The Hamaayan Haggadah

Volume II

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Introduction

With immense gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we are proud to present our readers with a second collection of Divrei Torah relating to the Pesach Haggadah, the Egyptian exile, and Yetzi’at Mitzrayim that have appeared in our weekly publication, Hamaayan / The Torah Spring, over the 14 years since our first Haggadah. Each “piece” appears almost exactly as it was published originally. For the most part, only obvious typographical errors were corrected; also, a modest effort was made to render consistent some of the stylistic differences that exist between transliterations in earlier and later issues of Hamaayan. (In addition, some references to Torah scholars who were living when their words originally appeared have unfortunately had to be changed to reflect the fact of their passing.)

There is a bittersweet aspect to the publication of this Haggadah, however. As we sit quarantined in our homes, we pray that the few days remaining before the Chag will bring the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the future redemption (Michah 7:15), “As in the days when you left the land of Egypt I will show wonders.” Who knows whether, in witnessing the world’s greatest economic and military powers brought to a standstill as Egypt was in the days of the Plagues, we are not already seeing those wonders! But, barring an openly miraculous end to our ordeal, Jews worldwide soon will be observing the “Coronavirus Pesach” – a Pesach very different from what nearly all of us are used to. Last year, my wife and I merited to have four generations at our Seder table; this year, we will share the Seder with our two single children and no one else. That’s the “bitter.” As for the “sweet” – It was the realization that this year would be the first in decades when I had not purchased a new Haggadah that impelled me to write my own – the work that is before you now. I pray that the Torah study that results, as well as any enhancement that is brought to the Sedarim of others, will serve as a merit for me, my family, and all of Klal Yisrael.

Once again, I would like to thank the readers, sponsors and other supporters of Hamaayan who give me a reason to continue my work. I am grateful to my wife and family who still live with the fact that I am always under pressure to put out the next issue. As his 10th Yahrzeit approaches, I cannot omit mention of Moreinu Harav Gedaliah Anemer ז"ל, who took great pride in his role in encouraging Hamaayan’s continued publication. I thank as well the many Rabbonim and Chaveirim who have likewise encouraged my writing and teaching. Finally, my continued thanks to Alan and Fran Broder, who invented Torah on the Internet when they first suggested publishing Hamaayan on that new medium, and to Rabbi Yaakov Menken and his team at Torah.org for their continued distribution of Hamaayan.

Like my previous works, I have given this Haggadah the Hebrew title שֶׁשֶׁא הַבָּרָכָה (She’aih Berachah). Please see the introduction to Volume 1 for the origin of that name.

Shlomo Katz
יח נפש הקדיש
Pesach At Home

The following is a letter written by R’ Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler z”l (1892-1953; Rosh Kollel in Gateshead, England, and Mashgiach Ruchani in the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) to an unidentified recipient. It is printed in Michtav M’Eliyahu: Kovetz Igrot, p.129.

I received your precious letter with your invitation to come visit you and to participate in the Pesach Seder with you. Thank you very much for your invitation. However, I am unable to accept it. With G-d’s help, I will celebrate the holy festival and arrange the Seder where I live.

It would seem that, just as it is impossible to invite a ben Torah [loosely translated: “one whose values are derived from the Torah”] to visit a friend for the Ne’ilah prayer on Yom Kippur, so, it seems to me, it is impossible to make a “visit” out of the holy Seder. [The Seder is an occasion to internalize, not a time to be outward-looking.] Fortunate is one who focuses and arranges the Seder within his heart. The Exodus is the source of the Jewishness within us. The Seder must make a convert of our inner selves, which have left their original domain and become animal-like, grossly material. More than that, our inner selves have ceased being Jewish. Woe to our hearts that are lost within our inner selves.

A related thought:

R’ Shalom Noach Berezovsky z”l (1911-2000; Slonimer Rebbe in Yerushalayim) writes: As applied to some people, the title “Jew” is no more than an accident of birth. Such a person’s Jewishness is not part of his essence; though he fulfills all of the Mitzvot, he is doing nothing more than “acting” Jewish. To really be a Jew means that one’s Jewishness is embedded in the essence of his being, in his innards, his mind, his heart, and all his limbs. We read in Megilat Esther [about Mordechai], “There was a Jewish man . . .” [instead of, “There was a Jew”]. His whole personality was Jewish—his beliefs and his outlooks were Jewish, his feelings and aspirations were Jewish; even his physical desires were Jewish, i.e., they were under his control. We read (Vayikra 18:3), “Like the deed of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled—you shall not do, and like the deed of the land of Canaan to which I bring you—you shall not do, and do not follow their traditions.” This means that those things which you are permitted to do, you should not do the way an Egyptian or Canaanite would do them.

A true expression of these feelings can be found in the journal entry that the Piaseczna Rebbe Hy”d [R’ Klonimus Kalman Shapira z”l; 1889-1943] wrote upon turning 40: “What can I accept upon myself? To study more? I believe that I don’t waste any time currently. To distance myself from physical desires? Thank G-d, I’m not subjugated to them, G-d forbid. What is lacking in me? Simply to be Jewish. I appear to myself to be a perfectly painted picture of a human being, which lacks only a soul.” [The Slonimer Rebbe continues:] Tzaddikim say that when one recites the blessing, “He did not make me a gentile,” he must examine himself to see whether any part of himself is in fact gentile-like. (Netivet Shalom, Vol. 1 p.18)
R’ Shmuel Eliezer Eidels z”l (Maharsha; Poland; 1555–1631) writes that the dates of all of the festivals are connected to the letters aleph, heh, vav and yud—i.e., the letters found in two of the holiest names of Hashem: Y-K-V-K and A-K-Y-K (see Shemot 3:14). [We have substituted “K” for “heh,” as is customary.] He elaborates:

- **Aleph** has a Gematria of one, representing the first day of Tishrei (Rosh Hashanah) and the first day of Nissan (the first Rosh Chodesh in history; also, the day on which the Mishkan was erected).
- **Yud** has a Gematria of ten, representing the tenth day of Tishrei (Yom Kippur) and the tenth of Nissan (the first Shabbat Ha’gadol in history, when lambs were set aside for the first-ever Korban Pesach).
- **Heh** has a Gematria of five, representing Sukkot (the fifth day from Yom Kippur) and Pesach (the fifth day from the first Shabbat Ha’gadol).
- **Vav** has a Gematria of six, representing Hoshanah Rabbah (six days after the beginning of Sukkot) and the last day of Pesach (which, in Eretz Yisrael, is six days after the first day of Pesach). Also, six represents Shavuot, which falls on the sixth of the month of Sivan.
- Finally, the sum of these numbers (1+5+6+10) equals 22, the day in Tishrei on which Shemini Atzeret falls. (Chiddushei Aggadot: Yoma 2a)

R’ Michel Zilber shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Zvhil Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) observes that, despite the above parallels between the holidays of Tishrei and those of Nissan, there is a fundamental difference between them.

The holidays of Tishrei reflect the aspiration in the verse (Tehilim 27:4, recited on the Tishrei holidays), “Would that I could dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life.” On Rosh Hashanah, we congregate in shul to hear the shofar. On Yom Kippur, we spend almost the entire day in shul. On Sukkot, we again leave our homes, this time to move into the sukkah.

On Pesach, the opposite is true: the Mitzvot focus on our homes. Make sure there is no Chametz in your home. Eat the Korban Pesach only with a pre-arranged group, and only in one home. Do not take any part of the Korban Pesach out-of-doors once the Seder has begun. Our task on Pesach is to sanctify our homes until they (figuratively) have the same sanctity as the Temple courtyard. If we do that, commentaries say, eating Matzah will be equivalent to offering a Korban Minchah / flour-offering in the Bet Hamikdash.

How is this possible? R’ Zilber explains that, if not for Adam’s sin, there would have been no need for a Mishkan, for Hashem would have “dwelled” with man. By sanctifying ourselves to the degree that we repair the damage from Adam’s sin, we once again make our homes into a dwelling place for the Shechinah. (Haggadah Shel Pesach B’yam Derech p.10)
“He and his neighbor who is close to his house shall take...” (Shmot 12:4)

The Tosefta (Pesachim 8:6) teaches: There are a number of differences between the way the Korban Pesach was offered in Egypt and the way it was brought in later generations. One of those differences was this requirement that the Pesach in Egypt be eaten with a neighbor [if one’s only family was too small to eat an entire lamb]. In Eretz Yisrael, there was no requirement that the lamb be shared specifically with a neighbor. However, the sage Rabbi Shimon says, “I maintain that this requirement applies in all generations, so that a person not abandon his neighbor in favor of a distant friend. This is in accordance with the verse (Mishlei 27:10), “A close-by neighbor is better than a distant brother.”

R’ Chaim Zaichyk z”l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) writes: This teaches us that even if one would enjoy the holiday more somewhere else, he must forego that pleasure in order not to risk offending his neighbor. [Ed. note: Although Rabbi Shimon’s opinion is not the Halachah, that does not detract from the validity of the ethical lesson he is teaching, in accordance with the principle (Eruvin 13b), “These and these are both the word of the Living Elokim.” (See Maharal z”l, Be’er Ha’golah I p.20)]

R’ Zaichyk continues: We read (Bereishit 13:3), “He proceeded on his journeys from the south to Bet El--to the place where his tent had been at first.” Rashi z”l quotes our Sages’ view about the importance of returning to the same hotel where one stayed previously. The Gemara (Arachin 16b) teaches that this obligation goes so far that a person should return to the same inn unless the innkeeper hits him or throws his belongings into the street. Sometimes, R’ Zaichyk observes, a person may be more comfortable in a different hotel than the one he stayed in before. Nevertheless, one’s personal comfort must be secondary to the feelings of one’s former host. (Haggadah Shel Pesach R’ Chaim Zaichyk)
Preparing for Pesach

“We ask and expound upon the laws of Pesach 30 days before Pesach.” (Pesachim 6a)

Commentaries ask: The Gemara states elsewhere (Megilah 32a), “Moshe enacted that we ask about and expound on the laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Shavuot on Shavuot, and the laws of Sukkot on Sukkot.” How can this be reconciled with the ruling that we ask and expound upon the laws of Pesach 30 days before Pesach?

R’ Yosef Karo z”l (1488-1575; Greece and Eretz Yisrael; author of the Shulchan Aruch and other works) explains: The ruling that we ask and expound upon the laws of Pesach 30 days before Pesach does not mean that we are obligated to study and teach that subject during that time period. Rather, the Gemara relates to the rule that, when two people each ask a rabbi a question, he should answer the timely question first. During the 30 days before Pesach, the Gemara is teaching, a question about Pesach is considered timely.

Alternatively, writes R’ Karo, the Gemara means the laws of preparing for Pesach should be studied and taught 30 days before Pesach. This is necessary because those laws are so numerous and complex, and there are many preparations to make before the festival. In comparison, building a Sukkah is relatively easy and can be done even on the day before Sukkot. Even the laws of Lulav and Etrog are not so complicated, as most Lulavim and Etrogim are kosher, observes R’ Karo. On the other hand, when the Gemara obligates us to study the laws of each festival on that festival, it refers to studying the reasons for, and messages contained within, the laws of the holidays, in addition to studying the “do’s and don’t’s” associated with each holiday.

Another possibility, concludes R’ Karo, is that the original enactment to study the laws of Pesach 30 days in advance referred to the laws of the Korban Pesach. (Bet Yosef 429:1)

R’ Chaim Friedlander z”l (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva; died 1984) writes: As Pesach approaches, we make many preparations--cleaning, shopping, etc. But the Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzi’at Mitzrayim / relating the story of the Exodus requires no less preparation, and this we do not do by-and-large. In particular, we tend to make two mistakes which stem from not understanding either the “Geder” / definition or “Shiur” / required amount of this Mitzvah, R’ Friedlander states.

First, our Divrei Torah at the Seder tend to focus on the text of the Haggadah rather than on the content, for example, expounding on whether we should say, “Ha lachma anya” or “K’ha lachma anya.”

Second, many people recite so many Divrei Torah on the first part of the Haggadah, which is only the introduction (including “Mah nishtanah” and the Four Sons), that they have to rush through the later part, which actually tells the story of the slavery, persecution and, finally, redemption. Yet, according to Rambam z”l, the portion of the Haggadah about which it is said, “Whoever speaks more about the story of the Exodus is praiseworthy,” is only the latter part of Maggid, from “Arami oveid” and onward.
R’ Friedlander continues: We find two hints in the Haggadah to what the real Mitzvah is. One teaches us the Geder of the Mitzvah: “Even if we are all wise, etc., it is incumbent upon us to relate the story of the Exodus, and whoever speaks more about the story of the Exodus is praiseworthy.” The second teaches us the shiur of the Mitzvah: “In every single generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he had participated in the Exodus from Egypt.” One must tell the story until he can see himself in it.

Why, in fact, is a person who already knows the detailed story of the Exodus obligated to retell it? R’ Friedlander explains: When a person relates a moving experience that happened to him, it can be so real to him that he reacts as if he is reliving the fear or the joy that he experienced during the actual event. So, too, the Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzi’at Mitzrayim is fulfilled when we can picture ourselves in the story, not merely when we know the story. This requires even a learned person to actively retell the story so that he can first experience the bitterness of the slavery and oppression, then the gradual process of the Exodus, and finally the joy of being drawn close by Hashem.

This is not an easy task by any means. To help, we have tangible items on the Seder plate to aid us: Matzah, Maror, Charoset, etc. When we eat these items, or when we point to them during the course of reciting the Haggadah, it should not be a mechanical act but rather one that causes us to reflect.

For example, when we eat the Maror, we should reflect on the bitterness of the exile. When we eat the Matzah, we should think about the miraculous, sudden departure from Egypt after hundreds of years of exile.

The Gemara relates that the sage R’ Nachman had a slave named Daru. R’ Nachman asked him, “If a master freed his slave, what would be the slave’s obligation?” Daru answered, “He would have to give thanks.” R’ Friedlander explains that R’ Nachman wanted to concretize for himself the abstract ideas discussed in the Haggadah. It should be noted that the Gemara describes Daru as a good-for-nothing who did not even work enough to pay his own upkeep. If even such a slave must be grateful for his freedom, how much more so must Bnei Yisrael, who performed back-breaking labor in Egypt, be grateful!

R’ David Avudraham z”l (14th century) writes that feeling as if one participated in the Exodus leads to “Hoda’ah,” which means both acknowledgment and thanks, and to “Shevach” / praise. R’ Friedlander explains: Hoda’ah means “acknowledging” the truth that Hashem performed many miracles for us and “thanking” Him for them. This leads to Shevach, which involves speaking His “praises.” Ultimately, both of these--Hoda’ah and Shevach--are meant to lead to Kabbalat Ohl Malchut Shamayim / accepting the yoke of Heaven, which then leads to doing the Mitzvot willingly and with joy. This is why, after we say, “In every single generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he had participated in the Exodus from Egypt,” we immediately say, “Therefore, we are obligated to give Hoda’ah and Shevach.” (Siftei Chaim: Mo’adim II p.355)

From the same work:

The Gemara (Ta’anit 29a) states: “When Adar enters, joy increases.” Rashi z”l explains: “They were days of miracles for the Jewish People -- Purim and Pesach.”
R’ Friedlander observes: Apparently, Purim and Pesach have something in common, and that commonality is a source of joy. What is it? Also, asks R’ Friedlander, we read in the Torah sections describing the Ten Plagues that Hashem wanted Pharaoh to acknowledge Him. Why was that important to Him?

R’ Friedlander explains: One of the most foundational “Ways of Hashem” is that His Honor will be revealed in this world no matter what man does. Indeed, at times, His Honor is revealed as a result of the actions of the wicked -- not merely despite their actions. This occurred, for example, when Haman was hanged on the very same gallows that he had made for Mordechai. This teaches that, not only can the wicked not foil Hashem’s plans, they themselves are tools in His hands.

The very same lesson is demonstrated by the story of the Exodus. Pharaoh hoped to prevent Bnei Yisrael’s savior from growing to adulthood by decreeing that all newborn boys be drowned. As it turned out, that very decree resulted in the savior, Moshe, growing up in Pharaoh’s own palace. Moreover, continues R’ Friedlander, classical commentaries say that it was in Pharaoh’s palace that Moshe learned leadership skills.

Hashem was not trying to make a religious man out of Pharaoh, R’ Friedlander explains. But, if Pharaoh would acknowledge Hashem, it would teach us that Hashem always “gets His way,” no matter how much the wicked try to resist. That is the shared message of Purim and Pesach. And, the more clarity we have about this point, the more joy it will bring us. (Ibid. p.249)

R’ Shimshon David Pinkus z”l (died 2001) writes: There are two ways to pass Shabbat and Yom Tov – one can live the day, or one can be a bystander. By way of a parable: Two people go to the airport – one goes to watch the airplanes take off for distant and exotic lands, while the other buys a ticket and actually flies to one of those wonderful places. Obviously, airplanes were not built to give pleasure to those who watch them; they were built to carry those who board them and want to be lofted skyward.

So it is with the holy days. One can stand by and admire the beauty of the day – the sparkle of the house newly-cleaned for Pesach, the beautifully set table, the many songs that are sung as the night progresses. However, the holidays were not given to us so that we can watch them pass by as a tourist watches a parade go by. Rather, the holidays, like the airplane, were given to us to elevate us.

How do we accomplish this? How do we enable the spirit of the holiday to penetrate deep within us and affect our being? It is only by attempting to understand the essence of the holiday. This, in turn, requires us to study books about the holiday – both its laws and its philosophical aspects.

R’ Pinkus continues: The title “Yom Tov” alludes to the first thing that was ever referred to as “Tov” / “Good,” i.e., the first light that G-d created (Bereishit 1:4). [Rashi writes that that verse does not refer to the light that we are familiar with, but to a Divine light that was put away for the righteous to enjoy in the future.] The holidays, however, can shine this Divine light on us, and the mechanism to achieve that is through the Torah, which is called (Mishlei 4:2), “Lekach Tov” / “A good teaching.” This is why each Yom Tov (except for Shavuot) has its own tractate of the Talmud; the essence of each holiday’s light is contained within its tractate. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tiferet Shimshon)
Ma’ot Chittim

The leaders of the town of Radin complained to R’ Yisrael Meir Hakohen (1839-1933; the Chafetz Chaim) that donations to the town’s Ma’ot Chittim / Pesach charity fund were inadequate to feed the town’s poor. The Chafetz Chaim acceded to the leaders’ request that he address the townsfolk.

