is reflected in the earth, too; many plants die, and the skies get particularly grey. Yet when the spring comes and you look outside, you notice people smiling, running around, and playing catch while also catching up with one another. The mood is overall much happier. As we do our spring cleaning, emptying our houses of not only חמץ but also the buildup of dust and clutter from the colder months, we experience our own miniature version of freedom.

This understanding of the spring as not only a beautiful time of year, but also a miracle, helps us realize why it is so important to recognize that פסח was in the spring. Every year we are meant to feel as though we ourselves left מצרים, and often this can be incredibly challenging. Thank G-d, we have not experienced slavery as the Jews in Egypt did. Noting the seemingly small things, however, like the winter that ה' has brought us out of every year without fail, can help us to appreciate that ה' still takes care of us, even 3,000 years later. While it can be easier to remember the bigger things that we have been saved from, the name יצור האביב prompts us to find gratitude for what often gets passed by as ordinary.

The Purpose of חמץ

By Theo Fraenkel, Grade 9

The תורה tells us many times that over פסח we should eat מצה but that we shouldn't own or eat any חמץ. The reason for the מצה is, "תאכל-עליו מצות לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִי," בחפזון יצאת מארץ מצרים למען תזכר את-יום ב"ך" "you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live" (ויקרא ט"ז:ג). According to this פסוק, מצה is a rushed bread that you have when you don't have time to let it rise. Through eating מצה we eat the same rushed bread as our ancestors ate when leaving מצרים, and we use it as a vessel to remember the

experience. But why do we need to eat only מצה throughout פסח? What's wrong with חמץ that we have to avoid eating it?

One explanation for the problem with חמץ can be taken from the גמרא in ברכות (יז). It records that רבי אלכסנדר would say a bracha after davening that called the "שאוור שבעיסה" "the yeast in the dough" the reason for mankind not doing the will of Hashem. According to רבי אלכסנדר, חמץ represents the יצר הרע. A leavening agent has the ability to inflate flour and water into a dough; in the same way our יצר הרע inflates our desires into a much bigger essence that reigns over our will to do the will of Hashem.

The חמץ connects to idol worship. The זוהר notices that a פסוק forbidding idol worship (שמות (ל"ד:י"ז) comes before a פסוק forbidding חמץ (ibid. (י"ח). The זוהר says that the reason for this is that someone who eats חמץ is like an idolater. Rav Menachem Kasher in הגדה שלמה also noticed these parallels with a list of things in common between the two איסורים: the prohibition of seeing it, the need to burn and get rid of it, the prohibition of deriving benefit from it, and the prohibition of even a small amount of it. This connection between חמץ and עבודה זרה may be because חמץ grows our self perception or bad מידות to a degree where Hashem is shut out of our life just like an idolater denies Hashem's role in the world in favor of פריצות.

חמץ as the symbol of human means and ingenuity. The שמות י"ג:ג' on העמק דבר זכור את־היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים כי בחזק יד הוציא ה' אתכם מזה ולא יאכל חמץ "Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how Hashem freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten" juxtaposes Hashem providing for us and forbidding חמץ. חמץ is something that raises dough

beyond just flour and water. חמץ is something that nature works to create, as opposed to what Hashem does for us.

These interpretations show that there is something about חמץ that symbolizes pushing away Hashem. With חמץ there isn't enough room for Hashem as we inflate our egos and desires. Instead on פסח we refrain from eating חמץ in favor of unleavened bread. We deflate our egos and desires and welcome Hashem back into the picture. We back down from the idea that mankind is fully self-sufficient and doesn't need G-d and instead rely on Hashem to provide for us. In this way the סוכות are intertwined. On סוכות we sit in temporary, insecure booths to show our reliance on Hashem to protect us from the outside world. On פסח we reject חמץ and eat מצה in order to show how the workings of Hashem triumph over the workings of man, and therefore we must rely on Hashem. On שבועות after purging ourselves from חמץ we build ourselves back up during the עומר in order to be able to receive the תורה.

We should all be זוכה to be able to cleanse ourselves from 'חמץ' and actualize our דבקות in Hashem.

Why Should I Eat מרור?

By Daniel Grossman, Grade 9

Why do we eat מרור on פסח? This is a commonly-asked question, along with many others, about the things we eat (or don't eat!) on פסח. During a joyful holiday, when we are off from school and work, why would we bother eating such bitter-tasting food, right? Well, that's when you have to remember that פסח, although viewed as a vacation and holiday, should also be viewed as a great time of remembrance. During פסח we have things like a סדר where we drink wine to symbolize freedom from slavery, and we eat מצה which represents the haste with which the Jews had to leave Egypt, as their dough didn't have enough

time to rise, creating מצה. However, the way we truly remember the complete story of leaving Egypt isn't always with joy, which is why we have מרור. מרור is a very bitter herb, which represents and reminds of the bitterness of the slavery us Jews were in so many years ago. Eating מרור also passes the story of יציאת מצרים down by having us experience the bitterness of our slavery and therefore allows us to feel more connected to it as Jewish people. Although it may be tough, it is ultimately vital that we do have מרור and all the other food and drinks mentioned on פסח, as it helps us fulfill פסח on מצוות and תורה commandments.

Why חרוסת?

By Dina Wagner, Grade 11

The חרוסת food is unique for many reasons. It symbolizes our experiences in Egypt and reflects the diversity of our culture. It is typically made with apples, nuts, wine, and sometimes spices, but has other variations. חרוסת is an essential part of our סדר, but what exactly is it, and why do we include it?

The traditional explanation is that חרר represents the mortar we used when we were enslaved in Egypt. It serves as a poignant reminder of the struggles we faced before our liberation.

Different communities have their own way of preparing חרוסת, which leads to the taste and looks varying across various communities. For example, אשכנזי charoset, popular among Jews of Eastern European descent, is usually made with ingredients like apples, walnuts, cinnamon, and red wine. Sometimes honey or sugar is added to enhance the sweetness. This version of חרוסת is meant to physically represent the mortar used in Egypt. The apple symbolizes the sweetness of redemption, while the nuts represent the harshness of the labor

we were forced to do. The red wine or grape juice in the חרוסת can symbolize two things: the blood we shed as slaves or the blood of the פסח offering, further emphasizing the struggle we faced. Ashkenazi Jews often serve their חרוסת in a chunky consistency, to visually mimic the mortar that was used.