“I am an old man,” the Chafetz Chaim said in his speech. “Soon I will be called to give an accounting in the World-to-Come, and, since I am an influential person in this town, I will be asked whether the people of my town of Radin gave generously to charity. I will then be faced with a dilemma. If I say that they did, I will be telling a lie, something I have never done. On the other hand, if I say that the people of Radin did not give generously, I will be speaking lashon hara, which I also have never done.

“There is only one solution to my dilemma — for each of you to give generously to the Ma’ot Chittim campaign.” (A Word of Wisdom, A Word of Wit)
**Shabbat Ha’gadol**

R’ Avraham z”l (an otherwise unknown sage in 12th or 13th century France) teaches: The people are accustomed to call the Shabbat before Pesach: “Shabbat Ha’gadol” / “The Great Shabbat.” But, they don’t know why. After all, it is no greater than any other Shabbat!

He explains: The reason for this name is that the Exodus from Egypt took place on a Thursday, as stated in Midrash Seder Olam. Therefore, the 10th of Nissan, when Bnei Yisrael set aside lambs for the Korban Pesach, was Shabbat. When Bnei Yisrael were given this commandment, they asked, “If we slaughter the deity of Egypt in their sight, will they not stone us?” Hashem answered, “You will see the wonder that I will do!” Sure enough, when the Egyptians saw Bnei Yisrael gathering sheep that they planned to slaughter on the 14th of Nissan, their insides boiled with anger, but they were helpless to harm the Jewish People. Because of the miracle that happened on that Shabbat, we call it “Shabbat Ha’gadol.” (Siddur Rashi, paragraph 352)

Why did the Torah command that the Korban Pesach [in Egypt] be set aside four days before it was slaughtered? Rabbi Matia ben Charash used to say: The verse says (Yechezkel 16:8), “I passed by you, and saw you, and behold the time was a time of love.” The time had come for Hashem to fulfill His oath to Avraham to redeem his children, but they had no merit in which to be redeemed, as it is a written (ibid. verse 7), “You were naked and bare” -- i.e., naked of Mitzvot. Therefore, Hashem gave them two Mitzvot--the blood of the Korban Pesach [to spread on their doorposts] and the blood of Brit Milah [which had been neglected during the years in Egypt], as it is written (ibid. verse 6), “Then I passed you and saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live'; I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live'.” That is why Hashem commanded that they set aside the animal for the offering four days in advance. (Midrash Mechilta D’Rabbi Yishmael: Parashat Bo)

R’ Eliezer Ashkenazi z”l (1513-1585; rabbi in Egypt, Italy and Poland) asks: Why four days--not three or five? And, why do we commemorate the day of the week when this miracle occurred (Shabbat), rather than its date (10 Nissan)?

He explains: The entire purpose of Bnei Yisrael’s exile and of the Exodus, with all of the associated miracles, was to reveal that Hashem is the Creator. Only the One who created all of nature can manipulate it at will to the extent that Hashem did in the course of the Plagues! Paralleling this, Hashem wanted the lamb for the Korban Pesach to be set aside four days beforehand--not because there is anything special about the number four, but because that day was Shabbat, the day that testifies to Creation. This explains, as well, why we remember that miracle on Shabbat, not on the calendar date when it occurred. (Ma’asei Mitzrayim ch.15)

Many ask: Why do we commemorate the day of the week when the above event occurred (Shabbat) rather than the calendar date of the event (10 Nissan)?
R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim’s Sha’arei Chessed neighborhood and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav) explains:

Our Sages teach that Hashem did not redeem Bnei Yisrael until they were on the brink of falling into the lowest level of impurity. Why did He wait? Because He wished to highlight the fact that there is permanent holiness within a Jew. No matter how low he falls, there is an “inner point” which cannot be eliminated. That “inner point” is hidden within all Jews, including many who seem be lost, but all that is necessary for it to be revealed is for some of the layers that conceal it to be stripped away. This is what our Sages mean when they say: “Anyone who rejects idolatry is called a ‘Yehudi.’” When our ancestors separated a lamb – an Egyptian deity – as an offering, that is what they did: they stripped away that which concealed the “inner point” of holiness that cannot be eliminated.

The day that represents this characteristic of a Jew is Shabbat. Calendar dates and the dates of the festivals are determined by mankind, through the power of the Bet Din to say what day is Rosh Chodesh. In contrast, Shabbat is fixed, built in to creation.

This explains, as well, why Pesach is a holiday that revolves around the family. The Egyptians set out to destroy Jewish families and, as punishment, their families were destroyed. On Pesach, we celebrate the family, recognizing that “inner point” that is passed by heredity from generation to generation. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom)

Many reasons have been offered for why the Shabbat before Pesach is called “Shabbat Ha’gadol” / the Great Shabbat. R’ Pinchas Menachem Alter z”l (1926-1996; long-time Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Sfas Emes in Yerushalayim, and later the Gerrer Rebbe) teaches:

The Torah cites two reasons for observing Shabbat. First, Shabbat commemorates Creation (see Bereishit 2:3). In addition, it commemorates the Exodus (see Devarim 5:15). [See below.]

Before the Exodus, only the first of these reasons existed. However, as we prepare to commemorate the Exodus, we realize that Shabbat is now greater.

He adds: Notably, the Gematria of the phrase from Kiddush, “Ve’Shabbat kodsha” / “Shabbat, His holy [day]” (1118) is the same as the Gematria of “Zecher Yetzi’at Mitzrayim” / “a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt” and of “Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad,” the basic declaration of our faith. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Pnei Menachem p.9)

How does Shabbat commemorate the Exodus?

R’ Avraham ibn Ezra z”l (1089-1164; Spain, France and England) explains that just as we rested from our slavery after the Exodus, so we should permit our slaves to rest on Shabbat.

R’ Moshe ben Nachman z”l (Ramban; 1194-1270; Spain and Eretz Yisrael) writes: R’ Avraham ibn Ezra’s explanation is not correct. Ramban also disagrees with the explanation of Rambam z”l (“Maimonides”), who writes that, when we were slaves in Egypt, we had no time to rest. Now, when we rest, we should remember the Exodus and be grateful for Hashem’s kindness.
Rather, *Ramban* writes, the miracles of the Exodus demonstrate G-d’s ability to do with nature as He wishes, which is proof that He is the Creator. Thus, both reasons for *Shabbat*: Creation and the Exodus--testify to the same thing.

“Behold! I send you Eliya Hanavi, before the great and awesome day of Hashem. He will restore the heart of fathers to children and the heart of children to their fathers . . .” (*Malachi* 3:23-24 – *Haftarah* for *Shabbat Ha’gadol*).

In an essay entitled “The Fathers and the Sons,” R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (see above) writes:

“There are many aspects to redemption, and each brings salvation in some form. However, if even one aspect is missing, the redemption is incomplete. Moreover, a darker situation may arise as a result.

“Every division is a form of Galut (literally, ‘exile’), and every coming together is a redemption. Certainly, however, the most dangerous division is the division between fathers and sons. Thus, when Hashem chooses a metaphor for the exile, He says (see *Berachot* 3a), ‘Woe to sons who have been exiled from their father’s table.’ In contrast, the highlight of the redemption will be when the hearts of fathers will be restored to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.

“The redemption from Egypt, the root of all redemptions, began by revealing the wonders of Bnei Yisrael’s allegiance to their families. Just as ‘with Yaakov, each man and his household came’ (*Shmot* 1:1), so, when they left, the sons were attached to their fathers. ‘And it shall be when your children say to you . . .’ (*Shmot* 12:26 & 13:14). Even the wicked son, although he asks with Chutzpah, nevertheless bows his head to his father and grandfather and awaits an answer. (*Mei Marom: Ma’ayanei Ha’yeshuah, Ikvita De’meshicha* Ch. 2)

“Behold! I am sending you Eliyahu the prophet, before the great and awesome day of Hashem.” (*Malachi* 3:23 – *Haftarah* for *Shabbat Ha’gadol*)

R’ Avraham Yoffen z’l (1887-1970; Rosh Yeshiva of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bialystok, Poland; New York and Yerushalayim) writes: This verse reminds us of Moshe Rabbeinu’s announcement to Bnei Yisrael in Egypt that they would be redeemed. The fact that our Sages enacted reading this on the *Shabbat* before *Pesach* teaches us that, in this month of redemption, we not only must remind ourselves anew of the Exodus from Egypt, we also must prepare ourselves for the future redemption. The roots of the future redemption are found within the Exodus, as the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 91b) observes in connection with the verse (*Shmot* 15:1), “Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael will sing.” The Gemara notes: The verse does not say, “sang,” as would have been appropriate for an event that occurred long ago at the Yam Suf, but rather, “will sing.” This is an allusion in the Torah to the future *Techiyat Ha’meitim* / Resurrection of the Dead. [Until here from the Gemara]

Therefore, continues R’ Yoffen, it is incumbent upon us, as we busy ourselves with remembering the Exodus, to also examine our present state and determine whether we are
preparing ourselves for the Redemption. We must ask ourselves whether we have fulfilled (Shmot 12:21), “Draw forth and buy for yourselves one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Pesach-offering,” according to the interpretation of the Midrash Mechilta: “Draw yourselves away from false gods and cling to Mitzvot.”

R’ Yoffen continues: The Haftarah speaks of a general malaise in the Jewish People’s service of G-d; for example (3:13), “You said, ‘Serving Elokim is useless, and what did we gain from keeping His charge or from walking submissively before Hashem, Master of Legions?’” The prophet speaks of a world where it appears that dishonesty does pay, where successful people take advantage of widows and orphans without consequences to themselves; a world that advances in all areas of science, leading it to deny the existence of higher values.

In such an age, one might think that the quality of our Mitzvot does not matter; as long as we are going through the motions of performing Mitzvot, G-d is pleased. To counter this view, writes R’ Yoffen, the prophet says (3:18), “Then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves Elokim and one who does not serve Him. The Gemara (Chagigah 9b) teaches that “one who serves Elokim” refers to a person who reviews his learning 101 times, while “one who does not serve Him” refers to a person who reviews his learning “only” 100 times. Each additional bit of effort that is put into a Mitzvah is noticed by Hashem and makes a difference. Hashem values every single good deed, even a single good word, and, on the other hand, the depth of G-d’s judgment for any laxity in serving him is great. No detail is ignored! (Ha’mussar Ve’ha’daat: Shmot/Vayikra p.143)
The Big Picture

“Rabbi Eliezer says, ‘The world was created in Tishrei.’ Rabbi Yehoshua says, ‘The world was created in Nissan.’” (Rosh Hashanah 10b)

R’ Yisrael Hofstein z”l (1737-1815; Chassidic Rebbe, known as the Maggid of Kozhnnitz) writes that there is no dispute about when the physical creation of the world took place. Rabbi Yehoshua, who says that the world was created in Nissan, is merely observing that, like a fetus concealed within its mother, Hashem’s dominion over the world was not recognizable until the Exodus, which occurred in Nissan.

R’ Michel Zilber shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Zvhil yeshiva in Yerushalayim) explains: In fact, the world was not created in Tishrei or in Nissan, but rather on the 25th of Elul. What occurred on the first day of Tishrei was the creation of man. Why, then, does Rabbi Eliezer say the world was created in Tishrei? Because, until there was a being (man) capable of recognizing the Creator, the purpose of the world’s creation was unrealized.

Given that the purpose of Creation was not fulfilled--in a sense, Creation had not yet occurred--as long as Hashem was not recognized, Rabbi Yehoshua says that Creation cannot be said to have been until Nissan. Before the Exodus, Hashem was hidden. Man could, and did, erroneously attribute divine powers to heavenly bodies and forces of nature. Only the miracles of the Exodus changed that so that Hashem was known and the purpose of Creation was realized. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ba’yam Derech p. 9)

Rabbeinu Asher z”l (1250-1327; Germany and Spain; one of the three pillars of Halachah on whose works the Shulchan Aruch is based) writes: Trust in Hashem with all your heart and believe in His Hashgachah Peratit / Divine Providence [explained below]. In this way, you will fulfill in your heart the complete Yichud / Oneness [also explained below], i.e., when you believe that His Eyes roam the entire world, watching all the ways of man and examining man’s heart and man’s thoughts. On the other hand, one who does not believe (Shmot 20:2), “He is the One who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery,” also does not believe (ibid.), “I am Hashem, your Elokim.” That person has not made a complete Yichud. This is the uniqueness of Yisrael over all other nations, and this is the foundation of the entire Torah. (Orchot Chaim No. 26)

R’ David Cohen shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) explains: Rabbeinu Asher is teaching that the Mitzvah of believing in the Yichud / Oneness of Hashem, the Mitzvah found in the first verse of the Aseret Ha’dibrot, has two parts: believing in Hashem’s existence and believing in His Hashgachah Peratit / Divine Providence. Hashgachah Peratit means that Hashem’s Eyes roam the entire world, watching all the ways of man and examining man’s heart and man’s thoughts, and that He conducts the world in accordance with man’s actions, giving each person positive or negative consequences as appropriate. [The latter follows logically from the fact that He is watching, since He must be doing so for a reason.] One’s Emunah / faith is incomplete unless it includes both matters. If one believes that Hashem exists but does not believe in Hashgachah Peratit, his Emunah is incomplete. From where do we learn that Hashem watches man’s actions and reacts accordingly? From the events of the Exodus. (Mizmor Le’David I p.153)
R’ Nosson Yehuda Leib (Leibel) Mintzberg z”l (1943-2018; rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: When we carefully examine the relevant verses of the Torah and Prophets, we discover that Exodus is important for two reasons. Most importantly, the Exodus is when Hashem became our Elokim and King and we became His nation. This is reflected in the verse (Shmot 6:7), “I shall take you to Me for a people and I shall be an Elokim to you; and you shall know that I am Hashem your Elokim, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.” Secondarily, through the wonders of the Exodus, it was revealed to all that Hashem runs the world and there is none like Him.

R’ Mintzberg continues: We must understand the concept, “Elokim of Yisrael,” which is one of the fundamentals of Judaism. This means that, in addition to being the G-d of the entire world, He wishes to have a “private” kingdom, and that is the nation of Yisrael. Just as a human emperor has numerous subjects, but he has a family and inner circle with whom he has a different type of relationship, so it is with Hashem.

From Hashem’s perspective, this means that He directs our affairs with special attention (Hashgachah Peratit). Thus we say in the blessing after Shema (“Emet V’emunah”), all of which, writes R’ Mintzberg, is devoted to our special relationship with Hashem: “He redeems us from the power of kings, our King who delivers us from the hand of all the cruel tyrants ... Who led us upon the heights of our enemies and raised our pride above all who hate us.” From our perspective, because He is our Elokim, we have a special obligation to serve Him and honor Him differently than all other nations. We accepted upon ourselves to carry the banner of Hashem, to serve Him loyally, and to occupy ourselves with His affairs in this world.

R’ Mintzberg concludes: From the Torah and Prophets we learn that the fact that Hashem redeemed us so that we will be His nation is the source of our special assignment: to be devoted to the service of Hashem and to the performance of Mitzvot. All this follows from the fact that He is our Elokim, and that came about through the Exodus. (Ben Melech: Pesach ma’mar 1)

The Torah teaches that the purpose of the Plagues in Egypt was not only to punish the Egyptians, but also to teach both the Egyptians and Bnei Yisrael about Hashem’s existence and His power. R’ Moshe Chagiz z”l (1671-1750; Yerushalayim and Amsterdam) notes that many articles of faith can be learned from the Parashot dealing with our slavery in Egypt and the Exodus. These include:

- Hashem exists, as is written (6:2), “I am Hashem.”
- Hashem is Echod / unique, as is written (9:14), “So that you shall know that there is none like Me in all the world.”
- Hashgachah, i.e., that Hashem pays attention to individual beings, as is written (8:18), “I am Hashem in the midst of the land.”
- Hashem rewards and punishes [as each person deserves], as is written (11:7), “So that you shall know that Hashem will have differentiated between Egypt and Yisrael.”
Hashem speaks to mankind through prophets that He sends as His messengers, as is written (3:10), “Now, go and I shall dispatch you to Pharaoh.”

The prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu was on a higher level than that of other prophets, as is written (7:1), “Aharon your brother shall be your spokesman,” i.e., not on the same level as you (Moshe).

Hashem brings about miracles and wonders as He pleases, which is absolute proof that He created the world. All of the plagues demonstrate this, for He changed every aspect of nature – land and sea and everything in them -- at His Will. From this it follows, as well, that He preceded everything, which means He always existed.

Hashem knows the future and what is in people’s hearts, as is written (3:19), “I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go.” (As an aside, R’ Chagiz writes that this verse addresses the much-discussed apparent paradox between “Yedi’ah” / Hashem’s knowledge of the future and “Bechirah” / man’s free will. The verse states, “I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, v’lo [usually translated, ‘except through’] a strong hand,” i.e., Hashem’s “strong arm.” However, the verse may be translated, “I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, but there is no strong hand,” i.e., even though I know what choice Pharaoh will make, that does not compel his choice.)

Every person has the free will to be righteous like Moshe or wicked like Pharaoh, as is written (7:13), “The heart of Pharaoh was strong.” Even though Pharaoh saw clear evidence that Hashem had sent Moshe, he still was able to choose wickedness.

Hashem hears the cries of the poor and oppressed, as is written (6:5), “Also, I have heard the groan of Bnei Yisrael.”

Hashem will redeem us in the future at the hand of a prophet as He did in Egypt, as is written (3:14), “I Shall Be As I Shall Be.” [As I am with them in this exile and will redeem them, so I will be with them in future exiles and will redeem them.] In addition, the entire account of the Exodus gives us hope and confidence.

A person should not attribute events to chance; rather, when things happen to him, he should repent, as even Pharaoh eventually did, confessing (9:27), “Hashem is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the wicked ones.”

All creations do Hashem’s bidding, and He can use even the smallest of them as His agent, as is evident from the Plagues.

One must give his life in Hashem’s service [as the frogs did].

Hashem does not desire the death of the wicked, but rather that they repent, as is evident from the repeated warnings Pharaoh was given.

Hashem takes away life and gives it back, as happened to the snake which turned into a stick and back into a snake.

The Torah is of Divine origin, as is written (3:12), “You will serve Elokim on this mountain,” i.e., Har Sinai.

Hashem despises evil, as is written (3:7), “I have indeed seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt, and I have heard its outcry because of its taskmasters.”
R’ Chagiz concludes: Because of all of these lessons, it is Hashem’s desire that we remember all of the wonders that He did in Egypt, and it is our duty to do so every day. (Eileh Ha’mitzvot No.21)

R’ Ben Zion Gossenbauer z”l (Komarno, Galicia; early 20th century) lists a number of lessons and benefits that one can take away from different parts of the Pesach Haggadah, including some parts that seem to be tangential:

(1) We learn from the Haggadah that even when a situation seems hopeless, it is not, for Hashem is capable of saving a person from any predicament. This is why we recite, “Ha lachma anya . . .,” for it alludes to the very difficult straits that Bnei Yisrael were in before the Exodus.

(2) Relating the story of the Exodus instills in a person faith in the Creator and the belief that no one can move a muscle absent His Will. We should not think that our ancestors could not save themselves from Pharaoh only because they were poor or not wise. No one could have saved himself without Hashem’s intervention! Therefore, the Haggadah relates, even wise men like Rabbi Akiva and rich men like Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah must relate the story of the Exodus.

(3) The Haggadah teaches that when G-d decrees that a person should suffer, that suffering will not last a moment longer than was decreed, but it could end earlier as a result of a person’s prayer. This is why we tell the wise son the laws of afikoman, which alludes to the “chipazon” / the hurried exit of Bnei Yisrael from Egypt.

(4) The word “Sippur” / “telling a story” alludes to the gem called “sapir” / “sapphire.” This is because by telling the story of the Exodus, we cause great spiritual lights to shine from the Upper Worlds. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shulchan Ha’thahor p.54)

R’ Yehuda Loewe z”l (the Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes: The Exodus is the foundation of our faith on which everything else rests. This refers, not to the miracles that occurred in connection with that event, but to the mere fact that there was an Exodus, as will be explained below. Anyone who believes that there was ever in Jewish history a greater miracle than the Exodus is simply unaware of the Torah’s viewpoint on the matter, writes Maharal.

The Midrash analogizes Hashem’s role in the Exodus to a goldsmith who reaches into the fire to remove the gold and also to a shepherd who reaches into an animal’s womb to birth the offspring. Why does the Midrash offer two analogies? Maharal explains that the Exodus must be seen from two perspectives.

First, like a goldsmith who reaches into the fire to remove the gold, Hashem reached into the most powerful nation on earth and freed its slaves. Second, like a shepherd who reaches into an animal’s womb to birth the offspring, who is connected to the mother by an umbilical cord, Hashem separated Bnei Yisrael from their attachment to Egypt and freed them.

Maharal continues: Bnei Yisrael’s existence in Egypt was deficient in two respects. First, they were slaves, not a free nation. That was a physical deficiency. Second, the descendants of Avraham Avinu were subjugated to the most debased and immoral nation on earth. That was a spiritual deficiency.
The Exodus cured both of these deficiencies.

(Why was a lofty nation--Yisrael--enslaved specifically by the lowliest nation? Maharal explains that the inherent uniqueness of the Jewish People is an all-or-nothing proposition. Either we maintain our level or we fall to the lowest possible depths.) (Gevurot Hashem, chapters 3-4)

Why does Maharal mention in the explanation above that Bnei Yisrael are descendants of Avraham, as if that fact made their oppression at the hands of the Egyptians worse?

Perhaps it is because Avraham was the pillar of chessed / kindness, whereas the Egyptians, by oppressing Bnei Yisrael, turned their backs on the kindness that a Jew (Yosef) had done for them. Had Bnei Yisrael been a people with a callous nature, not a kind people, perhaps they would have suffered less from the ingratitude of the Egyptians. In fact, however, the Jewish People have inherited the trait of chessed from their ancestor Avraham.

Our Sages teach that the purpose of the exile in Egypt was so that we would develop emunah / faith in Hashem. One might ask, however: why did the enslavement have to be so harsh? R’ Alexander Aryeh Mandelbaum shlita (Yerushalayim) offers several explanations:

(1) “Emunah,” by definition, means believing in something that one cannot see. If life is going well and all signs point to the existence of a loving G-d, there is no room for emunah. Therefore, the Jewish People could attain the pinnacle of emunah only by going through the darkest of times.

(2) One of the fundamentals of our belief is that Hashem’s “Yichud” (Uniqueness and Oneness) will ultimately be revealed--indeed, this is one of the reasons why Hashem created the world. R’ Moshe Chaim Luzzato z”l (Ramchal; 1707-1746) writes that Hashem's Yichud is apparent only when He reveals that He is more powerful than any other force on earth. This, in turn, requires that evil be given free rein for a time, after which Hashem will vanquish it and be revealed--exactly what happened in Egypt.

(3) The Egyptians were a very arrogant people, as demonstrated by Pharaoh’s question to Moshe (Shmot 5:2): “Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?” Living in Egypt, Bnei Yisrael acquired this trait of arrogance, a characteristic that would have precluded their attaining the unity necessary to receive the Torah. The only solution was to subdue them to the point of hopelessness, and then to redeem them and have them submit humbly to Hashem's dominion. (Ha’ylah Ha’zeh p.52)
Why is Bedikat Chametz / the search for Chametz carried out at night? Commentaries explain that Chametz is a metaphor for the Yetzer Ha’ra. Since the Yetzer Ha’ra takes advantage of darkness, as explained below, it is in the darkness that we must seek it out.

Darkness causes two undesirable consequences. Firstly, it causes people to trip over unexpected obstacles. The Yetzer Ha’ra also places unexpected obstacles in people’s way. Thus we read in Mishlei (4:19), “The way of the wicked is like darkness, they do not know upon what they stumble.”

Secondly, it causes even familiar territory to become confusing. In the dark, one may think that a door is a wall or a wall is a door, or that gold is iron or iron is gold. So, too, under the influence of the Yetzer Ha’ra, one may think that a sin is a Mitzvah or that a Mitzvah is a sin.

There is a story popular among Yemenite Jews about a widow named Sadah who was very punctilious in her observance of Mitzvot. When she heard that the prophets promise that the miracles of the future redemption will be equal to those of the Exodus, she concluded that Mashiach will come on the Seder night. Throughout the Seder, which she observed at a neighbor’s house, she watched the door carefully, waiting for Mashiach to enter and redeem all those assembled. Alas, he did not come by the time the Seder had ended.

In the meantime, Sadah drank four cups of wine, the hour grew late, and her eyelids began to grow heavy. She desperately wanted to sleep, but just as desperately, she wanted to stay awake to greet Mashiach. Wearily, she made her way home and, fighting off sleep for a short while, she hit upon an idea:

Our Sages say that Mashiach will arrive riding a donkey. Surely, if Mashiach arrived while Sadah was sleeping, her donkey would prance and bray to greet its cousin bearing the redeemer. Realizing this, Sadah took a rope and joined her leg to her donkey’s leg. That way, when her donkey saw Mashiach’s donkey, its movement would awaken her.

However, Sadah was not aware of another teaching of our Sages which says (Berachot 3a) that donkeys commonly prance and bray in the first third of the night. Sure enough, Sadah’s donkey took off running through town, all the while dragging the unfortunate widow behind it. This was painful indeed for Sadah, but in her heart she rejoiced, for surely Mashiach had arrived!

All of the neighbors were awakened by Sadah’s screams of pain mixed with cries of joy. Quickly they reined in her donkey and helped her to her feet. Only then did she learn, to her dismay, that Mashiach had not arrived.
What does this parable teach? It illustrates that sometimes we are seduced to perform what we believe to be a Mitzvah, when in fact it is the Yetzer Ha’ra that is motivating us. For a young yeshiva student, there might be a Yetzer Ha’ra to learn Torah all night, forgetting that this causes one to sleep through the next morning’s prayers. For others, it is the Yetzer Ha’ra to speak lashon hara about a neighbor who, we tell ourselves, is so evil it is a Mitzvah to speak about him. About this the prophet says (Yishayahu 5:20): “Woe to those who speak of evil as good and as good of evil; who make darkness into light and light into darkness . . .”

The first step in eliminating this darkness is to light the candle of Bedikat Chametz. With it, one should search every nook and every corner until the trickery of the Yetzer Ha’ra is rooted out. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Avoteinu Sipru Lanu p.11)

While discussing the laws of Bedikat Chametz / searching for Chametz, the Gemara (Pesachim 8b) states: “If there is a hole in the wall between a Jew’s home and an Aramean’s home, one should examine [for Chametz] as far [into the hole] as his hand reaches, and the remainder, he should nullify in his heart. The sage Plaimo says: He should not search there at all, because it is dangerous. [The Gemara asks:] What is the danger? If you are concerned that the neighbor will think the Jew is practicing witchcraft against his neighbor, then how did the Chametz get there in the first place? [In other words, one is required to search for Chametz only in places where he might have put Chametz. If you argue that a person should not use the holes in the walls because his neighbor might suspect him of practicing witchcraft, then how could there be Chametz there and why should the place be searched at all? The Gemara answers:] Perhaps he placed Chametz there in daylight, whereas the neighbor will not suspect the Jew of witchcraft until he sees the candle light [from Bedikat Chametz] coming through the hole.”

Obviously, on a most basic level, the above passage is a legal discussion. However, R’ Yitzchak Dadon shlitat (a senior Kollel member at Yeshivat Merkaz Harav in Yerushalayim) finds another message there as well. He writes:

The Gemara’s discussion obviously involves the Jewish People in a state of exile, where gentiles have the upper hand. In such a state, a Jew cannot fully differentiate himself from his neighbors in order to realize the level described in our Yom Tov prayers: “Atah vechartanu mi’kol ha’amim . . .” / “You have chosen us from among the nations . . .” Nevertheless, one must examine as far as his hand reaches, i.e., a Jew must differentiate his thoughts and behavior to the extent that he can. To the extent that he cannot, he must at least nullify in his heart the Chametz, i.e., those negative elements of the surrounding culture that deserve to be nullified.

The sage Plaimo argues that even that is too much to ask of a Jew in exile. Only in the daytime, i.e., when the Jewish People are secure and tranquil in their homeland, is it safe for the Jew to hold himself out as a light onto the nations. In the darkness of the exile, the “candle” that the Jew holds out may itself cause antagonism from his neighbors. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ayelet Ha’shachar p.10)
R’ Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam z”l (1905-1994; Klausenberger Rebbe) writes: It is customary to put out ten pieces of bread before Bedikat Chametz so that the person conducting the search will find them. These ten pieces of bread are then left to be burned the next morning. The Klausenberger Rebbe suggest that these ten pieces of bread allude to the ten sons of Haman. As we prepare to celebrate our redemption on Pesach, we recall the trait that the ten sons of Haman shared with many of our enemies: their inability to see the handwriting on the wall, cut their losses, and save themselves. Haman’s wife predicted his downfall, but Haman’s sons did not run away to save themselves. Even after Haman was hanged—which happened on Pesach, eleven months before the appointed day for the Jewish People and their enemies to do battle--Haman’s sons didn’t react. The same trait, writes the Klausenberger Rebbe, a concentration camp survivor, was evident in the Germans. Long after it was clear that they would lose the war, concentration camp guards refused to run away and save themselves; they waited to be captured. To recall this aspect of our salvation, which repeats itself throughout history, the ten pieces of bread are left to wait to meet their end. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Halichot Chaim p.11)

בּוּרְ חַמֵּץ

כָל חַמֵּץ וְהָמִישָׁה דְּאָכָא בֵּרְשִׁית דְּחַתָּה חַלָּא חוּתָה, דְּחַתָּה וְדָלָא חוּתָה.

בֵּעֵרְ חַמֵּץ טַלָא בֶּעָרָה, לֶבֶטָל לְחָא וְפֶסֶרְ חַמֵּץ דָּאָרְא.

Our Sages use “Chametz” as a metaphor for the Yetzer Ha’ra, and they teach that, along with searching for and destroying leavened bread, one should search his soul and eliminate the evil inclination from within himself. This idea is expressed in the prayers printed in many haggadot and which some people recite in conjunction with Bedikat and Bi’ur Chametz.

How, in fact, is the Yetzer Ha’ra like Chametz? R’ Chaim Stein z”l (1912-2011; Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland) explains: We read (Shmot 12:17), “You shall safeguard the matzot.” Literally, this verse is the source of the Mitzvah to eat Shemurah Matzah, i.e., Matzah that was prepared with special safeguards. However, because there are no vowels in the Torah, our Sages read this verse to also say, “You shall safeguard the Mitzvot / commandments.” Based on this reading, our Sages teach: “When a Mitzvah comes your way, do not let it become Chametz,” i.e., do not miss your chance to perform the Mitzvah.

R’ Stein continues: We are used to thinking that a Mitzvah performed with zerizut (loosely translated, “energy and promptness”) gets extra credit, while a Mitzvah performed lackadaisically is also a Mitzvah. That is true in a technical sense [for example, a person who davened at the latest possible minyan did, in fact, daven with a minyan], but the above verse gives us a different perspective. If one delays while baking Matzah and his dough becomes Chametz, he does not have “Chamel Matzah”; in the eyes of Halachah, he has no Matzah at all. Similarly, a Mitzvah performed without zerizut is not merely worse than a Mitzvah performed with zerizut--it is an entirely different creature.

It follows, that the Yetzer Ha’ra doesn’t need to stop us from performing Mitzvot in order to defeat us; the Yetzer Ha’ra wins when we procrastinate and perform Mitzvot without zerizut. That, explains R’ Stein, is why Chametz is a metaphor for the Yetzer Ha’ra.
R’ Stein says further: This metaphor is not merely a “nice thought,” it is part of the essence of the Mitzvah of searching for Chametz. Pesach is the “Time of our Freedom,” not only because it is the time when the Exodus took place, but also because it is a propitious time for a person to be freed from his Yetzer Ha’ra. Of course, the “idea” is no substitute for the “action.” One who eradicates his Yetzer Ha’ra but leaves Chametz in his house has not performed the Mitzvah. At the same time, the complete fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Bedikat Chametz requires one to search for his Yetzer Ha’ra within himself.

R’ Stein illustrates this idea using another Mitzvah: Halachic authorities from the Rambam to the Mishnah Berurah remind us that withholding food from oneself on a fast day is not the main point of fasting; rather, the primary avodah / Divine service on a fast day is prayer and repentance. If one goes through the physical exercise of fasting but doesn’t engage in the day’s spiritual activity, he may have fulfilled the technical Mitzvah, but he has missed the point.

Similarly, if one searches for bread in his house and then burns it, he has fulfilled the technical Mitzvah. But, if doesn’t also search for his Yetzer Ha’ra, he has missed an important part of the Mitzvah. (Emunat Chaim ch.1)
כף.
והזל.
קרס.
ניוצ.
מוכד.
נרצת.
можיא מצת.
מור.
פורד.
שלום עוזר.
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שלום ב' ויהי ערב ויהי בקר

נני ממקי והוסיף לקבץ מעת מתן וראשות המועצות ושיבת חסיד יעקב יהודה ויוסף חיים על יד את חומת טימר

ונעלם בשם כל-שראלי

שבר מטרת ורגנית (רבותי):

ברוט באה כ', אללהי מלך העולמות, בורא פרי היער:

ברוט באה כ', אללהי מלך העולמות, הגדול בין מלכי-ים, ורוממות ראשון, מקדש ימים קדושים. באה כ', אללהי שבתヴァכבה (לשהב בהנהלתו) מוטドイ ממלכתו לעמול,རוגה. מימיה בין עולמיה, אללהי שבתヴァכבה, מקרא קהל, זה לציית Artificial Intelligence. כי כה באב בהנהלת קדושת ימי-הימים. לשהב (שבה) מוטドイ קדושת (לשהב באמובה בברוט) שביחה ובישוריה הנהלות: ברוט באה כ', מקדש (לשהב השבת) יוע来る

(הנתיבות)

(כשהלו ויי במענרטיה שבחו במסיפורים או ברוח הטבלה)

ברוט באה כ', אללהי מלך העולמות, בורא פרי היער:

ברוט באה כ', אללהי מלך העולמות, המובסל בין ימי קדשים ולול ימי ה useContextים, ביניהם קדש שבח ימי-הימים, לשב אמת. כ', המובס בין ימי-הימים, ימי קדשים במיוחד. המבשל האמת את-

ינצק: יושב-בִּכְנָשׁה ב. ברוט באה כ', המי-ביסי בין ימי קדשיםزة

ברוט באה כ', אללהי מלך העולמות, שיחותוככיומונות תורה עורכת ל comando.
“Who has chosen us from every people . . .”

We read in *Yirmiyah* (9:11-12) that *Eretz Yisrael* was destroyed because the Jewish People had “abandoned the Torah.” The *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 81a) explains that the Torah was being actively studied; however, *Birchat Ha’Torah* / the blessings before Torah study were not being recited.

R’ Zvi Yehuda Kook z”l (Rosh Yeshiva of *Yeshivat Merkaz Harav*; died 1982) would regularly comment: One of the *Birchat Ha’Torah* is “Asher bachar banu mikol ha’amim” / “He has chosen us from among all the nations and given us His Torah.” Even if one studies Torah, if he does not recognize his chosenness, he is bringing about destruction. Such Torah study is referred to as “abandoning the Torah.”

In order to avoid this result, R’ Kook recommended, traditional Talmud study must be combined, or even preceded, by the study of works of *emunah*, in particular, the *Kuzari*, which the *Vilna Gaon* said is “holy and pure, and upon which the foundations of *emunah* and Torah hang.” (Quoted in *Haggadah Shel Pesach Ayelet Ha’shachar* p.24)

The Four Cups

“I am Hashem, and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you to Me for a nation and I shall be an *Elokim* to you.” (*Shmot* 6:6-7)

R’ Yitzchak Yerucham Borodiansky shlita (Yeshivat Kol Torah in Yerushalayim) writes: Our Sages instruct that the *Pesach Haggadah* should “begin with degradation and end with praise.” This reflects two different reasons why a person might praise G-d for his situation—either because the person’s situation is good in an absolute sense, or because it is relatively good compared to his prior situation. In the *Haggadah*, we first mention our degradation—we were slaves—and praise G-d for redeeming us. The mere fact that there was a redemption was a relative good compared to the slavery that preceded it. Afterward, we mention the absolute good—He gave us the Torah, took us into *Eretz Yisrael*, and built the *Bet Hamikdash*.