Conversely, the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Jews (ספרדים and Egyptians) prepare חרוסת with a more diverse blend of ingredients than Ashkenazi Jews. They include fruits like figs and dates, which thrived in warmer climates, almonds, pomegranates, and various spices like cinnamon and ginger. In some regions, orange juice, lemon juice, or even olive oil might be used instead of wine. ספרדי charoset is often smoother and more paste-like than its Ashkenazi counterpart. The use of dates and figs is symbolic, as they represent the sweetness and abundance that is in the land of Israel. In some versions, the inclusion of pomegranates is made to symbolize the 613 mitzvot, each seed representing a מצוה. The flavors and ingredients in ספרדי charoset reflect the agricultural products available in the Mediterranean and North African regions, highlighting the connection between Jewish culture and the many lands in which these communities have lived.

Persian חרוסת, usually made by Jews from Iran, is similar to ספרדי charoset but often includes unique ingredients like rosewater, cinnamon, and orange zest. Persian חרוסת's use of fruits and nuts is

meant to reflect the richness of the land of Israel. Additionally, the inclusion of rosewater adds a fragrant element that is often associated with Persian culinary traditions. Persian חרוסת emphasizes the importance of celebrating both the sweetness of redemption and the sensory pleasures of life, highlighting the community's rich history and cultural contributions.

These variations reflect the cultural influences, agricultural products, and traditions of the diverse communities in which Jews have lived throughout history. Each regional variation not only brings a unique twist to the dish but also carries its own cultural significance, enriching the Jewish tradition. While the difference in the way חרוסת is prepared may seem insignificant, it is very important, as it highlights the beauty of cultural variation and diversity. Each ingredient contributes to the חרוסת's unique flavor, just like each Jew, with their experiences and culture, contributes to, and enriches, the overall Jewish experience. In this sense, חרר סת symbolizes the importance of unity, mutual support, and the strength found in coming together as a community. The variety of ingredients in חרוסת illustrates that, while our experiences and backgrounds may differ, we all play a vital role in contributing to the collective good. It teaches us to appreciate the unique contributions of others and to embrace our differences in the pursuit of a brighter, more unified future.

חרוסת has evolved into a dish that reflects the unique histories, cultures,

and agricultural traditions of Jewish communities worldwide. From the chunky, nut-based **אשכנזי** version to the smooth, fruity **ספרדי** variety, it symbolizes both the hardship of slavery and the sweetness of freedom. It also serves as a reminder of the unity within the Jewish people, as they embrace the richness of their diversity while holding onto shared traditions and values.

Beyond its traditional role in the **סדר**, **חרוסת** is a reminder of resilience, unity, and empathy—qualities essential for

overcoming the challenges we face today. It reminds us that, like our ancestors who persevered through adversity, we should reflect on our struggles and embrace the strength to face life's obstacles.

חרוסת teaches us that hope for redemption and growth exists even in difficult times. As we consider its significance, we are encouraged to appreciate life's blessings and work together toward a world of peace and understanding. It inspires us to maintain faith and hope, even in adversity.

Four Cups, Four Explanations

By Anna Szalat, Grade 9

The number four is a recurring theme during the **סדר**—the four questions during **מה נשתנה**, the four sons asking questions, and the four cups of wine, which each have several explanations about their significance. **רש"י** says that these four cups represent the four expressions used to describe **בני ישראל's** redemption from Egypt as mentioned in the **פסוק** (**שמות ו':ו'-ז'**): "**והוצאתי, חז"ל**." **והצלת, וגאלתי, ולקחתי** say that these four cups refer to the four exiles **בני ישראל** suffered: from **מצרים**, **בבל**, the **Greeks**, and **אדום**. Another explanation is that the four cups of wine are also a symbol of the four situations in which someone needs to say **ברכת הגומל**. The sign to remember these four situations is "**חיים**":

ח = **חולה שנתרפא**, a sick person who was healed

י = **יורים ים**, one who crosses the ocean

י = **יוצא מבית האסורים**, being freed from captivity

ם = **מדברות**, and crossing a desert

When **בני ישראל** left Egypt, they experienced these four situations, which obligates them to say **ברכת הגומל** four times, so we drink four cups of wine on the night of the **סדר** to fulfill this obligation. However another question comes to mind: Why do we have to use wine? Why can we not remember these things with another type of food or plant or object like the **ארבע מינים** during **סוכות**?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains that the four verbs describing the redemption from Egypt are not just descriptions but also represent different levels of liberation. Each one is greater than the previous and provides an additional level of freedom. Similarly each cup of wine that we drink provides a greater feeling of happiness and joy in addition to the previous one. Another type of food would not have the same impact (imagine eating four potatoes!). Furthermore the preparation of wine from grapes requires a very specific process. At the stage of grapes we say the regular ברכה on grapes as other fruit trees. After the grapes are squeezed and processed in the right way the ברכה changes to a special ברכה just for wine. If this juice is left out to ferment it can become wine or vinegar. This whole process can be seen as a metaphor of בני ישראל suffering in Egypt. The Egyptians oppressed the Jews and continually pressured them, but this was the plan of Hashem to make בני ישראל submit to a כור הברזל, an iron furnace, in order to purify them and to make them stronger than ever before they go through various additional steps and finally receive the תורה. This is just like the grapes that were squished and pressed together and then turned into really good wine.

But are we really supposed to drink four cups? Or should we drink five cups? Indeed, after the four expressions of deliverance, there is a fifth one of וְהִבֵּאתִי “and I brought you out to the land” (שמות ו'ח'). Furthermore, in מסכת פסחים קיח עמוד א there is an

interesting phrase: רבי טרפון says over the fifth cup we recite the הלל. This seems strange, since all the other Rabbis talk about four cups, yet it seems that according to Rabbi Tarfon, one does not drink four but five cups! The last cup is associated with the recitation of the הלל at the end of the סדר. David Henshke, a professor at Bar Ilan university, in his book “מה נשתנה” suggests that רבי טרפון’s opinion echoes his view (משנה) regarding the final blessing of מגיד (ברכת הגאולה), which he says should not end with a blessing. Both of רבי טרפון’s opinions are linked to the destruction of the בית המקדש and to the challenges of celebrating the deliverance from Egypt while living in a tragic present marked by the loss of the ברכת הגאולה. Therefore, if the בית המקדש cannot be complete in the absence of the בית המקדש, we must still anchor the notion of deliverance in our present. This explains the reference to a phrase in the הלל, which, in its final verses, connects the miracle of past deliverance from our enemies “וַיִּפְּרֹקֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ” “and rescued us from our enemies” (תהלים קל"ו:ד), to the miracle of our daily sustenance “נִתֵּן לָנוּ” “who gives food to all flesh” (תהלים קל"ו:ה). This association can allow us (בראשית רבה כ"ט) to base our hope for future redemption on the miracle of our daily lives.