R’ Borodiansky continues: Our Sages refer to the above verses as the “Four Expressions of Redemption,” and one of the reasons we drink four cups of wine at the *Seder* is to represent these four expressions. Note that the first two expressions—“I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service”—describe relative good (freedom from slavery), while the second two—“I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you to Me for a nation”—describe absolute good, i.e., He didn’t just free us from slavery; He made us His special nation. [“Redemption” implies an elevation of status, not merely attaining freedom.] (*Siach Yitzchak: Geulat Mitzrayim* p.16)

The expressions in the above verses are usually understood as relating to different aspects of the redemption from Egypt. In contrast, R’ Yaakov Sakly z”l (Spain; 14th century) sees them as a prophecy regarding a broader range of events in Jewish history. He explains:
• “I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt” -- this means exactly what it says.
• “I shall rescue you from their service” -- this refers to the splitting of the sea. Note that the verse says “their service” (plural). Prior to the Exodus, Bnei Yisrael were slaves to Pharaoh alone. However, in order to encourage his people to accompany him in chasing the escaped slaves, Pharaoh promised them that Bnei Yisrael would serve all of the Egyptian people.
• “I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments” -- this refers to the battle with Amalek at Refidim, which was won when Moshe climbed to the top of a hill and stretched-out his arms. (Of course, R’ Sakly adds, you must understand that it was really the hand of Hashem that saved Bnei Yisrael.)
• “I shall take you to Me for a people” -- this refers to the events following the sin of the Golden Calf. Hashem decreed destruction upon Bnei Yisrael, but Moshe spoke on their behalf and Hashem took them as His nation again.

Finally, “I shall bring you to the land about which I raised My hand” -- this refers to the sin of the spies. Once again, Hashem decreed destruction upon Bnei Yisrael, but Moshe spoke on their behalf and the younger generation was spared. Nevertheless, Moshe did not ask Hashem to reverse the decree entirely and let the older generation live because Hashem had hinted to him with the words “about which I raised My hand” that He had taken an irreversible oath. (Torat Ha’minchah)

R’ Zelig Reuven Bengis z”l (1864-1953; rabbi in Lithuania; later rabbi of the Eidah Ha’chareidis of Yerushalayim) explains that each of the four expressions of redemption represents a different aspect of the subjugation, as well:
• the back-breaking work (paralleled by “I shall rescue”);
• the fact that the work was involuntary, which made it seem even harsher (paralleled by “I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt”);
• the spiritual harm that resulted from the Egyptian influence (paralleled by “I shall take you to Me as a people,” a reference to the giving of the Torah); and
• the damage to Jewish national pride (paralleled by “I shall redeem”).

R’ Bengis writes: In contrast to the last aspect, Hashem restored our national pride and our image in the eyes of the nations through the Exodus, as is written (after the splitting of the Yam Suf--Shmot 15:14), “Nations heard--they were agitated; terror gripped the dwellers of Philistia.” But it is noteworthy, continues R’ Bengis, that the phrase that alludes to the giving of the Torah is mentioned last, for that was the ultimate purpose of the Exodus. (L’flagot Reuven: Haggadah Shel Pesach p.38)
The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Pesachim 10:1) states that the four cups of wine at the *Seder* parallel the four mentions of a “cup” in Parashat Vayeishev (Bereishit 40:11 and 13).

What is the significance of this parallel? Furthermore, asks R’ Yitzchak Arieli z”l (Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and author of the Talmud commentary Enayim La’mishpat), is there not a fifth mention of a cup in Parashat Vayeishev (Bereishit 40:21)?

He explains: The first four mentions of a cup in that Parashah are in a dream, while the fifth is “for real.” We read in Tehilim (126:1), “Shir ha’maalot / A song of ascents, when Hashem will return the captivity of Zion, we will have been like dreamers.” When the redemption comes, the joy will be so great and so palpable that all of the suffering of the four oppressions in our history (at the hands of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, respectively, the last of which continues to the present) will recede into the background as if it was only a bad dream. This is what the four cups in the butler’s dream allude to. The fifth cup, the one that was “for real,” is the cup of Eliyahu Hanavi, the cup of the ultimate redemption. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Gedolei Yerushalayim p. 56)

R’ David Ha’naggid z”l (1224-1300; grandson of Rambam z”l) offers the following additional reasons for drinking four or five cups of wine at the *Seder*:

There are four verses in Tanach where a “cup” alludes to the reward awaiting the righteous. They are: “You anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows” (Tehilim 23:5); “Hashem is my allotted portion and my cup” (Tehilim 16:5); “I will raise the cup of salvations” (Tehilim 116:13); and “So that you may nurse and be sated from the cup of her consolations” (Yeshayah 66:11, as interpreted by the *Talmud Yerushalmi*).

In addition, there are four verses in which a cup alludes to the punishment awaiting the wicked. They are: “Take this cup of the wine of wrath” (Yirmiyah 25:15); “A golden cup was Babylon in the hand of Hashem” (Yirmiyah 51:7); “For there is a cup of punishment in Hashem’s hand” (Tehilim 75:9); and “He will rain down coals upon the wicked; fire and brimstone and a burning blast is their allotted cup” (Tehilim 11:6).

In short, the Four Cups were established to remind us of the consequences of good and bad deeds so that we will destroy the *Yetzer Ha’ra*, which is compared to *Chametz*, from our hearts, our ideas, our thoughts, and our speech—a total of four “parts” of our beings.

In addition, the Four Cups remind us that Hashem saved us from four aspects of the Egyptian exile: laying bricks, applying mortar, having children drowned in the Nile, and not receiving straw to make bricks.

Also, the Four Cups allude to the Four Exiles: Bavel (Babylon), Persia, Greece, and Rome. For those who have a fifth cup, it alludes to the partial exile under the reign of the Ishmaelites; partial, because at least they permit us to live in Yerushalayim, R’ David writes.

Also, for those who drink five cups, they allude to the ten (2 x 5) recitations that are recited over them: Kiddush and Borei Pri Ha’gafen; the Haggadah and Borei Pri Ha’gafen; Birkat Ha’mazon and Borei Pri Ha’gafen; Hallel and Borei Pri Ha’gafen; and Hallel Ha’gadol (Tehilim ch.136) and
Borei Pri Ha'gafen. Together, these ten recitations allude to the Ten Commandments, which were arranged in two columns of five.

Finally, the Four Cups allude to the four Mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael performed prior to leaving Egypt—Brit Milah, Korban Pesach, Matzah and Maror, and the four meritorious practices because of which they desired to be redeemed—not changing their language, not changing their names, not changing their alphabet, and not revealing each others’ secrets. (Midrash Rabbi David Hanaggid al Haggadah Shel Pesach p.30-33)

R’ Yitzchak Nissenbaum z”l (1869-1942; rabbi in Warsaw and early leader of the Mizrachi movement) writes: The Zohar notes that these verses appear to be backwards, for taking Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt would seem to be the end of the redemption, not the first step. However, the correct understanding, based on the Zohar, is as follows:

First, says Hashem, I shall take you out of Egypt. Lest you fear that Pharaoh will chase you (as he did, in fact) and enslave you again, I shall rescue you such that you will never be enslaved by Pharaoh again. Still, you might worry that you will feel indebted to Pharaoh for releasing you, such that you will always have an emotional tie to him. No! says Hashem. I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm, i.e., with such a show of power that there will be no doubt that Pharaoh deserves no gratitude. Lastly, the redemption will not be complete if it is only a physical redemption. Therefore, I shall take you to Me as a people and give you the Torah.

These, continues R’ Nissenbaum, are the elements of a complete redemption. However, the full realization of this redemption is not possible without Eretz Yisrael. Thus, states the next verse, “I shall bring you to the Land about which I raised My hand [i.e., ‘I swore’] to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and I shall give it to you as a heritage.”

Alternatively, R’ Nissenbaum writes, each of the four expressions of redemption in our verses addresses the needs of a different segment of Bnei Yisrael, as follows:

“I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt,” refers to a type of oppression that imposed a special burden—forcing men to do women’s work and vice versa. This also includes forcing people to perform tasks for which they were overqualified, for there is nothing more frustrating for a highly-skilled person than to have to perform menial tasks that do not utilize his skills and training.

“I shall rescue you from their service” refers to the frustration of having to use one’s skills solely for the benefit of another nation (“their service”) and not in the service of one’s own people.

“I shall redeem you” is addressed to those of Bnei Yisrael who were bothered more by the attempts to subjugate their spirits rather than by physical oppression. For them, it was irrelevant whether the servitude was back-breaking or not, since any form of subjugation to a foreign power was unacceptable.

Lastly, “I shall take you to Me as a nation” refers to those who thought that they didn’t need to be redeemed, so long as they could to serve G-d right there in the diaspora. They needed to be taught: No! There is no future for the nation without being “taken” from our present circumstances. (Kinyanei Kedem)
Why are four expressions of redemption necessary? Why isn't one enough?

Chida answers: These four expressions allude to four separate stages of the unfolding Exodus: (1) The Plagues began one year before the Exodus, and surely that resulted in some lightening of Bnei Yisrael’s enslavement. (2) Six months later, in the month of Tishrei, the enslavement ended entirely. (3) In Nissan, they were redeemed. Nevertheless, they were not entirely free, because another king could have captured them and enslaved them. That is why Hashem split the sea, which (4) demonstrated His special relationship with Bnei Yisrael and frightened all of the nations of the world. [This highlights the audacity of Amalek, the one nation that was not intimidated.]

This, concludes Chida, is the meaning of the above verses: “I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt” alludes to lightening their enslavement. “I shall rescue you from serving them” refers to ending the slavery. “I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments” hints at the actual Exodus. Lastly, “I shall take you to Me for a people” refers to Hashem’s demonstrating that we are His people, and no one else’s.

The Gemara (Pesachim 109b) records the following statement by the Sage Ravina: “The Rabbis established four cups of wine, and each is a separate Mitzvah.” In the light of the above explanation, writes Chida, i.e., that each cup represents a separate aspect of the redemption, we understand why each cup is a separate Mitzvah. (Petach Einayim)

After the verses discussed above, there is a fifth promise (Shmot 6:8): “I shall bring you to the land about which I raised My hand to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and I shall give it to you as a heritage -- I am Hashem.” Seemingly, this promise was never fulfilled, since the generation of the Exodus died in the desert! R’ Moshe Zuriel shlita (former Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivat Sha’alvim) explains:

It is true that the generation of the Exodus did not enter Eretz Yisrael in their physical bodies. Nevertheless, they did inherit portions in Eretz Yisrael. Specifically, when Bnei Yisrael conquered the Land, it was not divided among those who entered the Eretz Yisrael. Rather, it was divided among those who had left Egypt--although nearly all of them were now in the grave--and then passed forward to their heirs. Since the body is not the essence of the person, owning a share of Eretz Yisrael without being physically present there is also a form of entering the Land.

In any event, R’ Zuriel continues, they actually did enter the Land because the Sinai Desert is also part of Eretz Yisrael. This is stated in the 11th century work Kuzari, in explanation of how Moshe Rabbeinu could be initiated into prophecy at Har Sinai, something that is impossible outside of Eretz Yisrael. (Drishat Tzion)
"Ha lachma anya / This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry--let him come and eat! Whoever is needy--let him come and share Pesach! Now, we are here; next year may we be in Eretz Yisrael! Now, we are slaves; next year may we be free men!"

Commentaries ask many questions about this invitation, among them: (1) Why do we invite guests now, after kiddush? (2) What good is this invitation if we recite it sitting in our dining rooms behind a closed front door? (3) How can we say “Whoever is needy--let him come and share Pesach” when, according to Halachah, the korban Pesach may be shared only with those who made such arrangements before the lamb was slaughtered?

R’ Eliezer Ashkenazi z”l (1513-1583; rabbi in Egypt, Cyprus, Italy and Poland) offers a novel explanation of “Ha lachma anya” which answers these and some of the other commonly asked questions. He writes that this paragraph is not an invitation at all, but rather a lamentation composed on the first Pesach night after the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. Sitting at their Seder tables, the Jewish People remembered the glory of the Seder when the table was graced by the korban Pesach and surrounded by family and friends who had joined together in advance as Halachah requires. Remembering this, they said, “Our fare at this Seder is reminiscent of the lachma anya / poor man’s bread which our ancestors ate in Egypt, not the sumptuous feasts that we had when the Temple stood. Now, anyone who is hungry can come and eat, and anyone who needs to can come and remember the korban Pesach, unlike last year when advance reservations were required by Halachah. This year, we are here, but next year, may we be back in Yerushalayim as we were before the Destruction.” (Ma’asei Hashem)
R’ Yaakov Lorberbaum z”l (Poland; 1760-1832; the “Nesivos”) explains this passage similarly, except for the ending, “Now we are here…” He writes: Given that now, after the Temple’s destruction, we are eating the same lachma anya that our ancestors ate in Egypt, one might wonder why we are celebrating! Does a prisoner in jail celebrate the anniversary of his release from a prior incarceration?

The answer is that the Exodus was not like any other release from imprisonment. Rather, because of the bond that we formed with Hashem through the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah, we are confident that, although “now, we are here; next year” we will “be in Eretz Yisrael” (“This year here; next year, in Eretz Yisrael.”)

R’ Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z”l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: Those things which are not based on what already exists require substantial preparation before they come to fruition. However, that which is innate in nature and is only being held back from being realized by external forces will blossom into existence as soon as those external forces are removed.

Our relationship to Eretz Yisrael is not coincidental, but rather natural and of Divine origin. Our entire being is tied to Eretz Yisrael, and any distance between us and it is merely the result of our sins. Thus we can realistically believe that by next year we will already be in Eretz Yisrael. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Olat Re’iyah)

Why does the recitation of “Mah nishtanah” follow immediately after the recitation of “Hah lachma anya”? R’ Yosef Chaim of Baghdad z”l (died 1909) explains: In Hah lachma ania we proclaim: “Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat! Who ever is in need let him come and share the Pesach sacrifice!” This confuses our children, so they ask: “Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, you slam the door in beggars’ faces or leave them standing in the front hall. Why, tonight, are you are inviting them into the dining room?” (Haggadah Shel Pesach Orach Chaim p.85)
R’ Ben Zion Nesher shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) writes: The child says in Mah Nishtanah, “On all other nights we eat Chametz and Matzah . . .” This implies that on all other nights, except for the Seder night, we are obligated, or at least accustomed, to eat both Chametz and Matzah. However, that is not the case!

R’ Nesher explains: [One of those who is obligated to bring a Korban Todah is someone who was imprisoned and was freed.] The Korban Pesach is a form of thanksgiving-offering, expressing our gratitude for the fact that we were freed from Egypt. Therefore, the child asks: On all other nights when we have a Korban Todah to eat, we eat both Chametz and Matzah. (See Vayikra 7:12-13: “If he shall offer it for a Todah / thanksgiving-offering, he shall offer with the Todah - Matzah / unleavened loaves mixed with oil, Matzah wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of scalded fine flour mixed with oil. With loaves of Chametz / leavened bread shall he bring his offering, with his thanksgiving peace-offering.”) Why, then, is the Korban Pesach--the thanksgiving-offering that we eat on the Seder night--accompanied only by Matzah, not by Chametz?

What is the answer to the child’s question? R’ Nesher explains: When a person is saved from danger, there is both a physical and a spiritual component, for surely a Jew has no desire for physical life without a spiritual aspect. If not for the fact that the body that was saved has been given another chance to serve Hashem, what would be the point of being saved?!

R’ Nesher concludes: The physical and spiritual aspects are represented by the heavier Chametz loaves and lighter Matzah loaves, respectively, that accompany the Korban Todah. Both are brought, because both aspects were saved. At the Seder, however, we wish to emphasize that we were not saved from bondage in Egypt in order to be free physically. Rather, we were saved in order to serve Hashem. Therefore, we eat only Matzah with the thanksgiving-offering on Pesach. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.44)

"Matzot shall be eaten throughout the seven-day period; no Chametz may be seen in your possession, nor may leaven be seen in your possession in all your borders." (Shmot 13:7)

R’ Yosef Gikitila z”l (1248-1310; Spain; author of the influential work of kabbalah, Sha’arei Orah) asks: Why is the prohibition against Chametz so strict that, not only does it carry a severe punishment, one is prohibited to consume or even possess a minuscule amount of it? In contrast, there are other prohibitions -- for example, the prohibitions against drinking blood or eating certain fats -- which we can seemingly understand; while they certainly have hidden reasons, they also seem to have rational, health-related reasons. Yet, despite the important benefits of these Mitzvot, they do not seem to be as strict! Indeed, if the prohibition against Chametz is so important, why does it last for only one week?

R’ Gikitila explains: The Torah “designed” this Mitzvah to cause us to ask “Mah nishtanah” / “How, or why, is it different?” Through the reflection that this question engenders [rather than through a direct answer to the question], we are meant to realize the significance of the Exodus, i.e., that it foreshadows all the good that Hashem has promised to give to us, for both our bodies and our souls, in all time periods thereafter. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tzofnat Paneach)
“Had not the Holy One, Blessed is He, taken our fathers out from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children’s children would have remained subjugated to Pharaoh in Egypt.”

The question is well known: Why do we assume that we would still be in Egypt thousands of years later when, throughout world history, kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall? Who is to say that we would not have left Egypt in time through natural means? Furthermore, what is the purpose of speculating; didn’t G-d promise Avraham that we would be redeemed?

R’ Yitzchak Yerucham Borodiansky shlita (Yeshivat Kol Torah in Yerushalayim) explains: We find that Yaakov was afraid as he prepared to meet Esav, notwithstanding G-d’s promise to protect him. Our Sages explain that his fear of Esav was due to his fear that he might have sinned and lost G-d’s protection. This teaches that no promise can be relied upon to counteract a sin, which is a rebellion against G-d. Similarly, once Bnei Yisrael sinned [either the brothers against Yosef, or their descendants by practicing idolatry in Egypt], G-d’s promise was at risk of being voided.

Nevertheless, perhaps we might have been freed as history progressed? To answer this we need to understand that it was not a chance of history that Bnei Yisrael were slaves to Pharaoh. It was a manifestation of a Heavenly decree. Commenting on the verse (Devarim 4:34), “Has any god ever miraculously come to take for himself a nation from amidst a nation?” our Sages say, “Like a shepherd births a lamb from a ewe.” This indicates how Bnei Yisrael were tied to Egypt by the decree of Heaven, and no historical event could have broken that bond if G-d had not brought about the Exodus. (Siach Yitzchak: Geulat Mitzrayim p.18)

R’ Yosef Chaver z”l (Lithuania; 19th century) notes that the Haggadah does not say, “We . . . would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt,” but rather, “We . . . would have remained subjugated to Pharaoh in Egypt.” He explains: Egypt was a land where a belief in astrology and the supposed powers of the heavenly bodies reigned supreme. The purpose of the Ten Plagues was to demonstrate that those powers are false, and that Hashem is in control of every detail of existence. Not only the Egyptians needed this education; Bnei Yisrael needed it too. Thus the Haggadah teaches, “Had not the Holy One, Blessed is He, taken our fathers out from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children’s children would have remained subjugated [to the false beliefs of] Pharaoh in Egypt. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Zorea Netuyah)

R’ Zevulun Hamburger shlita (Yerushalayim) asks: Our Sages state that the world was created conditionally and that the entire universe would have ceased to exist if Bnei Yisrael had not received the Torah. How then would we, our children, and our children’s children have remained subjugated to Pharaoh in Egypt if there had been no Exodus? To the contrary, we would not even exist!
He explains: Surely we would have left Egypt and received the Torah at some point. However, the Arizal teaches that, had Bnei Yisrael remained in Egypt one more instant, they would have sunk to the fiftieth level of impurity from which there is no climbing out. In that case, even after the eventual Exodus and even after receiving the Torah, Bnei Yisrael would have remained spiritually subjugated to Pharaoh. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Sha’arei Zevul p.41)

R’ Aharon Lewin z”l Hy”d (1879-1941; rabbi of Rzeszow, Poland) writes: Many have wondered, “Why did G-d do this to Yisrael, the offspring of his beloved Avraham--bringing them to Egypt and handing them over to cruel masters?” He suggests the following answers:

Hashem has chosen us from among all the nations to stand before Him, to serve Him, and to carry the banner of the Torah-- to enlighten the dark world, drive away the clouds of ignorance, and spread knowledge of Hashem everywhere. To make us fitting bearers of this mission, He wanted to implant in us good middot/ character traits, such as empathy, mercy, compassion and pity. How strong such traits are in a person depends on his personal experiences; one who has never experienced suffering cannot feel the pain of a person who is down-trodden. In contrast, one who has been satiated with suffering and then has been relieved of it can understand the feelings of those who are less fortunate. And, he can appreciate his duty to help relieve the burdens of those who are still suffering.

This was the purpose of our slavery in Egypt, writes R’ Lewin. And, he writes, this explains why that slavery and the Exodus are mentioned in connection with so many Mitzvot that relate to inter-personal relationships, for example: “You shall not taunt or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Shmot 22:20); “You shall rejoice before Hashem, your Elokim--you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, the Levi who is in your cities, the proselyte, the orphan, and the widow who are among you . . . You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall observe and perform these decrees (Devarim 16:11-12); and many more. (Ha’drash Ve’ha’iyun)

R’ Nosson Yehuda Leib (Leibel) Mintzberg z”l (1943-2018; rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: The fact that Ha’kadosh Baruch Hu is the “Elokim of Yisrael” derives from the fact that Am Yisrael / the nation of Yisrael is a novel creation. The coming into being of Am Yisrael was not like that of any other nation. Rather, it was the result of supernatural miracles and wonders that occurred when Hashem rescued Am Yisrael with a “strong hand and outstretched arm” from a nation stronger than it. In fact, these miracles and wonders began even earlier, when Avraham and Sarah became parents in their old age. And, the miracles continued with a family of 70 individuals multiplying over a 210-year period into a nation of 600,000 men. Of course, most important were the miracles of the Exodus itself and the splitting of the Yam Suf.

R’ Mintzberg continues: Since then, Hashem directs us with special Hashgachah / Providence, including: bringing us to His good Land, protecting us from our enemies, sustaining and supporting us, hearing our prayers, and accepting our service. Even when we sin, His hand still is outstretched to guard us and rescue us from the seventy wolves that arise in every
generation to destroy us. Even in the midst of our exile, the Shechinah is with us in our suffering, so-to-speak, and Hashem has not ceased to be our Elokim. One day, He will yet return to be with us as in the days of old, as He has promised through His servants, the prophets.

The special relationship that Ha’kadosh Baruch Hu has with Am Yisrael has many levels, some of which we have already experienced—for example, receiving the Torah, Shabbat and Eretz Yisrael—and some of which are still in the future. The beginning of it all, however, was the Exodus. (Ben Melech: Pesach ma’amor 1)

“Today you are leaving, in the month of springtime.” (Shmot 13:4)

Rashi z”l asks: Would we otherwise not have known in which month they went out? Rather, Moshe was telling them the following: “Note Hashem’s kindness in taking you out of Egypt in a month that is suitable for going out—not hot, nor cold nor rainy.” In the same sense, Rashi continues, we read in Tehilim (68:7), “He takes out prisoners fittingly,” i.e., in a month that is suitable for going out.

R’ Azriel Lange z”l (1915-1996; rebbe at Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn, N.Y.) asks: Why was the weather important considering that Bnei Yisrael were protected by the Clouds of Glory during their travels? Moreover, asks R’ Lange, when someone is being enslaved and tortured, and his children are being murdered, does it make a bit of difference to him whether he is released when the weather is pleasant or unpleasant?

R’ Lange answers: The Torah is teaching us that Hashem’s chessed is complete. Hashem not only takes care of the “big things” (the actual Exodus), but also the “small stuff” (making sure there was pleasant weather for that event). Moreover, He commanded Moshe to point out to them how pleasant the weather was so that they wouldn’t worry for even a short time before they learned that there would be Clouds of Glory. This teaches us a lesson, since we are called-upon to emulate Hashem: When performing even the greatest act of kindness, we must not ignore even the minutest details. (Ikvei Erev)

“Even if we all were wise, we all were understanding, we all were experienced, and we all were knowledgeable in Torah, we still would be obligated to tell about the Exodus from Egypt.”

R’ Eran Moshe Margaliot shlita (Israel) writes, based on the writings of R’Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter z”l (1847-1905; the Gerrer Rebbe; known as the “Sefat Emet”):

Why, indeed, must a wise person who knows the story of Yetzi’at Mitzrayim retell it year-after-year? He explains: We learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.3), “If one’s Yir’ah / fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will endure.” Even if one is wise, he needs Yir’ah, because Yir’ah is the foundation that allows a person to stand before Hashem and accept the yoke of Heaven. That, in turn, is a prerequisite for attaining true wisdom.
He continues: Through retelling the story of the Exodus on the Seder night, a person can experience a revelation of G-d, which leads, in turn, to increasing one’s Yir’ah and re-accepting the yoke of Heaven. This comes from the realization that Hashem did not simply free us from serving Pharaoh; He did so in order that we would serve Him.

Also, a wise person must retell the story of the Exodus until he understands that all of his wisdom is not his own accomplishment, but from Hashem. This is why we conclude the Seder with the poem, “Echad mi yodea?” / “Who knows one?” We declare: “Mi yodea” / “The fact that anyone knows anything” is the result of the abilities he has been given by the “Echad Elokeinu” / “Our One Elokim who is in the heavens and the earth.” (Petach Ha’haggadah p.26)

R’ Michel Zilber shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Zvhil yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: At first glance, it would appear that, because Bnei Yisrael were oppressed and subjugated in Egypt and, in order to redeem them, Hashem “needed” to exert His power to take them out, including performing open miracles--therefore, we have a Mitzvah to relate the story of the Exodus so as to remember the miracles and give thanks for them.

In fact, the opposite is true. The reason Hashem performed miracles was so that we will tell our children about them and thereby strengthen our Emunah and our knowledge that Hashem is directly involved in our lives. This is stated expressly in the Torah (Shmot 10:1-2), “I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst, and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt, and My signs that I placed among them -- that you may know that I am Hashem.”

R’ Zilber continues: Look how beloved the Mitzvah of relating the story of the Exodus is to the Jewish People! In the Book of Shoftim, we read that an angel appeared to the (future) leader Gidon ben Yo’ash, and Gidon said to him (6:13, as explained by Rashi z”l), “Last night was the Seder night, and my father read Hallel and said, ‘When our forefathers left Egypt.’ Where,” asked Gidon, “are all the wonders about which my father spoke to me?”

Gidon’s father was an idol worshiper, R’ Zilber notes. Nevertheless, he held a Seder and told his children about the Exodus. You may ask: If even idolaters like Yo’ash have a place at the Seder, why is the wicked son in the Haggadah told that he has no place? The answer, R’ Zilber writes, is that Yo’ash was a sinner, but he did not abandon the Jewish People. The wicked son is worse than a sinner; when he says, “What is this service to you?” he affirmatively separates himself from the Jewish People. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ba’yam Derech p.96)

A related thought:

R’ Yitzchak Arieli z”l (1896-1974; Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and author of Enayim La’mishpat) taught: When a person relates the story of the Exodus, he can attain lofty levels, especially when he does so on the Seder night. Telling the story on that night has the power to light up the darkness of the exile in every generation and, through this story, one can attain pure Emunah in the coming Ge’ulah / redemption as well as merit the Ge’ulah itself.

One can learn how great is the power of Sippur Yetzi’at Mitzrayim / relating the story of the Exodus from that which is said about the Shofeit / judge Gidon. We read (Shoftim 6:13), “Gidon
said to [the angel], 'I beg of you, my master, if Hashem is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all His wonders of which our forefathers told us, saying, “Behold, Hashem brought us up from Egypt?” For now Hashem has deserted us, and He has delivered us into the grip of Midian.' Rashi z’l explains that this discussion took place on Pesach, and Gidon was saying, “Last night my father led me in the recitation of Hallel, and I heard him say, ‘When our ancestors left Egypt . . .’” Who was Gidon’s father? He was an idolater who was so dedicated to his idolatry that he fattened a bull for seven years in order to prepare it to be an offering to his idol. Even so, when he related the story of the Exodus to his son on Pesach night, he instilled in his son the strength to kill that fattened bull and otherwise risk his life for the Jewish People, ultimately bringing about their salvation from Midian. Note that Gidon received this inspiration despite not being a great believer himself; see Shoftim 6:17.

R’ Arieli continues: Salvation from Above depends on our reawakening below and on our willingness to sacrifice ourselves, both traits that come from Sippur Yetzi’at Mitzrayim—the foundation of Emunah and the key to the miracles that occurred in every later generation. One who recites the words of the Haggadah, “In every generation, one must view himself as if he left Egypt,” with innocence and honesty and with pain for the troubles of the Jewish People and the resulting Chilul Hashem, as Gidon said, “Where are all His wonders?”—that person will merit what was said to Gidon, “Go with this strength of yours and you shall save Yisrael!” (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi’shulchanam Shel Gedolei Yerushalayim)

R’ Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z’l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania, and a prolific author in all areas of Torah study) writes:

Retelling the story of the Exodus is the foundation of the Torah and the root of our Avodah/service [of Hashem], for the story is the source of our faith in the existence of Hashem and our faith that He watches over the world; also, that He reigns in the heavens above and the earth below, that He supports all the creations above and below, and that His wondrous supervision does not depart from them for an instant, as we read (Nechemiah 9:6), “You give life to all of them.” Likewise, the Pesach story teaches that the existence of the world depends on Torah and avodah; when these are present, they add “light, which is good” [paraphrasing Bereishit 1:4]. On the other hand, when Bnei Yisrael deviate from the path of Torah and Mitzvot, the “light” of the King of Kings leaves them and they are destroyed in a moment. The root of everything is the belief in Hashgachah Peratit / that G-d watches over the details of existence. This is evident from the sequence of the exile to Egypt and the Exodus from there—He took a nation that was lowly and despised, persecuted through back-breaking labor, and He overturned the regular functioning of nature on their account and humbled nations’ guardian angels in Heaven and kings on earth.

R’ Chaver adds: Hashem conducts the affairs of His world in two ways. One is analogous to the orderly functioning of a government, where the king issues decrees and delegates their implementation to lower officials [i.e., angels]. The second is the way He brought about the Exodus; disregarding formalities and taking a hands-on approach, so-to-speak. This latter mode is what our Sages refer to when they say the Exodus occurred “b’chipazon.” (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)
Why are we so hard on the wicked son? asks R’ Pinchas Halevi Horowitz z”l (1730-1805; rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany). The Halachah is that a person who denies the validity of just one Mitzvah is not deemed an apostate. Why, then, do we treat the wicked son as an apostate?

He answers: The observances connected with Pesach are Mitzvot that encompass all of the other Mitzvot. They represent the foundation of the entire Torah, for they represent Bnei Yisrael’s rejection of the idolatry of Egypt. This is alluded to in the name “Pesach” itself. If the three letters of the Hebrew word are spelled out -- peh-heh samech-mem-chof chet-tav -- the resulting Gematria equals 613, the number of Mitzvot in the Torah. (Panim Yafot)

R’ Shmuel Zvi Danziger z”l (the Alexanderer Rebbe; died 1923) explains the Rasha’s question as follows: Even you do not understand the deep meaning behind these rituals that you perform; therefore, they will not help you merit the redemption. Why then do you bother? The Rasha does not understand that G-d guides those who truly seek Him to deeper and deeper understandings of the Torah and Mitzvot.

As for the Rasha, had he been in Egypt, he would not have sought-out G-d and would not have merited this Divine assistance. Therefore, he would not have been redeemed. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tiferet Shmuel)
A related thought:

R’ Shmuel Meltzen z”l (Slutsk, Poland; 19th century; author of Even Shleimah) writes that the degree to which a person merits Divine assistance in attaining spiritual goals depends on the degree to which he strengthens himself in the following areas: Love of Hashem, fear of Hashem, attaching himself to Hashem, bitachon / trust in Hashem, and the trait of simchah / joy. Of these, the most important is bitachon, R’ Meltzen writes. (Ha’emunah V’ha’hashgachah p.2b)

“You have spoken harshly against Me, says Hashem, yet you say, ‘How have we spoken against You?’

“You said, ‘To serve Elokim is useless, and what did we gain from keeping His charge or from walking submissively before Hashem, Master of Legions?’” (Malachi 3:13-14 -- from the Haftarah for Shabbat Ha’gadol)

R’ Ben Zion Nesher shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) asks: How could the Jews referred to in this verse not know that they had spoken harshly against Hashem? If they actually said, “To serve Elokim is useless,” that is outright heresy!

He explains: The Jews referred to in this verse made the same argument that the Rasha / wicked son makes in the Haggadah, saying: “Of what use is this work to you?” He means: I am a Jew in my heart, and that’s what’s important! What difference does it make whether or not I observe all of these Mitzvot? Jews who make this claim do not realize that what they are saying is heresy, that they are speaking harshly against Hashem. Thus, even when the prophet rebukes them in G-d’s Name, they respond, “How have we spoken against You?”

R’ Nesher continues: Why is the Rasha (and anyone else who has this attitude) wrong? We say in response to the Rasha, “It is because of this that Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt.” What is “this”? It is the Mitzvot. Specifically, our Sages teach that the Exodus occurred in the merit of the Mitzvot of Brit Milah and Korban Pesach. We say in the Haggadah that had the Rasha been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed. He would have refused to perform these Mitzvot--claiming instead that his Judaism was in his heart; therefore, he would not have merited to leave Egypt.

R’ Nesher adds: We read (Bemidbar 15:39--in the section about the Mitzvah of Tzitzit), “You shall not wander after your hearts . . .” Our Sages say that “wandering after one’s heart” refers to heresy. At first, the connection between the heart and heresy is not apparent, but, in light of the above, it is clear. We now understand, as well, how the next two verses fit in (Bemidbar 15:40-41): “So that you may remember and perform all My commandments . . . I am Hashem, your Elokim, Who has taken you out from the land of Egypt . . .” The Exodus occurred in the merit of Mitzvah observance, not because our ancestors felt Jewish in their hearts. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.53)
“When your son will ask you in the future, ‘What is this?’” (Shmot 13:14)

R’ Moshe Feinstein z”l (1895-1986) writes: The question of the “simple son” (“What is this”) appears in the Torah before the question of the “wise son,” because before a person can ask the reasons for the Mitzvot, he must know them thoroughly. This will give provide him with a solid foundation for his faith. (Darash Moshe)

As for the one who does not know what to ask, you must begin to speak to him, as it is stated (Shmot 13:8), “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt’.”

Why is this the answer we give to the child who does not know what to ask? R’ Yaakov Perlow shlita (Novominsker Rebbe in Brooklyn, N.Y.) explains:

Rashi z”l comments on the quoted verse: “Because of this’ -- in order that I will fulfill His commandments.” According to Rashi, writes R’ Perlow, the purpose of the Exodus was so that we would receive the Torah and fulfill Hashem's Mitzvot, for only in that way can Hashem's Honor be revealed in this world.

The Gemara (Pesachim 68b) teaches that a person first beginning to serve Hashem may legitimately do so for selfish motives--for example, for the sake of his own soul. Therefore we tell the young child or the beginner, “Hashem acted on my behalf,” for my own good. How so? “Because of this’--in order that I will fulfill His commandments,” which will elevate me and make me great. (Adat Yaakov: Pesach p.137)

Why is the Mitzvah to sanctify the new moon part of the story of the Exodus (see Shmot 12:1-2)? R’ Ben Zion Nesher shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) explains:

People in general are not aware of how strong an influence the calendar has over them. A nation’s calendar commemorates that society's significant days, both happy occasions and the opposite. This is why the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 8a) states: “Jews in the diaspora serve idols in purity.” The life of a Jew in the diaspora is very heavily influenced by the calendar of the culture in which he lives. Their days off are our days off, their national holidays are our national holidays. This is not necessarily objectionable from a Halachic viewpoint; thus, it is “in purity.” Nevertheless, it introduces a bit of “idolatry” into our lives.
Our ancestors in Egypt were, no doubt, under the influence of their host nation’s calendar. Therefore, the first step in the redemption was to get a new calendar, the Jewish People’s very own calendar. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.58)

Why was the Mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon given to Moshe and Aharon together, rather than to Moshe alone, as were most of the Mitzvot?