This teaching, which was taught in one of the most difficult moments in Jewish history, seems to be of great relevance today, and it helps us better understand the rule that every person, in every generation, should see themselves as if

they personally left Egypt. This פסח it might be a little difficult to feel as joyful about telling the story of our deliverance

while our brothers and sisters are still being held hostage. Even so we must be like רבי טרפון and drink the fifth cup.

Insights into the Different Aspects of מגיד and its Order

By Ariel Jeselsohn, Grade 11

The משנה in פסחים י"ד states that when you pour the wine for the second cup, the son asks the father the questions of מה נשתנה. Then the father answers the son by telling the story of יציאת מצרים through being "מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח," starting with the bad things that the Jewish people faced and ending with the good that happened to us at the end. The מהר"ל explains that the reason for starting with the bad is because one only comes to fully appreciate and recognize the good when they remember the difficulties of their past. Now, knowing that you must begin the story of יציאת מצרים with the negative, what exactly is it that you must begin with? The פסחים קטז. in גמרא brings a debate between רב, who holds that the bad is when our forefather used to worship idols, and שמואל, who holds that it is when we became slaves. רבינו חננאל says that nowadays we hold like both opinions, and indeed in our הגדות we first say that we were slaves and then we say our forefathers used to worship idols.

As we learned, the פסחים in משנה states that we begin מגיד with the son asking his father questions. It seems, at first

glance, that the son asks questions which are related to יציאת מצרים, and through that the father will answer and tell the story of יציאת מצרים. However, the גמרא in פסחים קטז. tells a story which raises a question on this. The גמרא tells a story of a young אב"י who was sitting with his uncle רבה at the סדר. When אב"י saw that they were removing the table, he asked why they were removing the table if they did not eat yet. רבה responded to אב"י that he just exempted them from מה נשתנה with that question. If the purpose of מה נשתנה is to begin the telling of the story of יציאת מצרים, how did אב"י's question exempt them from מה נשתנה? How is the removing of the table at all related to יציאת מצרים? Therefore, it must be that there is importance in the act of asking questions during the סדר, even if they are not connected to יציאת מצרים. תוספות there explains that irrelevant questions are indeed not good enough, but if the son asks non-related questions it will eventually lead him to ask questions related to יציאת מצרים. Furthermore when we allow the children to ask as many questions as they want, they start to feel like they are a part of the סדר and that they have an important

role; through this we hope that they will ask relevant questions, which will set the starting point of the telling of the story of יציאת מצרים.

So, we saw that רב and שמואל have different versions of מגיד when it comes to where we start the story. According to שמואל, the questions are מה נשתנה, which comes right before עבדים היינו. However, רב also holds that מגיד begins with questions, and if so what are those questions? If you look in the הגדה, you can see that a little before the passage of "beginning as idol worshippers," we read the questions of the four sons. Therefore it seems that even according to רב, questions proceed the story aspect of מגיד, with those questions being the ones asked by the four sons.

Until now we saw that there are two aspects of מגיד: questions and then story telling, but what exactly is the purpose of telling the story of יציאת מצרים? Rabbi Soloveitchik ז"ל answers this question by explaining the difference between the זכירת יציאת מצרים of מצוה, which we are required to do every day, and סיפור יציאת מצרים, which we are only commanded to do during the סדר. The Rav explains as follows: the זכירה of מצוה is only to remember the great things Hashem did for us to get us out of Egypt, whereas סיפור requires us to thank and praise Hashem for what He did for us back in Egypt. Therefore, the purpose of סיפור יציאת מצרים is to recall all of the great miracles that Hashem performed for us in Egypt with the hope that it will lead us to

praise Hashem and thank Him. With this knowledge, where do we praise Hashem in both שמואל and רב's version of מגיד? According to שמואל, the praise is that which we say right before the question of the four sons: "ברוך המקום, ברוך הוא, ברוך" "Blessed is the Place, blessed is Him, Blessed is He Who gave the תורה to His nation ישראל, Blessed is He," and according to רב the praise is that which we say right after the paragraph about our forefathers being idolaters: "ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל, ברוך" "Blessed is the One who keeps His promises to ישראל, Blessed is He."

So we now know that the style of סיפור יציאת מצרים is story then praise. And we know that up until now מגיד is built from two different mini הגדות: רב and שמואל's. Interestingly enough, if you look later on in מגיד, you can see that there is a third and fourth part which fit the same style of story then praise. The third part starts with יעקב mistreating לבן and ends with the praise of how great Hashem is. The fourth part starts with רבן גמליאל saying that there are three things one has to say during the סדר, that being מצה, פסח, and מרור. It ultimately ends with us saying הלל, the ultimate praise; therefore, מגיד is built up of four different הגדות.

But what is the reason for four different הגדות? Why do we need to tell the story of יציאת מצרים four times? First let us delve into the first two הגדות. We learned that the first two הגדות incorporate both רב and שמואל's opinion. A question that must be asked regarding this is how are we able to follow both opinions? רב יוסף

צבי רימון, a Rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion, points out that שמואל's version of the הגדה focuses on the physical redemption from slavery, whereas רב's version focuses on the spiritual redemption from idolatry to serving Hashem. Both of these aspects of redemption are equally important. Not only that but physical redemption is a prerequisite for spiritual redemption. The biggest example of spiritual elevation the Jews in the desert experienced was the receiving of the תורה. Had Hashem not saved us from Egypt we would not have been able to receive the תורה. Therefore before we talk about our spiritual redemption we must first mention the physical exodus from Egypt, and that is why we follow both רב and שמואל's version of the הגדה. Interestingly enough, מה נשתנה, which is שמואל's version of the question, deals with food and leaning, which are physical things; while on the other hand, רב's version: the questions of the four sons, are more spiritual questions. This idea, which has been laid out, also serves as an important lesson in our lives. Whenever we experience a moment of success or redemption, we must elevate the experience and sanctify it.