R’ Kalman Winter z”l (rabbi of Southeast Hebrew Congregation-Knesset Yehoshua in Silver Spring, Maryland; passed away 8 Marcheshvan of this year) explained: The moon was the first creation to act jealously, i.e., when it [or its guardian angel] challenged G-d’s decision to create two luminaries in the heavens (see Chullin 60b; Rashi to Bereishit 1:16). In contrast, though Aharon was older than Moshe and experienced prophecy before Moshe did, he greeted Moshe with truly heartfelt happiness upon learning that the latter had been chosen to lead Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt (see Shmot 4:14). Because of this contrast, it was fitting that the commandment to sanctify the new moon be taught to Aharon along with Moshe. (Heard from R’ Winter z”l)

At first, our ancestors were idol worshipers, but now the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service.

R’ Avraham Aharon Friedman z”l Hy”d (Hungary; killed in the Holocaust) explains: One might ask, “Why make a big fuss over the Exodus? If G-d had not put us in Egypt, He would not have had to take us out!” To answer this we say, “At first, our ancestors were idol worshipers, but now the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service.” Through the experience in Egypt, especially the Ten Plagues, we learned to reject idolatry and to believe in Hashem. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Dvar Aharon)

Rashi z”l writes that 400 years passed from the birth of Yitzchak until the Exodus, and Yitzchak’s birth was 30 years after Hashem spoke the above words to Avraham. That explains the 430 years mentioned in the second verse quoted above.

R’ Chaim Zaichyk z”l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) elaborates: Midrash Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer teaches that Bnei Yisrael were in
Egypt for only 210 years. Although Hashem had told Avraham the exile would last 400 years, He shortened the time in the merit of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

What “merit” is referred to? R’ Zaichyk explains: The Gemara (Makkot 11b) teaches that a person who commits accidental manslaughter must flee to one of the cities of refuge and remain there until the Kohen Gadol dies. If the Kohen Gadol is disqualified from office after the murderer is sentenced to exile, but before he begins his exile, then, according to one opinion, it is as if the Kohen Gadol died and the murderer goes free. R’ Yom Tov Asevilli z”l (“Ritva”; Spain; 1260s-1320s) asks: The reason an accidental murderer goes free when the Kohen Gadol dies is that the latter’s death provides atonement for the Jewish People’s sins. But, if the Kohen Gadol was merely disqualified, what provides that atonement? He answers: The anguish that the Kohen Gadol feels at being disqualified provides atonement. Another commentator, R’ Menachem Meiri z”l (Spain; 1249-1306) explains, on the other hand, that the anguish that the murderer himself feels when his sentence sinks in and he pictures himself in exile subdues his heart and thereby provides atonement.

In light of this, R’ Zaichyk continues, we can understand the above Midrash as follows: When the Patriarchs and Matriarchs envisioned the suffering that their descendants would undergo in Egypt, they were so shaken and pained that it was as if they were in Egypt. Hashem placed that anguish of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs on the “merits” side of His “scales” and used it to shorten the exile in Egypt. (Ohr Chadash: Pesach p.78)

“V’gam / Also the nation that they shall serve, I shall judge, and afterwards they shall leave with great wealth."

What is added by the word “v’gam” / “also”? R’ Aharon Teitelbaum shlita (Satmar Rebbe) explains: Rashi z”l (to Shmot 11:2) writes that there were other nationalities in Egypt besides the Egyptians, who helped the latter oppress Bnei Yisrael. Regarding them, Hashem promised Avraham Avinu, “Also the nation that they shall serve, I shall judge . . .” (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Otrotaihem Shel Tzaddikim)

R’ Eliezer Dan Ralbag z”l (1832-1895; Rosh Yeshiva of the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: Hashem told Avraham (Bereishit 15:13), “Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own, Va’avadam/ and they will serve them, V’innu / and they will oppress them four hundred years.” Our Sages say that the 400 years began when Yitzchak was born, for he, also, was an alien in a land not his own--the land of the Canaanites and Plishtim. This counted toward fulfillment of the prophecy because, in the Torah, the letter “Vav” before a word can mean “or” as well as “and”; thus, the prophecy can mean: “Your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own, or they will serve them, or they will oppress them.” Any of those three situations -- alien status, slavery, or oppression -- could count toward completing the 400 years.

R’ Ralbag continues: In this light, we can understand why the tribe of Levi did not need to be enslaved. It was sufficient that they were aliens. Indeed, for this reason, Moshe (a Levi) named his oldest son “Gershom” -- “for he said, ‘I was a Ger / alien in a foreign land.’” (Shemot 18:3)
In this light, as well, we can better understand Yosef’s story. Yaakov hoped to fulfill Avraham’s prophecy by being an alien, as Yitzchak had. Thus we read (Bereishit 37:1), “Yaakov settled in the land where his father was a Ger, in the Land of Canaan.” However, Yaakov’s growing and powerful family could not be considered aliens in Canaan, so “the troubles with Yosef began” (see Rashi there). Notably, Yosef was sold into slavery but soon was elevated to a position of authority, because he was, at least, an alien. But, when Yosef became too comfortable in Egypt and began preening himself (see Rashi to Bereishit 39:6), he was no longer an alien, so he was again imprisoned and enslaved. (Damesek Eliezer)

R’ Eliezer Ashkenazi z”l (1513-1585; rabbi in Egypt, Italy and Poland) asks: How could the benevolent G-d enslave an entire people (the Jewish People in Egypt) for no fault of theirs? Indeed, writes R’ Ashkenazi, it seems that our Sages themselves asked this question in the Gemara (Nedarim 32a): “Why was Avraham Avinu punished and his descendants were enslaved in Egypt for 210 years?”

In response to this question, three Sages in the Gemara each suggests a sin that Avraham committed. Notwithstanding, writes R’ Ashkenazi, it is impossible to say that the enslavement in Egypt was decreed because of a sin committed by Avraham. After all, Rabbi Yochanan, one of the three Sages who says that Avraham sinned, also says that the Splitting of the Sea after the Exodus was built into Creation at the time that water was created. This implies that Bnei Yisrael’s enslavement in Egypt and the Exodus were part of the grand plan for the world, not merely a reaction to some sin of Avraham’s.

Moreover, at the Brit Bein Ha’betarim, the vision in which Hashem informed Avraham of the coming enslavement, Hashem began by speaking lovingly to Avraham (Bereishit 15:1), “Fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you; your reward is very great.” These do not sound like words spoken by One who is about to inform Avraham of a forthcoming punishment for a sin!

Rather, explains R’ Ashkenazi, the Gemara is not suggesting that the enslavement in Egypt was punishment for a sin. Indeed, it was good news to Avraham that his descendants would be enslaved. Avraham devoted his entire life to proclaiming the truth of Hashem’s existence, and the only reason he wanted children was so that Hashem could continue to be proclaimed through them. And, just as the spiritual soul can attain perfection only by descending for a time to the physical body, so the Jewish People could not attain its perfection—which is attained when Hashem is revealed through it—except by descending into a land of impurity and black magic, i.e., Egypt. This is the purpose, as well, of our current dispersion throughout the world—so that every nation will hear of the G-d of the Jews.

And what of the Gemara quoted above? That Gemara is asking a different question. Hashem told Avraham (Bereishit 15:13), “Know with certainty that your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own, they will serve them, and they will oppress them four hundred years.” This implies that Bnei Yisrael would be aliens in a land not their own for 200 years and they will serve their hosts and be oppressed by them for 200 years. Thus, asks the Gemara, “Why was Avraham Avinu punished and his descendants were enslaved in Egypt for 210 years?” To that question, the Gemara answers that Avraham sinned. (Ma’asei Hashem)
“Moshe was frightened and he thought, ‘Indeed, the matter is known!’” (Shmot 2:14)

Rashi comments: “Now I know that which I have been puzzled about, i.e., I what way has Yisrael sinned more than all the 70 nations, that they should be oppressed by this crushing servitude? But now I see that they deserve this.”

R' Yisrael Isserlin z”l (1390-1460; Austria; author of Terumat Ha’deshen) asks: Didn’t Moshe know that exile had been decreed upon Avraham’s descendants? He explains: The Torah says that children will not be killed for their fathers’ sins. How, then, was this exile possible? When Moshe saw that children who emulate their fathers’ sins will be punished for their fathers’ sins as well. (Beurei Maharai)

What is “this” that stood by our fathers? It refers to the previous sentence in the Haggadah, which states (quoting Bereishit 15:13-14): “He said to Avram, ‘Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own, they will serve them, and they will oppress them four hundred years. But also the nation that they will serve, I will judge, and afterwards they will leave with great wealth’.” Hashem’s promise to Avraham stood by our fathers when other nations tried to annihilate us.

R’ Menachem Mendel Stern z”l (rabbi of Sighet, Hungary; died 1834) asks: This seems counter-intuitive! How did Hashem’s promise that He will exile and enslave Avraham’s descendants protect our ancestors? He answers:

If a king promises a gift to one of his subjects at a future date, he presumably intends to keep his promise when the time comes. However, the king’s promise does not obligate him to protect that subject from enemies and natural disasters to ensure that he lives to see the day when the king’s promise will be kept. Likewise, it does not obligate the king to punish those who harm that subject, nor to forgive that subject if he rebels against the king.

Hashem created the world because He wants to share His goodness. Therefore, unlike a human king, He certainly will protect His subjects so that they can enjoy His goodness. We allude to this when we say (in the previous paragraph of the Haggadah): “Blessed is He Who keeps His promise to Yisrael.” He even protects us from enemies who would destroy us, as proof of which we cite His promise to Avraham that the Egyptians would succeed only in enslaving and oppressing our fathers, implying that they would be unable to annihilate us. Ultimately, Hashem promised, He will shower goodness on Bnei Yisrael by giving us the Torah and material wealth. Moreover, He will take revenge upon those who oppress the Jewish People even though our own sins are partly to blame. (Derech Emunah)
Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to our father Yaakov! For Pharaoh decreed only against the males, while Lavan sought La’akor / to uproot Ha’kol / everything.

Why do we mention Lavan and his plot in the Haggadah?

R’ Aharon Teomim z”l (rabbi in Worms, Germany, and Krakow, Poland; died 1690) explains: Hashem told Avraham (Bereishit 15:13), “Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own, they will serve them; and they will oppress them [for] four hundred years.” Yet, the exile in Egypt lasted only 210 years! One answer is that the 400 years are counted from the birth of Yitzchak, for he and his son Yaakov also lived in a “land not their own.”

One might ask, however, continues R’ Teomim: If the decree applied to Yitzchak and Yaakov as well, why did the later generations suffer so harshly while the earlier generations seem to have had an easier time? Indeed, since our Sages say that the entire decree was a punishment for Avraham for questioning Hashem, one would expect the generations closer to Avraham to bear the brunt of the decree!

It is to answer this question that we mention that Lavan sought to uproot everything. Indeed, Yaakov did have it harder than his descendants in Egypt. (Haggadah Chalukah D’Rabban: Mateh Aharon)

R’ Levi Yitzchak Horowitz z”l (1921-2009; Bostoner Rebbe) asks: Why do we say, “Lavan sought to uproot Ha’kol,” rather than, “Lavan sought to uproot the females as well”?

He writes: The answer came to me in a dream. The term “Ha’kol” alludes to women. For example, the Gemara (Yevamot 62a) teaches: A man who has no wife lives without joy, without blessing, without goodness, without Torah . . .” In short, such a person lacks Ha’kol / everything!

We read (Bereishit 24:1), “Hashem had blessed Avraham Ba’kol / with everything.” The Gemara (Bava Batra 16b) states that Avraham had a daughter and her name was “Ba’kol.” In light of the above Gemara, we can understand why that name was appropriate.

The Bostoner Rebbe continues: One of the terms for a wife is “Akeret Bayit,” for she is the “Ikkar” / essence of the house. [Notably, the verb used in the above quote from Haggadah, “La’akor,” shares a root (עקר) with “Ikkar.”] Especially on Pesach night, concludes the Bostoner Rebbe, women are “Ha’kol.” After all, our Sages teach that the Exodus occurred in the merit of the women. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ezrat Avoteinu p.116)
more so is it important when we have the ability to assimilate.  

R’ Duschinsky concludes: If it was important for the Jewish People to preserve their 

Yaakov was afraid that his descendants would assimilate in Egypt, so 

In addition, R’ Duschinsky continues, this passage in the 

Rav Duschinsky, that at that time, before they began multiplying miraculously, Pharaoh could 

R’ Yosef Zvi Duschinsky z”l (1865-1948; chief rabbi of the 

The passage in the Haggadah alludes to the promise 

Yaakov was afraid that his descendants would assimilate in Egypt, so Hashem assured him that 

R’ Duschinsky concludes: If it was important for the Jewish People to preserve their distinctiveness in a country where they were, in any case, the lowest rung of society, how much more so is it important when we have the ability to assimilate.  

Haggadah Shel Pesach Maharitz p.74
“Bnei Yisrael were fruitful, teemed, increased, and became strong...”

R’ Yosef ben Moshe Tirani z”l (Maharit; 1568-1639) writes: No one, not even Pharaoh, could deny that the growth rate of Bnei Yisrael was miraculous. Therefore, perhaps the verse (1:9), “He said to his people, ‘Behold! the people, Bnei Yisrael, are more numerous and stronger mimenu’” [usually translated “more numerous and stronger than we”] should be translated, “more numerous and stronger from Him.” If this is the correct translation, Maharit continues, then the next verse, “Let us outsmart lo” [usually translated “it,” referring to Bnei Yisrael] perhaps should be translated, “Let us outsmart Him,” again referring to G-d. Indeed, our Sages say that Pharaoh said, “Let us outsmart the Redeemer of Bnei Yisrael.” That, of course, is none other than G-d. (Tzofnat Panei’ach)

The Midrash Rabbah states that the Jewish women in Egypt gave birth to sextuplets. Another opinion says they gave birth to sixty children at a time.

R’ Yehuda Loewe z”l (the Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes: The Midrash does not literally mean that women gave birth to 60 children at a one time. Indeed, he observes, if it were possible for one woman to carry that many children, each one would be so small as to not be viable. Rather, the Midrash means that women who gave birth, rather than suffering the weakness that normally follows birth, felt so strong that they could have delivered 60 babies if such a thing were possible.

As for the opinion that they gave birth to sextuplets, Maharal suggests that this was G-d’s response to the fact that Bnei Yisrael were enslaved six days a week. (Gevurot Hashem ch.12)

“The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, the first of whom was called ‘Shifrah’ and the second of whom was called was ‘Puah’.” (Shmot 1:15)

Rashi z”l writes: “Shifrah was Yocheved [the mother of Moshe] . . . Puah was Miriam [the sister of Moshe].”

R’ Ovadia of Bartenura z”l (1445-1515; Italy and Yerushalayim; Mishnah commentator) asks: How did Rashi know this? He answers:

“Shifrah” connotes goodness and beauty, and befits someone with the name “Yocheved,” which connotes “honor.” “Puah” implies crying, which parallels “Miriam,” from the root meaning to raise one’s voice. (Amar Nakeh)

What forced Rashi to abandon the peshat / straightforward meaning of the verse, i.e., that Shifrah and Puah were the midwives real names?

R’ Eliyahu Mizrachi z”l (1450-1526) writes that Rashi must have had a tradition to this effect. (Mizrachi)
R’ Yehuda Loewe z”l (Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes that the Torah is intended to teach, not to create mystery. Since we don’t find any other information in the Torah about Shifrah and Puah [for example, their fathers’ names or their tribe], they must have been people who are already known to us. (Gur Aryeh)

R’ Menachem Mendel Schneerson z”l (1902-1994; Lubavitcher Rebbe) answers: The verse is difficult to understand literally. Were there only two midwives for a nation of hundreds of thousands?

He explains: The reality was, as Shifrah and Puah say later (verse 19), that the Jewish women did not need midwives. Why then were two midwives appointed? To calm pregnant women with the knowledge that there would be midwives available if necessary.

If the mere knowledge that two midwives existed was sufficient to bring comfort to tens of thousands of women (or more), it follows that those two midwives must have been known for their righteous and good standing in the community. That is why Rashi concluded that they were Yocheved and Miriam. (Beurei Ha’chumash)

רֹבֶךָ כְּמֶה שְׁאָמַרְתָּ: רַבְּהָ בָּצַם חַשְׁדוּת נַחֲמִית, הַרְבֵּי, רוֹבֶךָ, רוֹבֶךָ בֹּאֵי בְּעֵדֵי עֲדָאִים: שֶׁדֶּשֶּׁם כְּנַה, וְשָּׁרַעְתָּ צְמָת, וַאֲחָא עָלִים וּוֹאֵי.

R’ Joseph B. Soloveitchik z”l (1903-1993) observes: The most amazing thing about the Exodus, far greater than the signs and the wonders, is the transformation that occurred to a nation of slaves. Slaves do not understand the idea of obeying laws when no taskmaster threatens them. But why would one obey the commands such as Matzah, such as Korban Pesach, such as “You shall not break a bone of it,” or such as “You may not leave over any of it until morning” if no taskmaster is threatening?

The Haggadah applied to the generation of the Exodus the verse (Yechezkel 16:7), “You have increased and grown great . . . yet you are naked and bare.” The Midrash explains: The generation was naked of commandments. [R’ Soloveitchik continues:] Their life was a naked one, controlled by lusts and desires. And then there occurred the greatest miracle of all: “Bnei Yisrael went and did as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon, so did they do.” The slaves suddenly felt the duty of commandments, the power of a life devoted to higher ideas and goals. They understood what it means to possess spiritual ideals and what it means to enter into a covenant with the Almighty. Suddenly, they stood “hedged with roses” [a term used by the Sages to refer to the laws of family purity, which are kept in private and which no authority could possibly enforce. These laws are in contrast to the lust-filled life of a person who recognizes no laws]. No one threatened them with batons, no taskmasters ran around shouting at them. They could have trampled everything, the roses and the glorious flower bed. But, suddenly, they beheld the power and beauty of the roses. This transformation was a hidden miracle of great import. The Jews were able to distinguish between sacred and profane. (Festival of Freedom p. 72-73)
R’ Klonimus Kalman Shapira z”l Hy”d (1889–1943; the Piaseczner Rebbe; killed in the Holocaust) posed the following question in a derashah he delivered in the Warsaw Ghetto on the Shabbat in 5701 / 1941 on which Parashat Ha’chodesh was read:

Rashi z”l writes that Bnei Yisrael had no merit in which to be redeemed, so Hashem gave them the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach and the Mitzvah of brit milah [which had been commanded to Avraham Avinu but had fallen into neglect]. This, said R’ Shapira, seems to contradict an earlier Rashi (to Shmot 3:12) which says the redemption occurred in anticipation of Bnei Yisrael’s later accepting the Torah!

R’ Shapira explains: When Bnei Yisrael later came to the Yam Suf and Moshe prayed for salvation from the pursuing Egyptians, Hashem responded (Shmot 14:15, “Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them journey forth.” What does this mean? Is one not supposed to pray in his time of need? Rather, Hashem was saying, “Why do you cry out to Me?”–i.e., for Me. The salvation will not happen for My sake, but for the sake of Bnei Yisrael.

Perhaps, R’ Shapiro continued, this is what our Sages mean when they say that the angel Micha-el offers the souls of Yisrael on the altar above. Micha-el is the angel charged with always defending and promoting the Jewish People. Perhaps he does this by bringing the suffering of the Jewish People before Hashem. He says, “You, G-d, are always concerned with the honor of Your people. Look at them now!”

In our present circumstances [in the Warsaw Ghetto], R’ Shapira said, we also can understand Moshe’s complaint (Shmot 5:23), “From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name he did evil to this people, but You did not rescue Your people,” and Hashem’s reply (in the next verse), “Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh.” Moshe said: You told me to speak to Pharaoh about traveling to the desert to observe a festival for Hashem. But, my speaking to him “in Your Name”--for Your honor--seems to have delayed the redemption. Hashem replied: “Now you will see.” Since you have awakened My mercy by speaking of the honor of Bnei Yisrael (by saying that Pharaoh “did evil to this people”), the redemption will begin immediately.

With this, R’ Shapira answered his original question. When Hashem told Moshe that the redemption would occur in anticipation of Bnei Yisrael’s later accepting the Torah, He did not specify when that redemption would take place. Although Hashem was willing to give Bnei Yisrael “credit” for a merit that would occur in the future (receiving the Torah), that merit was not the result of any sacrifice on the part of Bnei Yisrael (yet). Therefore, it could not awaken sufficient merit to bring the redemption by a definite date. In our verse, however, He said, “This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you . . .” In the merit of the dual sacrifice of circumcision and placing the blood of the Korban Pesach on the doorpost, Hashem promised that the redemption would occur immediately--“This month is for you.” (Eish Kodesh)
They appointed taskmasters over it [the nation of Bnei Yisrael] l’m’a’an / in order to afflict it with their [the Egyptians’] burdens; it built storage cities for Pharaoh--Pitom and Ra’amses.

What is added by the word “l’m’a’an” / in order? Moreover, why didn’t the verse say more simply, “They appointed taskmasters over it who afflicted it with their burdens.” R’ Tuvia Halevi z”l (Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; 16th century) explains:

“Come, let us outsmart it [the Jewish People] . . .”

R’ David Ha’naggid z”l (1224-1300; grandson of Rambam z”l) notes that the Mitzvot and customs of the Pesach Seder parallel Pharaoh’s plot to “outsmart” Bnei Yisrael:

- nun: “nisuch ha’yayin” / pouring wine;
- tav: “tavshilin” / the two cooked items on the Seder plate;
- chet: “charoset;
- kaf: for karpas;
- mem: for Matzah; and
- heh: for Hallel. (Midrash Rabbi David Ha’naggid Al Haggadah Shel Pesach p.37)

R’ Shlomo Amar shlita (former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel) writes: By using the word “outsmart,” the Torah is telling us that all of the know-how of the mighty Egyptian nation was devoted to over-powering Bnei Yisrael. Imagine! Since Pharaoh decreed that “every boy” that is born should be drowned, he must have believed he had the ability to carry out that decree. Even today, when births are recorded in a computerized official registry--when hospitals, birthing centers and midwives are regulated by the government--the government still cannot know about every child that is born. Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu’s mother Yocheved was able to hide Moshe at first only because he was born prematurely. Once his due date arrived, she felt unable to hide her baby son any longer. Certainly, this righteous woman--indeed, any normal mother--would not have left her son in a basket on the river if she had any other choice.

R’ Amar concludes: King Shlomo teaches (Mishlei 21:30), “There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Hashem.” By reflecting on the planning that went into Pharaoh’s plot and recognizing that it was not a half-baked scheme but rather a comprehensive plan to destroy Bnei Yisrael, we can better appreciate that even so, it was no match for Hashem’s wisdom. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi’ymim Yamimah p.104)

"They appointed taskmasters over it [the nation of Bnei Yisrael] l’m’a’an / in order to afflict it with their [the Egyptians’] burdens; it built storage cities for Pharaoh--Pitom and Ra’amses.”
A Midrash relates that Pitom and Ra’amses were built on quicksand or very soft soil so that, no sooner had they been built, they had to be built again. The Egyptians received no benefit from Bnei Yisrael’s work. Thus, the Torah emphasizes that the sole purpose of this work was “in order to afflict” Bnei Yisrael. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Haggadat Chachmei Tzefat)

“Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the work and they cried out.”

R’ Shimson David Pinkus z”l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) quotes the Zohar (Shmot 20a) which teaches that Tze’akah / crying out is a form of prayer that is very dear to G-d and never goes completely unanswered. What is Tze’akah? It is prayer without words, as the verse says (Eichah 2:18), “Their hearts cried out to Hashem.”

R’ Pinkus continues: Tze’akah is “hysteria.” However, it does not involve screaming or waving one’s arms like a lunatic. Rather, when a person stands silently in prayer with a recognition that he is surrounded by challenges that he cannot overcome without G-d’s help, or an appreciation of the fact that the Yetzer Ha’ra is holding a knife to his throat and is about to overcome him, and he then pleads, “Help me!” – that is Tze’akah. In particular, Tze’akah is found when a person feels himself unworthy of approaching G-d and cannot find the words to pray.
R’ Pinkus adds: Although the Zohar says that Tze’akah is a wordless cry, any prayer that a person utters when he cannot articulate his thoughts, even if it involves words such as “Help!” is also Tze’akah. We see this, for example, in Melachim I (18:37), where Eliyahu Hanavi prayed, “Answer me, Hashem! Answer me!” It is as if a person is being attacked by robbers, and he calls out to a friend who stands nearby, “Help me!” (She’arim Batefilaḥ pp.41-43)

R’ Itamar Schwartz shlita observes that Tze’akah that involves a raised voice is an undesirable form of prayer. While a person who is being held up screams “Help!” to a friend who is standing some distance away, he does not need to cry out if he knows his friend is standing right next to him. Thus, a raised voice indicates that the supplicant feels there is distance between himself and Hashem, as Bnei Yisrael felt that Hashem had abandoned them in Egypt. When a person stands in prayer and feels that Hashem is right there with him, he does not cry out. (B’levavi Mishkan Evneh Vol.II p.125)

Based on the foregoing, we must understand why (in Shmot 8:8) Moshe Rabbeinu “cried out” to Hashem to remove the plague of tzefarde’a / frogs. Surely Moshe Rabbeinu did not feel that Hashem was distant from him. Indeed, commentaries offer a number of reasons for Moshe’s Tze’akah:

Sforno – Moshe was asking Hashem to remove the frogs only from the Egyptians’ homes, but to leave them in the Nile. Ordinarily, one may not pray to Hashem to perform “half a job.” Because Moshe Rabbeinu was violating this rule of prayer, he had to cry out.

Abarbanel – All of the other plagues lasted one week, but Moshe asked that this one end early. Since Moshe Rabbeinu did not know if such was Hashem’s Will, he cried out.

Sftei Chachamim – A person must hear himself pray. Since the frogs were so noisy, Moshe Rabbeinu had to cry out.

Rashi z”l writes that this decree was not against Bnei Yisrael alone. Pharaoh’s astrologers had told him that the savior of Bnei Yisrael would be born on a certain day, and he might be Jewish or he might be Egyptian. (They were confused because the savior, Moshe, actually was a Jew who would grow up in Pharaoh’s palace.) Therefore, Pharaoh’s decree was also against Egyptian boys.

R’ Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z”l (1848-1932; rabbi of the Edah Ha’chareidit in Yerushalayim) observes that this illustrates how Hashem pulls all the strings behind the scenes and uses every person to bring about the result that His Will has ordained. How so? The Gemara (Chagigah 15a) teaches that everything in the world has an opposite. In the physical world, for example, there are

[Note: The text is restructured and formatted to improve readability.]
mountains and valleys, etc. In the spiritual world, there are tzaddikim and resha'im, Gan Eden and Gehinnom, etc. In the same vein, we are taught that the opposing forces of good and evil must be balanced in the world in order to preserve man's ability to exercise his free will. According to Hashem's own design, if a soul enters the world that has the ability to become a great tzaddik like Moshe Rabbeinu, another soul must come into the world that has the potential to counter-balance that holiness by spreading unspeakable evil and impurity.

Whatever became of the impure soul that was destined to counter-balance the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu? We never hear of such a person! The answer, says R’ Sonnenfeld, is that “Pharaoh commanded his entire people, saying, ‘Every son that will be born -- into the River shall you throw him!’” Unwittingly, Pharaoh killed the one person who might have impeded Moshe Rabbeinu’s future mission. (Chochmat Chaim)

R’ Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam z”l (1905-1994; Klausenberger Rebbe) asks: Why does the Torah report the last part of Pharaoh’s decree, “And every daughter you shall keep alive”? Is the Torah coming to praise his humanitarianism?

R’ Halberstam answers: The Torah reports that Pharaoh planned to keep the girls alive because that was part of his evil plot. Pharaoh didn’t know that a child born of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father is halachically Jewish. He thought that keeping the girls alive to marry Egyptians would increase the Egyptian population.

In the Pesach Haggadah, we quote this verse and exclaim, “This is our burden.” Understandably, the decree to kill Jewish boys was a burden, but why was the decree to keep alive the daughters a “burden”? In light of the above, R’ Halberstam notes, it is clear. The intent of the decree was to take away our daughters and marry them to Egyptians. The Haggadah is teaching that the searing pain that Bnei Yisrael felt at the prospect of this intermarriage served as a merit that hastened their redemption. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Halichot Chaim p.221)

The Midrash Rabbah states that our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of four things: They did not change their names or their language, they did not speak lashon hara, and they took precautions against immorality. R’ Shlomo Ephraim of Lunschitz z”l (1545-1619; author of the Torah commentary Kli Yakar and other works) writes that these four traits contrast with the four groups of people who, say our Sages, will not merit to greet the Shechinah. They are: leitzim (interpreted by R’ Shlomo Ephraim as “exceedingly haughty people”), chaneifim (interpreted by R’ Shlomo Ephraim as “hypocrites”), liars (in financial dealings, according to R’ Shlomo Ephraim), and those who habitually speak lashon hara.

R’ Shlomo Ephraim elaborates: Exceedingly haughty people are concerned with making a name for themselves. Throughout history, many such people have asserted, or even believed, that
they were gods. *Bnei Yisrael* did not change their “names” in Egypt. They never abandoned that fundamental trait of a descendant of Avraham Avinu—humility.

R’ Shlomo Ephraim continues: Avraham referred to himself (*Bereishit* 18:27) as “dust and ash,” but Moshe was even more humble, saying (*Shmot* 16:7), “What are we?” (literally, “We are *mah* / what?”). The Hebrew word “*mah*” has the same *Gematria* (45) as “*me’od*” / “very much,” as in the *Mishnah* (*Avot* ch. 4), “*Me’od, me’od*, you should be humble.” Notably, three times 45 (one for “*mah*” and two for “*me’od*”) equals 135, the *Gematria* of “*Matzah*”—thus demonstrating the connection between the humility of our ancestors and the redemption. (*Orach L’Chaim: Drush L’Pesach ma’amirim* 14-16)

“I shall go through Egypt on this night”—I [Hashem], and not a *malach* / angel. “I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt”—I, and not a *saraf* (another type of angel). “Against all the gods of Egypt I shall mete out punishment”—I, and not a messenger. “I am Hashem”—I am He, and no other.

R’ Aharon Teomim z”l Hy”d (rabbi and *darshan* in Prague, Worms and Krakow; martyred in 1690) explains: Our Sages teach that once Hashem permits a plague to begin, the Angel of Death does not distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. Thus, Hashem Himself had to carry out the Plague of the Firstborn to ensure that no firstborn of *Bnei Yisrael* would be killed. Nevertheless, one might have thought that Hashem’s power of discernment was only needed in those cases where Egyptians and *Bnei Yisrael* were in the same house. The general plague, however, could have been carried out by the Angel of Death. Therefore, the *pasuk* tells us, “I shall go through Egypt on this night”—I, and not a *malach*. Even though an angel could have performed part of the mission, Hashem chose to do it Himself.

“I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt”—I, and not a *saraf*. This refers to striking those Egyptian firstborn who took refuge in a Jewish home. These firstborn had to be stricken by Hashem Himself, for the reason explained above.

“Against all the gods of Egypt I shall mete out punishment”—I, and not a messenger. The Egyptians’ idols could have been destroyed by an angel, as there was no issue of discerning between the innocent and guilty. Nevertheless, Hashem chose to do it Himself.

Finally, lest one think that angels did assist, and the verse merely reflects the *halachic* principle of, “A person’s agent is like himself,” therefore the *pasuk* concludes: “I am Hashem”—I am He, and no other. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Bigdei Aharon*)
“I shall sing to Hashem for He is extremely exalted, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea.” (Shmot 15:1)

Rashi writes: Hashem did something that no human warrior can do. A human warrior knocks the rider off the horse and then vanquishes him. Only Hashem could hurl a horse and its rider into the sea together.

R’ Yitzchak Yerucham Borodiansky shlita (Yeshivat Kol Torah in Yerushalayim) writes: This is the attribute of Hashem which the Torah refers to as the “Yad Chazakah” / “Strong Hand,” and we eat Matzah on Pesach to recognize this attribute. Matzah is a mixture of flour and water. Naturally, flour and water that are mixed rise to make a bread dough, but the “strong hand” of the baker can overpower the natural tendency of the dough in order to make unleavened bread.

In the Pesach Haggadah, we say, “The ‘Yad Chazakah’ is [the plague of] devver / an animal disease.” R’ Borodiansky asks: The general theme of the haggadah is elaborating on the greatness of the miracles. Why does the author of the haggadah here limit the definition of the “Yad Chazakah”?

He answers: The haggadah is not referring here to the specific plague of devver. Rather, all of the plagues can be classified either as devver or cherrev / a sword, as in the verse (Shmot 5:3), “Lest He strike us dead with the devver or with the cherrev,” “Devver” refers to those plagues which involved a change to the nature of a physical object or phenomenon—e.g., blood, animal disease, and darkness—while “cherrev” refers to the plagues that involved an attack from the outside—e.g., frogs, wild beasts, and hail. Based on this understanding, the Yad Chazakah and devver indeed are synonymous, for they both refer to Hashem’s mastery over nature, such as when He tossed horse and rider into the sea together. (Siach Yitzchak: Geulat Mitzrayim p.43)

"Or has any god ever miraculously come to take for himself a nation from amidst a nation, with challenges, with signs, and with wonders, and with war, and with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with greatly awesome deeds, such as everything that Hashem, your Elokim, did for you in Egypt before your eyes?"

R’ Yisrael Belsky z”l (Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Voda’ath in Brooklyn, N.Y. and a major contemporary posek, particularly in the area of kashruth) writes: This pasuk is one of only two verses in the whole Torah that contains every letter of the aleph-bet. The message is that when G-d reveals Himself, it touches every aspect of the universe which, say Chazal, was created using all the letters of the aleph-bet. Likewise, it teaches that Hashem “personally” supervises every aspect of the universe. (Haggadah Shel Pesach B’tzeit Yisrael)
What was the staff’s role in creating the wonders and plagues? asks R’ Zalman Sorotzkin z”l (1881-1966; rabbi in Lutzk, Poland; later in Israel). Why couldn’t Moshe and Aharon just wave their hands or utter commands to make the plagues happen? Having the staff gave Moshe credibility as the redeemer because it was a physical manifestation of his status as Hashem’s messenger. The importance of physical evidence of reality is illustrated in the Gemara (Yevamot 25a), which states that a person who testified that a man had died is prohibited from marrying the man’s widow lest he be lying, whereas a man who delivered a get / bill of divorce is permitted in some cases to marry the divorcée. Why? Because the divorce document itself gives the messenger credibility [even though he might have forged it]. So, too, Moshe’s staff gave him credibility. Likewise, writes R’ Sorotzkin, this explains why Hashem gave part of the Torah to Moshe on stone tablets, as opposed to simply dictating the Aseret Ha’dibrot to Moshe and having him write them, as Moshe recorded the rest of the Torah. The Luchot were physical objects that added credibility to Moshe’s teaching of the Torah. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ha’shir Ve’ha’shevach p.92)

We say that Moshe’s staff performed “otot” / “signs.” Also, we refer to the plagues as “moftim” / “wonders.” What do these terms mean? R’ Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z”l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suwalk, Lithuania) explains:

*The miracles that Hashem has performed for Yisrael fall into two categories. The first is called, “otot” / “signs,” which describes miracles intended to foretell or even bring about a future event. For example, in Melachim II (13:15-19), the prophet Elisha tells King Yo’ash to shoot arrows toward the Kingdom of Aram as a sign that Yo’ash would defeat Aram. When Yo’ash obeys only partially, the prophet tells him that he will weaken, but not destroy, Aram. Moshe’s staff was a “sign” because the names of all of the plagues were carved on it, thus foretelling what would occur. Also, the staff was a sign of Hashem’s desire to fulfill the will of tzaddikim, because the staff represented a king’s scepter, and its being in Moshe’s hand foretold that Hashem would turn over a certain amount of control over the world to Moshe and Bnei Yisrael, i.e., that the world’s future would depend on the quality of Bnei Yisrael’s deeds.*

"Moftim," on the other hand, are miracles that Hashem performs directly without a “sign” preceding them and without any participation by tzaddikim on earth. These are not meant to prove anything, but serve other purposes.