In the third מגיד of the הגדה, the story of יציאת מצרים is told through the expounding of the verses by the מקרא ביכורים, the passage that one who brings the first fruit to the בית המקדש must recite—as the משנה in פסחים י"ד' says: one expounds ארמי אובד אבי' until you finish the entire passage. In this third הגדה there appears a lot of teachings from the Rabbis, at the time of the משנה,

and at the end we praise Hashem. In the fourth mini הגדה, we describe the story of יציאת מצרים through the מצה and the items that are placed on the סדר plate, and finally end מגיד with הלל.

While this is all very nice, why must מגיד be so complex and contain so many different parts and components? The answer to this question lies in the words of the פסחים י"ד' in משנה רמב"ם. The רמב"ם says that the father should teach his son the story of יציאת מצרים according to the knowledge of his son. The רמב"ם in his הלכות חמץ ומצה ז'ב' further explains this idea and writes that if the son does not know so much, then father should teach him that we were slaves in Egypt just like this slave and this maidservant and Hashem saved us. If the son is smarter then the father should teach him exactly what happened to us in Egypt and the miracles that were performed on our behalf. The רמב"ם is teaching us that the way we tell the story of יציאת מצרים and deliver its message is significant, and there is not one way to achieve this. When a teacher wants to teach to their students, they first have to take into account the best way to teach each student so that each one will absorb the information to its fullest. If the teacher teaches in the exact same style to every student, it may work for some students but not all. The writer of מגיד knew this and therefore took into account the different ways to deliver the message of יציאת מצרים, corresponding to the three different types of people. There are people who enjoy stories; when they hear a story they become very engaged and are

able to understand the deeper meaning. For this person we have the first two הגדות of מגיד which tell the story of our forefathers. There are also people who are very sharp and serious learners, and they enjoy hearing interesting דרשות. For this person, we have the third הגדה, which is full of creative teachings. However, there is not enough time in one night to expound all the פסוקים of יציאת מצרים, but we still want to learn an entire unit of פסוקים which are related to it, so instead we learn the פסוקים of the מקרא ביכורים. Finally, there are people who do not enjoy stories or interesting דרשות. Instead they enjoy shows and like to have physical signs in front of them which symbolize important ideas. Only through this do they internalize the important messages in the information they learn. The fourth, and final, הגדה is dedicated to this type

of person. In this הגדה we use foods such as מצה and מרור and other physical objects to almost relive the experience of the Jews in Egypt. This is what the רמב"ם was referring to when he wrote "like this slave or this maidservant." Then, finally, once everyone has internalized the story of יציאת מצרים to its fullest and realized Hashem's greatness, we praise Him together in unison.

It is important to realize that the סדר is not just us telling a story of our forefathers in Egypt. It is our attempt to get everyone to realize the greatness and kindness of Hashem. He saved us from Egypt so many years ago, and with the realization of His power, we yearn for the day that He will save us again.

This is the Bread of Oppression

By Becca Gold, Grade 11

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא
דמצרים.
כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח.
השתא הכא, לשנה הבאה בארעא דישׂראל.
השתא עבדי, לשנה הבאה בני חורין.

This is the bread of oppression our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.

Let all who are hungry come in and eat;
let all who are in need come and join us
for פסח.

Now we are here; next year in the land
of Israel.

Now – slaves; next year we shall be free.

הא לחמא עניא begins by reciting מצה while holding up the מצה. This is a very visual and startling way to start the section of the הגדה that tells the story of פסח. We announce the oppression through food (because we're Jews), invite those in need to our סדר, and then declare that our conditions now are not optimal, but hopefully next year will be better. The message is all over the place. So why do we start this way? In order to more clearly understand what is happening, this needs to be broken into pieces.

The first line makes sense. We hold up the מצה and address why we have this as an introduction to סיפור יציאת מצרים. This allows the children to ask questions.

The next three lines are more puzzling. Why are we inviting people to come join our סדר once it has already begun, when the only people who can hear us are the people at our table? Rav Soloveitchik zt"l says that this is a declaration of freedom, and we are showing ourselves and our guests that not only are we not slaves now, but we have enough that we can host meals for others. Someone who is scared they may not make it to the next day, and scared they may not have food for themselves, would not offer their small portion to others. Having had that experience, we know how horrible it is and that we need to offer our help to others. We are no longer the hungry ones; we can now be the ones to provide. By this logic it would seem that we should invite people in need to join us for the סדר days beforehand. Otherwise, this just shows that we have the means to host others, rather than actually hosting.

The following line seems to make sense at first. However, we normally mention that we want to be in Israel during benching, and now it is thrown in here long before the meal. There are two explanations for this. The first is that this is simply another thing that is different, to get children to ask questions and to again tell the story of פסח. Another explanation is that this is leading into the next line, about how we wish we could be in Israel right now. But as amazing as it is

that we are freed from being slaves, now it feels that we are trapped in a different way. We are all in exile; we are not yet truly free or home. This late invitation to others reminds us that the only reason we can invite others is because we are unfortunately having a סדר in exile instead of the קרבן פסח in Israel, where everyone has their own meal.

This last line seems strange since we just had a paragraph announcing how we are no longer slaves—we are free now! So why do we say that we are slaves again? This connects to the idea of גאולה, and poverty is connected to redemption. Only someone who has nothing can truly obtain redemption, which is why, while celebrating and thanking Hashem for taking us out of מצרים and freeing us from slavery, we must again remember that we truly have nothing without Hashem. We must detach ourselves from unnecessary things. מצה itself has barely any ingredients in it. Only then can משיח come.

הא לחמא עניא reminds us of many things in this short but complex paragraph that begins מגיד. We prompt questions, introduce the story, invite people in, demonstrate our current freedom in contrast with our previous slavery, and finally mention the different slavery we have now.

Today we are all slaves to something in modern society. It may be different for everyone, but most of us are so caught up in our everyday lives that we forget some really important things. הא לחמא

עניא reminds us that Hashem took us out of slavery before, so if we make an effort at bettering ourselves, Hashem can help us now as well. Going into מגיד, we should carry all of these thoughts with us and try

to improve and be more aware, freeing ourselves from our modern slaveries in order to be able to achieve a new level of freedom, with Hashem's help, just like the freedom achieved in the story of פסח.

This is the Bread of Affliction

By Hayim Sims, Grade 12

Why מצה!? For all that we look towards the סדר with glee, the time to recreate the experience of the Exodus from Egypt and celebrate with family, one factor gives this setting a particularly unpleasant aftertaste, accompanied by an equally displeasing crunch. For the rare individual who actually enjoys the taste of מצה, פסח is wonderful; for the vast majority of sane Jews in the remainder of the equation, it is a time to endure. (Particularly given the requisite amount of מצה one must consume during the פסח festivities, and according to the Vilna Gaon, even during the rest of the week... but I digress; perhaps that will be a topic for next year.) Not only do individuals have to endure the brunt of eating the non-bread mixture, we must sing about it as well. Yet, what are we singing? Is it really about מצה at all?

הא לחמא עניא, found in the beginning of the הגדה section of the מגיד, initially seems like an ode to מצה and the aspects of endurance: "הא לחמא עניא די אכלו," "This is a poor man's bread, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt." The first sentence of

the song encapsulates the origin of the substance, and ties it irrevocably to the remembrance of our slavery so present in the סדר. We are eating מצה, says this verse, because our ancestors were forced to consume it in their poverty; so too, we eat it as a means to remember their actions and the tortures we are forced to revisit. This answer provides little solace for the pain of eating מצה. However, it at least gives it a sympathetic spin; we are eating it to tie ourselves to our ancestors. Nonetheless, this interpretation, raised in the passage, brings several questions with it. For one, there is the מצה that was baked on the backs of the Jewish people leaving triumphant from slavery, so quickly that the dough did not have time to rise. Where is this מצה in הא לחמא עניא? Additionally, with the peculiar nature of the song itself, sung about לחמא, the added א indicates a clear shift to Aramaic tense. Why is this piece given in Aramaic, while the rest of the הגדה is in Hebrew?

These portions together indicate a meaning found in the song that eclipses the resemblance to the suffering: The

greater desire for redemption itself. When we gather together for the סדר and recreate the Exodus from Egypt, central to our perspective— even more central than the מצה that we crunch—is the idea of coming out from the redemption and going back to the Promised Land of Israel.

הא לחמא עניא, viewed in this light, takes on far more significance than a simple song about מצה and its origins. Suddenly, its nature in Aramaic verse reflects the assemblage of the Jews of Babylon, furtively putting together their סדר while longing to return to the land they once knew—speaking of it in a foreign tongue, Aramaic, but with the same spiritual כוונה that we should attempt to recreate.

The same message can be seen in the later verses of the song, now explained in this new form: “כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל” “All who are famished should partake in the פסח.” When can we do this? Not as slaves eating the bread of the poor, but as holy members of the land Hashem promised to us. Only in Israel, in the coming of the Messianic era. The last verse is now clear as well: “שנה הבאה בארעא דישראל. השתא עבדי, לשנה הבאה בני חורין,” “Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, and next year we will be free people.” This passage represents so much more than the recreation of the past narrative of slavery. It is the desire to look onwards, from now to the future, and into freedom.

The Four Sons

By Tobie Ostroff, Grade 10

At the סדר, we read about four sons: The evil one, the wise one, the simple one, and the one who does not know how to ask. We can learn a lot from the symbolism of these sons. Some people imagine the one who does not know how to ask as a baby, for he does not know how to speak at all. Others may argue that he is a full-grown man who has no background information on the פסח story, and literally is so lost he has no idea what to ask.

Additionally the הגדה mentions the רשע immediately after the חכם. Why would

we start with the wise and kind son, then switch over to the anger of the רשע? Why don't we end with the רשע? The רשע following the חכם teaches us that the wise cannot ignore their “evil” brothers, because we are all responsible for each other. “כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה” (תלמוד). So, ironically, we learn something from the רשע. To quote Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l: “Every Jew is like a letter in the תורה.” Just as a single broken letter in the תורה causes it to be not כשר, a missing Jew makes the Jewish population incomplete. This metaphor

shows the importance of each person's contribution to the Jewish community, and the need for unity.

So what can we learn from this? That every Jew is important, no matter how lost they may be. We can learn from any Jew, and every Jew is like a letter in the תורה. Without them, the story is incomplete.

Because of "This"!

By Noah Levy, Grade 8

Two of the main מצוות of the סדר are eating מצה and telling the story of יציאת מצרים. The first, eating מצה, is very easy, just like eating most food is very easy. The second מצוה is the longest part of the מגיד:סדר. During מגיד, many people zone out and count pages until the food, and occasionally read a paragraph. It is very hard to pay attention and stay mentally present during what can be a very lengthy מצוה which includes little action and often involves just going around the table reading paragraphs in Hebrew, especially if people do not know what they are reading or even why.

The מצוה of מגיד originates from the פסוק in משה says: "והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה" "and you shall tell your son on this day saying: because of this that Hashem did to me when I left Egypt." This פסוק is telling us we should tell our children that for the sake of "this," Hashem took us out of מצרים. The פסוק makes sense, except what is "this" that the פסוק is telling us about?

רש"י says that Hashem took us out of מצרים so that we could fulfill the מצוות. According to רש"י, the זה in our פסוק is referring to the מצוה one does on פסח, and from this רש"י says that it was for the sake of doing all the מצוות that Hashem took us out of מצרים.

The רמב"ן gives an exact opposite answer. He says that the "זה" is that because Hashem took us out of Egypt, we do the מצוות. In other words Hashem took us out of Egypt and, therefore, we now do מצוות. The difference between these two opinions is as follows. רש"י is saying, when it is מגיד in the סדר we discuss and talk about the story of Hashem redeeming the Jews by taking them out of Egypt, which allowed the Jews to do the מצוות. On the other hand, רמב"ן is saying that when we are talking about יציאת מצ- and the story of רים, we are telling the story about how Hashem took us out of Egypt and now we are giving back by doing מצוות.

The Message of G-d's Direct Involvement

By Mimi Fischer, Grade 11

During מגיד the rabbis quote an interesting פסוק from שמות. Although this goes unnoticed by many who are already hungrily counting the amount of pages left before רחצה, it can teach us valuable lessons about humanity and life as a whole. In י"ב:ב, Hashem says, "וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּלִילָה הַזֶּה וְהָכִיר־תִּי כָל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם וְעַד בְּהֵמָה, וְבָכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי ה'." "for that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and I will strike down every [male] firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human and animal; and I will execute punishments to all the gods of Egypt, I am Hashem."

In this פסוק the rabbis are bothered by G-d referencing Himself using the personal pronoun multiple times. Why does G-d need to specify that He will save us from the Egyptians? Is it not obvious that G-d will take us out of Egypt? After all, who else would have the power to overthrow פרעה's wishes?

The rabbis explain the פסוק as follows: "I will pass through the land of Egypt" means that G-d, not an angel, will save us; "I will strike down every [male] firstborn in the land of Egypt" means that G-d, not a seraph, will save us; "I will execute punishments to all the gods of Egypt" means that G-d, not a messenger, will save us; and "I G-d" shows us that G-d, and no other, will save us. In other

words, the rabbis view this פסוק as G-d promising us that He will do all the miracles and bring us freedom Himself, by His own power. Although G-d uses פרעה as a messenger to speak to משה and rally the Jews, it is ה' who brings the ten plagues, ה' who initiates קריעת ים סוף, and ה' who leads us through the desert and gives us the תורה.

As the הגדה says earlier, 'ויוציאנו ה' ממצרים—"And G-d took us out of Egypt." G-d was insistent on doing everything Himself. Although there is no shame in receiving help and rallying your sources, G-d wanted to show us the importance of taking initiative and acting on what you believe in. Oftentimes, we meet someone who needs help. Whether that help is uncomfortable to give or takes up a lot of our time, we must stay true to our identities as Jews and help out a fellow human being.

It would be easy to always rely on others to do the hard work for us. We may see someone in need and tell ourselves, "I do not need to help him; someone else will." But G-d's actions during יציאת מצרים teach us a different lesson. G-d took us out of מצרים Himself, without waiting for others to help. He saw the problem, heard our cries, and knew that He had to fix our condition.

When we see evil in the world, we should not hang back as part of the crowd, but take initiative and accept temporary burdens upon ourselves in order to help make the world a better place. Although others' problems may seem like none of

our business, it is important to remember that the needs and troubles of others are the needs and troubles that we may face in the future. Do not wait for others to support you, but take initiative in helping our fellow beings.

מכות The Order of the

By Menshi Trachtenberg, Grade 11

During the סדר, or while learning about יציאת מצרים, have you ever wondered why Hashem chose to order the מכות the way He did? And why do the first seven plagues appear in פרשת וארא while the final three are in פרשת בא? If you think back to last year's סדר, you might remember saying דצ"ך: מכות רבי יהודה's abbreviation of the מכות: עד"ש באח"ב. Why does Rabbi Yehuda categorize the מכות this way?

According to many commentators the structure of the מכות is not random; it is a lesson to בני ישראל to show them Hashem's absolute control over the world. The מכות can be divided into three groups, each proving a different aspect of Hashem's power: the first group (Blood, Frogs, and Lice) proved Hashem's control of nature itself. The second group (Wild Animals, Pestilence, and Boils) targeted living beings, demonstrating Hashem's control over health and life. The final group (Hail, Locusts, Darkness, and the Death of the Firstborn) proved Hashem's command over light, weather, and even life and death itself.

Another reason for רבי יהודה's specific order is that each plague became less and less replicable by the Egyptian sorcerers. After imitating the first few the sorcerers were eventually left helpless and even admitted, "אֶצְבֵּעַ אֱלֹקִים הוּא" (שמות ח':ט"ו) "This is the finger of God". The Egyptian magicians tried to copy the first few plagues to prove that Hashem is not actually creating these miracles, rather that they were simply magic. Let's be honest, when you are forced to drink blood, and frogs are jumping all around your house, why would you willingly make more? That's like seeing your house on fire and saying, "Hey, I can do that too!"

As a side question, why ten מכות? Why not just five, three, or even one? Perhaps if there were only a few Pharaoh might have dismissed them as coincidences or natural disasters, but a full ten plagues (and some more at the sea) made it undeniable that this was Divine intervention. Winning the lottery once is amazing ... winning it twice is suspicious ... but winning it ten times is either blatant cheating or miraculous.

We also notice that as the plagues grow exponentially worse over time, פרעה still refuses to let בני ישראל go, demonstrating an important lesson: ignoring mistakes and refusing to change only leads to harsher consequences later. Just like פרעה kept pushing off doing the right thing, we too, sometimes delay fixing our own errors, but the longer we wait, the harder it becomes. So next time you ignore that growing pile of homework, or

see that your tire change light has been on for days, just remember that פרעה had the same idea... until מכת בכורות hit. To summarize, the plagues showed Hashem's control over nature, life, and everything in existence. פרעה's refusal to change led to harsher consequences, teaching us not to delay fixing our mistakes. As for why the מכות are split up the way they are, in פרשיות, that is for you to discuss at your סדר table.

The Bitterness of Egypt

By Ethan Ravid, Grade 10

During פסח, we tell a long story during מגיד about how we ended up in Egypt and were saved by the hand of ה'. Afterward, we wash our hands and eat מצה, then eat מרור. These bitter herbs are eaten to remind us of our hardships in Egypt, and the struggle our ancestors had.

Why does eating מרור remind us of the pain in Egypt? Why eat something at all? Why can't we make ourselves uncomfortable in another way? And why make ourselves uncomfortable at all?

First, it is important we know that eating מרור comes from the תורה, as in במדבר it states על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו, that one should eat the קרבן פסח with מצה and מרור. Nowadays since we can't eat the קרבן פסח, we eat them together to remind us of the קרבן פסח, and it is a מצווה דרבנן.

Second, we are required to eat מרור to remember our hardships in Egypt. Most people will remember the מרור from last year and the bitterness of its taste. However at the same time most people can't remember what they ate for breakfast this morning. This remembrance fulfills the מצווה because while thinking about the bitterness of מרור, we remember the story of how Hashem saved us from Egypt and the miracles He did for us.

But why do we eat anything at all? Can't we feel this some other way, like sitting on the floor, or not reclining for this part of the story, or just pointing at it, like with the זרוע? Also, why make ourselves uncomfortable? We do this so we can feel physical pain. It would be inhumane to make us all feel intense physical pain, whereas bitter food brings tears to our eyes and makes us weak for a moment.

At that moment you feel a connection to the Jews crying for salvation and freedom, and feel the heavy work they did while slaves in Egypt.

This discomfort, while hard, is in my opinion the biggest connection we get to the past. When you eat other foods for the reason of remembering, most of it is food people like and enjoy eating, or it adds flavor. Most people don't want to eat food they don't like. Also when your eyes

tear up, feeling that weakness brings us closer to the past that otherwise would be hard to connect to.

I wish that this פסח, while we can have a happy and spiritual חג, we can also remember the suffering, feel the real impact of Hashem's actions, and make the miracles He did all the greater when we understand the true pain the Jews went through in Egypt.

הלל Two

By Eitan Orkaby, Grade 10

After we clear the table and bench, the next part of the סדר is הלל. This is a section where we praise Hashem for the many miracles that He performed for us when we left Egypt. This is the same kind of praise that we say at the beginning of every month, and when an incredible miracle happened on a certain day. What is strange, however, is that during the פסח סדר we say some praise in מגיד and the rest after benching, rather than simply putting all of the praise in one place. If we are supposed to praise Hashem on פסח, why split the praise in two?

To explain this, first we must understand why praise is so important and why it is necessary. During חזקיהו's reign over the kingdom of יהודה, he becomes deathly sick. After he prays to Hashem and cries over his illness,

Hashem gives חזקיהו fifteen more years to live. When חזקיהו is healed, he writes a poem of praise and thanks to Hashem. To explain why חזקיהו wrote a poem to Hashem, אברבנאל attempts to interpret חזקיהו's poem as something deeper. He points out (ישעיהו ל"ח:ט') that very rarely do people throughout תנ"ך fall sick. Furthermore, one is only required to give such extravagant thanks if they fall sick twice. So why did חזקיהו write such a poem?

The explanation given is that חזקיהו wanted to glorify Hashem and to show all the nations of the world that Hashem brought him from the edge of death back to the world of the living. This explanation leads one to the conclusion that praise is the act of glorifying another. And to glorify Hashem is a מצוה from the תורה, as it says, וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "and

After all of this, however, we still cannot comprehend why parts of הלל are said before and after benching. During the formal portion, we should say all of the praise at one time. One might be able to say that since we only say part of הלל on the other days of פסח, we also say part at one point and part later here, to follow the same pattern. The idea of saying partial הלל comes from us not wanting to celebrate the death of any of Hashem's creations, even the Egyptians. This would explain the separation; so that we do not rejoice too much at any one point, the parts are more spread out. While this works to explain the night of the סדר, it does not explain why this is not done on the other days of פסח, splitting up הלל into two sections said at different times. ישיבת הגר רב ידידיה שביב, a rabbi at לן, takes a completely different view of הלל. He understands הלל as referring to a form of light, coming from the word הילה, halo. This means that הלל is only done during the daytime, which is what we do all year except for the night of the סדר. He explains this phenomenon by interpreting the night of the סדר as being כְּחֶשְׁכָּה כְּאוֹרָה, "and night is as day; darkness and light are alike." (תהלים קל"ט:י"ב) Since the night is like day, we can say הלל. This would, therefore, explain the reason for saying הלל at night.

רב ידידיה שביב furthers this idea by saying that the הלל which we say is separated into two is actually two separate praises entirely. The הלל at the end of מגיד is thanking Hashem for bringing us from the darkness of Egypt to the light of the תורה. The הלל after benching is a request for Hashem to bring us from the darkness of exile to the light of redemption.

While this initially seemed to be a mere separation between portions of הלל, the deeper meaning is much more significant. Having הלל be a prayer for redemption fits into the general structure of the ending of the סדר, with משיח being one of the main focuses. As we have seen from the praises which intersperse מגיד, there is a structure that is followed. There is also structure throughout the הגדה, but sometimes one has to look closer.

Structure is a core aspect of Jewish life. קרבן תמיד says that שמעון בן פזי is the most important concept in the תורה, even more than loving your fellow as you love yourself, as it shows us that we must set up a structure and follow it every day. When one has a structure, they give their life meaning and purpose. May we all strive to always keep to our own structure and fulfill it next year in ירושלים!

The Symbolism of חד גדיא

By Yochanan Cramer, Grade 11

Assuming you haven't fallen asleep from your fourth and final of the Four Cups, we conclude our סדר every year with the section of נרצה. At the very end, we find חד גדיא, an Aramaic-Hebrew hymn of uncertain origin. Having first appeared in a Prague הגדה in 1590, it is the most recent addition to our סדר, perhaps explaining its placement at the night's conclusion. But חד גדיא can't just be an illustration of the food chain and Hashem's sovereignty over all; if that were the case, why would we only recite it on פסח? Why not more frequently? Clearly, there is more beneath the surface. Let's dive deeper into the song to explore the following questions: first, what is the true meaning of חד גדיא and what can we learn from these interpretations? Second, given these interpretations, what makes it uniquely a פסח song?

Herrmann von der Hardt, a German historian and Oriental linguist, wrote one of the most well-known interpretations of the playful hymn in 1727. Von der Hardt was one of the first to suggest that חד גדיא is about the different nations that have conquered ישראל. In this interpretation, the kid symbolizes the Jewish people; the cat, Assyria; the dog, Babylon; the stick, Persia; the fire, Macedonia; the water, Roman Empire; the ox, the Saracens; the slaughterer, the Crusaders; and finally, the angel of death symbolizing the Ottomans (taking place

in 1516, 74 years before the hymn's first appearance in the הגדה). Hashem puts the kid, the symbol of the Jewish people, last, back in control of Israel; a foreshadowing of the British victory over the Ottomans in the 1918 Battle of Megiddo, and the Israeli victory and independence in the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war. The payment for the kid, תרי זוזי, would correspondingly be a reference to the two stone tablets (עשרת הדברות) given to משה סיני חס משה, the foundation of our faith.

An alternative (yet parallel) interpretation attributed to the Vilna Gaon is that each verse alludes to a certain person or event in Jewish history, as opposed to each of the conquering nations of ארץ ישראל. The kid is the birthright יעקב bought from his brother עשו in ספר בראשית, which was an important event in the continuation of אברהם's mission to build a world full of גמילות חסדים, and יראת השם, which is a world devoid of עבודה זרה, child sacrifice and other evils. The אבא would then be יעקב who bought the birthright, while תרי זוזי are the bread and stew יעקב exchanged with עשו for the birthright. The cat represents the envy of יעקב's sons toward their brother יוסף, leading them to sell him into slavery in מצרים. Subsequently, the dog is מצרים, where יוסף ended up, and where eventually the entirety of בני ישראל lived, were enslaved, and were redeemed. The

stick is the famous staff of משה, used to bring forth various plagues and to part the waters of ים סוף for בני ישראל to cross. The fire represents the thirst for idolatry among בני ישראל that proved to be a persistent issue between leaving מצרים and the destruction of the First Temple in the 6th century BCE. The water represents עזרא and נחמיה's divine work and influence on the Jewish people in the subsequent centuries to help eradicate idolatry. The ox is Rome (עשו's descendants) who destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE. The butcher is the משיח בן יוסף, who, according to the (יחזקאל ל"ז:י"ח) מלבי"ם, will restore full Jewish sovereignty in ארץ ישראל. The Angel of Death would then represent the death of משיח בן יוסף (who, according to the גמרא, will die, presumably in the War of Gog and Magog), who will be succeeded by Hashem and the משיח we know, משיח בן דוד, who is a sign of ultimate and complete redemption.

Both Hermann von der Hardt and the Vilna Gaon offer compelling

interpretations of the hymn, but still, why is it exclusive to פסח? Perhaps חיד גדיא is unique to פסח because one of the סדר's central themes is והגדת לבנך, that is, teaching our children where they come from and why this night is different. The interpretations of חיד גדיא we have discussed reveal that, in its colorful and concise way, the song encapsulates much of what the הגדה conveys at length: our history, our struggles, and our redemption of the past, present, and future. Fittingly, חיד גדיא appears at נרצה, the section where we pray that our סדר has been accepted. Ending with a song that revisits our history and expresses hope for the future (perhaps even a rebuilt המקדש) is a meaningful and lively conclusion to the night. It keeps the children engaged, reinforcing the very purpose of פסח. In short, it's hard to imagine חיד גדיא feeling as natural if sung in other holidays or instances; it belongs to this night, a night of storytelling, remembrance, and hope.

!שבת חס קרבנות Giving

By Avi Abbett, Grade 12

A few weeks ago, when we read פרשת ויקהל, the תורה went through all of the labors that were required to build the משכן. There were a total of 39 labors that were done in the building of the משכן. The

משכן, acts used to build the משכן, are all forbidden on שבת.

About every 20 years, it happens in the calendar that the first night of פסח falls

on a Saturday night. When this occurs it can make preparation for פסח difficult, but let's take a step back and think about the issues this caused in the time of the המקדש בית and the true significance of the קרבן פסח.

It was recorded in פסחים סו. that one year the 14th of ניסן, the day before פסח, fell out on שבת. בני בתירא, the סנהדרין of the time, did not remember whether the פסח קרבן overrides שבת. Having forgotten the correct הלכה for this situation, they asked the people if anyone knew what to do. At this time, הלל had recently moved to ירושלים from בבל but had not yet become a part of the Rabbinic Elite. The people responded to the סנהדרין as follows: there is a man from בבל, named הלל, who learned under the previous two heads of the generation, אבטליון and שמעיה. After being brought before the סנהדרין, הלל was surprised by the question. He said to the סנהדרין that there are more than two hundred פסח's in the year which override שבת. הלל is referencing the קרבן תמיד and מוסף that are brought every week on שבת. If these sacrifices are allowed, what would make them any different from the קרבן פסח?

הלל's proof for this opinion comes from the word "מועדו," meaning "at its set time." This word is used both when talking about the קרבן פסח and the קרבן בארבעה עשרים בחדש הזה ביר. תמיד (במדבר ט:ג) "הערכים תעשו אתו במעדו תשמרו להקריב לי במועדו...שנים ליום" and (במדבר כ"ח:ב'ג) "עלה תמיד". In these two places the same word is used to show that they must be offered on the day they

are intended. Even though the sacrifice violates the labors forbidden on שבת they must be done.

This is supported by העמק דבר. On the פסוק regarding the קרבן פסח, he says that even on שבת, or if you are impure, you are not only permitted but required to bring the קרבן פסח on its set day.

This is the הלכה for the majority of communal קרבנות. They are brought to the המקדש regardless of whether it is שבת or whether or not you are טמא or טהור. We see this in מסכת יומא נ. where it says, a communal offering suspends the laws of שבת and purity. This is the case for קרבנות like the מוסף and the תמיד, which are brought, regardless of the circumstance, on its set day. But is the קרבן פסח a communal or individual offering?

The Gemara in Yoma discusses this question. In Yoma 25b, Rabbi Yochanan states that the korban is viewed as an individual offering. So how can it be that it can be given on Shabbat? There must be something that we are missing. Rabbi Yochanan answers Rabbi Yochanan's question. He says that any korban with a set time may violate the terms of Shabbat and purity.

In שמות, when discussing the קרבן וְשַׁחֲטוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל קְהֵל עֲדַת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים...וְקָחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן לְמִשְׁפַּחַתְּכֶם, “And it should be slaughtered by all the congregation of Israel at twilight...and you should take for you lambs for your families and slaughter the פסח (שמות י"ב:כ"א)". This

פסוק emphasizes the fact that while this מצוה is done by the individual we are all doing it together.

The קרבן teaches us both the importance of community and individuality and taking advantage of the מצוות, doing them at their designated times. This

sacrifice is one that is done both alone and together. Each person alone with their family brings and eats the קרבן פסח, but this action is done by the entire nation. And not only that, it was done all at the same time, everyone brought this sacrifice on 14th of ניסן, together.

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Rabbi Jaffe

Maimonides School
34 Philbrick Road
Brookline, MA 02445
617-232-4452
www.maimonides.org