The plagues in Egypt, concludes R’ Chaver, were both otot and moftim. They were “signs” because they were meant to prove a point, namely that G-d gives control of the world to deserving tzaddikim--information that would encourage Bnei Yisrael to receive and observe the Torah. They also were moftim, miracles that were designed to punish the Egyptians. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)
“These are the ten plagues which Hashem brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt.”

R’ Chaim Palagi z”l (1788-1868; rabbi of Izmir, Turkey) asks: What is the purpose of the seeming redundancy, “upon the Egyptians in Egypt”? He explains: The phrase “in Egypt” refers to Egyptians of prior generations who had oppressed Bnei Yisrael, but had since died and been buried. They, too, experienced the plagues.

Conversely, the Bnei Yisrael of prior generations, including the twelve sons of Yaakov and their children, who had since died, shared in the Exodus, for their remains were taken out of Egypt. This is why we find the juxtaposition of the verses (Shmot 6:13-14), “Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them regarding Bnei Yisrael and regarding Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take Bnei Yisrael out of the land of Egypt. These were the heads of their fathers’ houses: the sons of Reuven . . .” (Peninei Rabbeinu Chaim Palagi Al Haggadah Shel Pesach p.250)

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1. חָמָן...
2. צְפַרְדוּתָם.
3. צְרִיָּם.
4. מִשְׂנֶה.
5. פֵּרָה.
6. חָצִיר.
7. הַשָּׂעַר.
8. חַשְׂרוּת.
9. מָכָה.
10. מֵרָבָה.

“Go to Pharaoh in the morning—behold! he goes out to the water— and you shall stand opposite him at the Nile’s bank.” (Shmot 7:15)

Rashi z”l explains: “[Pharaoh] went to relieve himself. Pharaoh claimed to be a deity and asserted that, because of his divine power, he did not need to relieve himself; therefore, he used to rise early and go to the Nile, where he relieved himself in secret.”

R’ Mordechai Krause shlita (rav in Yerucham, Israel) asks: Earlier (6:13) we read, “Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them . . . regarding Pharaoh,” which Rashi explains as a commandment to show respect to Pharaoh. Why then did Hashem now command Moshe and Aharon to humiliate Pharaoh by intruding on his most private activity?

R’ Krause answers: Pharaoh refused to subjugate himself to Hashem’s command that he let Bnei Yisrael go because Pharaoh suffered from ga’avah / haughtiness. Deep down, the essence of haughtiness is the feeling: “I am unique; there is no one above me, and it is unimaginable that I would need to humble myself before anyone.” In this vein, Pharaoh claimed (Yechezkel 29:3), “My Nile is mine, and I made myself.” In order for Hashem to be revealed in the world, Pharaoh had to be humbled, to be shown that Hashem is far more powerful than he. A necessary first step was to humiliate Pharaoh by reminding him that he could not even control his own body. (Netiv B’mayim Azim p.416)
“The fish that is in the water shall die . . .” (Shmot 7:18)

R’ Eliezer David Gruenwald z”l (1867-1928; Hungarian rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva) asks: Why was this included in Moshe’s warning to Pharaoh? Obviously, if the Nile turns to blood, all of the fish will die!

He explains: Pharaoh’s magicians ostensibly mimicked the plague and turned water to blood. However, what they actually did was an illusion; the water did not turn to blood but just looked like blood. Anticipating that, Moshe warned Pharaoh, “When I turn the Nile to blood, it will be the real thing and the fish will die.” (Keren L’David)

“Egypt could not drink water from the River, and the blood was throughout the land of Egypt.” (Shmot 7:21)

Midrash Rabbah relates that even if an Egyptian and one of Bnei Yisrael drank from the same cup, the Egyptian would find the liquid to be blood, while the Jew would have water.

R’ Yaakov Aryeh Guterman z”l (1792-1874; Chassidic Rebbe in Radzymin, Poland) notes that this miracle involving water foreshadowed the splitting of the Yam Suf. He writes: The Gematria of “Mayim” / “water” equals 91 (40+10+40, plus 1 to represent the whole word). This is equal to the combined Gematria of the Divine Name “Y-K-V-K” (a Name that denotes Divine mercy) plus the Divine Name spelled “Aleph-Dalet-Nun-Yud” (a Name that denotes Divine justice). Both in the case of the Plague of Blood and in the case of the Splitting of the Sea, the water was an instrument of mercy to Bnei Yisrael and an instrument of justice to the Egyptians. (Bikkurei Aviv)

“Behold, I shall strike your entire boundary with frogs.” (Shmot 7:27)

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z”l (Spain; 1255-1340) writes: This plague settled border disputes between Egypt and its neighbors. Wherever the frogs went was Egypt, and where they didn’t go was not Egypt.

R’ Moshe Leib Shachor z”l (Yerushalayim; 1894-1964) asks: We read later (10:4), “If you refuse to send forth My people, behold, tomorrow I shall bring a locust-swarm into your border,” on which Midrash Rabbah comments that the plague of locust settled border disputes. Wherever the locust went was Egypt, and where they didn’t go was not Egypt. What border disputes were there if the plague of frogs had already resolved them?

He explains: One way of marking boundaries is by planting trees. Perhaps, after the frogs settled Egypt’s border disputes, Egypt planted trees to mark its borders. But, we read (9:25), “The hail struck in the entire land of Egypt, everything that was in the field from man to animal; all the grass of the field the hail struck and every tree of the field it smashed.” Thus, after the plague of hail, there again were boundary disputes, until the locust swarm settled them once again.

R’ Shachor notes that establishing Egypt’s borders serves the needs of the Jewish People, for there is a Mitzvah (Devarim 17:16), “[The king] shall not have too many horses for himself, so that he will not return the people to Egypt in order to increase horses, for Hashem has said to you, ‘You shall no longer return on this road again.’” In order to know where not to go, we need to know the boundaries of Egypt. (Avnei Shoham)
"The River shall swarm with frogs, and they shall ascend and come into your palace and your bedroom and your bed, and into the house of your servants and of your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls." (Shmot 7:28)

The Gemara (Pesachim 53b) teaches: "Why did Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah allow themselves to be thrown into the furnace rather than bowing down to Nevuchadnezer's statue (in the book of Daniel)? They reasoned: 'If the frogs, who are not commanded to sanctify G-d's Name, entered the ovens (as told in our verse), certainly we, who are commanded to sanctify G-d's Name, should enter the oven.' Rashi explains the Gemara's question to be: Why didn't Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah feel that the commandment to preserve one's life (in Vayikra 18:5) superseded the Mitzvah of sanctifying G-d's Name?

(As an aside, the Tosafot note that Nevuchadnezer's statue must not have been an idol; rather, it was only a monument to his own honor. Had it been an idol, Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah would not have needed to learn anything from the frogs; they would have been required to give their lives no matter what other considerations existed.)

Commentaries ask: Frogs have no Mitzvah to preserve their own lives. Therefore, of course, they sanctified G-d's Name even if it meant losing their own lives. But, how could Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah learn from the frogs the importance of sanctifying G-d's Name, since Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah did have a Mitzvah to preserve their own lives?

R' Moshe Leib Shachor z"l (see above) explains: It is true that frogs are not commanded by the Torah to preserve their own lives. However, they are "commanded" by G-d's words at the time of Creation. G-d's utterances when He created the world implanted a natural survival instinct in frogs. When Hashem said (Bereishit 1:20), "Let the waters teem with teeming living creatures," He made known His Will that frogs exist just as His words (Vayikra 18:5), "You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live," make known His Will that man live by the Mitzvot and not die because of them.

In this light, we can understand Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah’s reasoning as follows: "If the frogs, who are commanded to live but who are not commanded to sanctify G-d’s Name, entered the ovens, certainly we, who, despite being commanded to live, also are commanded to sanctify G-d’s Name, should enter the oven." (Avnei Shoham)

"'For if you refuse to send out, and you continue to grip them – behold! The hand of Hashem is on your livestock that are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the cattle, and on the flock -- a very severe epidemic. Hashem shall distinguish between the livestock of Yisrael and the livestock of Egypt, and not a thing that belongs to Bnei Yisrael will die.' . . . Pharaoh sent and behold, of the livestock of Yisrael not even one had died -- yet Pharaoh's heart became stubborn and he did not send out the people." (Shmot 9:2-4, 7)

R' Eliezer David Gruenwald z"l (1867-1928; Hungarian rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva) asks: Why is so much emphasis placed on the fact that the flocks of Bnei Yisrael were not struck by the plague? We already know that the plagues struck Egyptians, not Jews. Indeed, it appears from the
last verse quoted above that the fact that the animals of the Jews were not struck was a compelling argument for releasing Bnei Yisrael from slavery, “yet Pharaoh’s heart became stubborn and he did not send out the people.” What was so compelling about the fact that the animals of Bnei Yisrael were not struck?

R’ Gruenwald explains: Pharaoh argued that Moshe and Aharon could not be the emissaries of G-d to save Bnei Yisrael because it was not yet time for the Exodus. Hashem had told Avraham that his descendants would be in a foreign land for 400 years, and so far Bnei Yisrael had been in Egypt only (just under) 210 years. Therefore, Pharaoh argued, he was legally entitled to hold Bnei Yisrael as his slaves. [Commentaries offer many explanations for why the Exodus did, in fact, take place early.]

Moshe responded to Pharaoh: If you are correct – “if you refuse to send out, and you continue to grip them,” i.e., you claim that you are entitled to hold on to them – then the halachic principle that “Whatever a slave acquires belongs to his master” should be applicable. Slaves cannot own property, and any flocks in the possession of Bnei Yisrael would be yours. The test of ownership will be whether the flocks of Bnei Yisrael die in the plague as well.

When Pharaoh saw that not even one of the sheep of Bnei Yisrael died, his argument that he was legally entitled to hold Bnei Yisrael as his slaves was defeated. Nevertheless, the verse says, “Pharaoh’s heart became stubborn and he did not send out the people.” (Haggadah Shel Pesach Chasdei David)

“Behold, the hand of Hashem is on your livestock that are in the field . . .” (Shmot 9:3)

Why is the plague described as coming from the hand of Hashem? Likewise, what is meant by the “hand” in the verses (Shmot 14:31), “Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt,” and (Devarim 2:15), “Even the hand of Hashem was upon them”?

R’ Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich z”l Hy”d (1863-1944; rabbi of Simleu, Romania) writes: The Gemara (Berachot 4b) asks, “Why is there no verse beginning with the letter ‘nun’ in Ashrei?” Because it alludes to the downfall of the “enemies of Yisrael” [a euphemism the Gemara uses to avoid saying “the downfall of Yisrael”], as we read (Amos 5:2), “Naflah / She has fallen and will no longer rise – maiden of Yisrael.” Thus, writes R’ Ehrenreich, the letter “nun” alludes to downfall. “Nun” is the 14th letter of the Aleph-Bet. Fourteen is represented by the letters yud-dalet, which also spell the Hebrew word “Yad” / “hand,” specifically, the “hand” of Hashem which cause the downfall of Egypt. (Tiyul Ba’pardes: Chelek Ha’remez, ot zayin)

“Pharaoh sent and summoned Moshe and Aharon and said to them, "This time I have sinned . . ." (Shmot 9:27)

Why, after the plague of hail, did Pharaoh admit that he had sinned?

R’ Raphael Emanuel Chai Riki z”l (1688-1743; author of Mishnat Chassidim and other works) explains: The hail destroyed the crops, which ultimately would cause famine. This reminded Pharaoh of the kindness that Yosef had done for the Egyptians, and that caused him to acknowledge that it was wrong to oppress Yosef’s family. (Chosheiv Machashavot)
“Entreat Hashem -- there has been an overabundance of G-dly thunder and hail...’

“Moshe said to him, ‘When I leave the city I shall spread out my hands to Hashem; the thunder will cease and the hail will no longer be.’

“Moshe... stretched out his hands to Hashem; the thunder and hail ceased and rain did not reach the earth.

“Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder ceased, and he continued to sin; and he made his heart stubborn, he and his servants.” (Shmot 9:28-29, 33-24)

Why, in fact, did Pharaoh continue to sin? R’ Shlomo Kluger z”l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) explains:

Pharaoh appears to have been more afraid of the thunder than of the hail; thus, he asked Moshe (verse 28) to pray first that the thunder stop and only then the hail. Moshe agreed to Pharaoh’s request (verse 29) and Hashem accepted Moshe’s prayer (verse 33).

However, Hashem had His own calculations as well. Midrash Rabbah teaches that the hail that was in the process of falling when Moshe prayed for the plague to end stopped in mid-air and remained there for future use (see Yechezkel ch.13). Hashem did stop producing thunder when Moshe prayed for the thunder to end, and hail when Moshe prayed for the hail to end. But, the last hailstones never reached the earth; rather, they gathered in the atmosphere. Thus, from Pharaoh’s vantage point, the hail stopped (i.e., it stopped reaching the ground) while he could still hear the thunder. The hail appeared to end first (verse 34). Thus, Pharaoh believed that Moshe’s prayer was not answered; apparently, the whole incident had been a coincidence, and there was no reason for Pharaoh to change his ways.

Perhaps, concludes R’ Kluger, Hashem acted this way so that Pharaoh could continue to rationalize his refusal to let Bnei Yisrael go. (Imrei Shefer)

“Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder ceased, and he continued to sin, and he made his heart stubborn, he and his servants. Pharaoh’s heart became hardened...” (Shmot 9:34-35)

Our Sages teach that Pharaoh hardened his own heart after the first five plagues, whereas Hashem hardened Pharaoh’s heart after the next four plagues. If so, why do our verses, which come after the seventh plague, imply that Pharaoh hardened his own heart?

R’ Yosef Duchs z”l (1792-1846; maggid in Pressburg, Hungary) explains: R’ Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z”l (1565-1630; the “Shelah Ha’kadosh”) writes that Pharaoh was ready to free Bnei Yisrael after each of the fifth through ninth plagues to avoid further suffering, but not because he was ready to repent fully. And, because Pharaoh had not repented fully, he deserved to be punished further. But, if he appeared to have repented and he was punished nevertheless, a chillul Hashem / desecration of Hashem’s Name would result. Therefore, Hashem hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he would not repent at all.

R’ Duchs continues: The above explanation fits those cases in which Pharaoh did not express any regret. After the hail, however, Pharaoh said (verse 27), “This time I have sinned.
Hashem is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the wicked ones.” If, after this expression of repentance, the Torah would say expressly that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart, that would cause a chillul Hashem. Therefore, our verse doesn’t say that Hashem hardened Pharaoh’s heart (though our oral tradition teaches that He did). (Bet Yosef Lehavah)

"So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt and My signs that I placed among them--that you may know that I am Hashem." (Shmot 10:2)

R’ Shlomo Amar shlita (former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel) asks: Who made a mockery of whom? Seemingly, it was Pharaoh--who kept promising to let Bnei Yisrael go as soon as each plague ended, but who never kept his promises--who made a mockery of Bnei Yisrael and Hashem, not the other way around!

R’ Amar explains: No doubt the Egyptians did think that they were in control and that they were mocking Bnei Yisrael and Bnei Yisrael’s G-d. The truth, however, was that the Egyptians were merely tools in the hands of Hashem, tools that He used to prepare Bnei Yisrael to become a nation.

Specifically, the plagues in Egypt taught Bnei Yisrael about Hashem’s awesome power and His ability to do with His world as He pleases. Thus, Egypt was the classroom par excellence for teaching emunah / faith to Bnei Yisrael. Of course, Hashem would not wantonly demonstrate His power against a nation that was not deserving of being dealt with harshly. But, the Egyptians brought this treatment on themselves by forgetting the kindness of Yosef and enslaving Yosef’s family with back-breaking labor, by killing Jewish babies, and by refusing to subjugate themselves to Hashem even after they saw His power. Because of these sins, the Egyptians deserved to have their hearts hardened so that Hashem could make a mockery of them and thereby teach Bnei Yisrael valuable lessons. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi’yamim Yamimah p.100)

“But among all of Bnei Yisrael, no dog will move its tongue, against neither man nor beast, so that you shall know that Hashem will have differentiated between Egypt and Yisrael.” (Shmot 11:7)

Why was it significant that no dog would bark during Makkat Bechorot / the plague of the firstborn, and why tell Pharaoh about it in advance?

R’ Shimshon Chaim Nachmani z”l (Italy; 1706-1779) answers: We read in Parashat Shmot (2:14), “Moshe was frightened and he said [to himself], ‘Indeed, the matter is known!’” Midrash Rabbah (cited by Rashi z”l) explains that Moshe was wondering why Bnei Yisrael deserved to be enslaved. When he saw that there were informers among Bnei Yisrael, he understood that they were enslaved because of the sin of Lashon Ha’ra.

Midrash Rabbah also teaches that our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt only because they repented. The dogs’ silence during Makkat Bechorot was evidence of that repentance, explains R’ Nachmani, for the Gemara (Makkot 23a) teaches that one who speaks Lashon Ha’ra deserves to be thrown to dogs. Here, the dogs were silent because they had no role to play, so-to-speak.
Why was it important for Pharaoh to know this? R’ Nachmani answers: Hashem had foretold to Avraham Avinu that He would harshly judge the nation that enslaved Avraham’s descendants. He also told Avraham that Jewish History would include four periods of subjugation to other nations. But, writes R’ Nachmani, if Pharaoh could be made to recognize the power of Teshuvah and to himself repent, the Attribute of Justice would be unable to demand further punishment of the Egyptians. In turn, the Attribute of Justice would be unable to demand the fulfillment of the rest of the prophecy received by Avraham—i.e., that Bnei Yisrael undergo additional periods of subjugation. (Zera Shimshon)

R’ Chaim Zvi Senter shlita (Rosh Ha’yeshiva of Yeshiva Aderes Ha’Torah in Yerushalayim) offers another explanation:

The original cause of the exile in Egypt was the sin of lashon hara, which is what caused Yosef’s brothers to hate him (see Bereishit 37:2). This is why, when Moshe Rabbeinu realized that Datan and Aviram were tale-bearers, he said (Shmot 2:14), “Indeed, the matter is known!” He meant: Now I understand why our exile persists. Measure-for-measure, Bnei Yisrael were enslaved by Pharaoh, whose name is an anagram (in Hebrew) of “Peh-ra” / “bad mouth.”

The Gemara (Pesachim 118a) says that a person who speaks or believes lashon hara deserves to be thrown to dogs. At the time of the redemption, no dog barked, for the fact that the redemption was occurring indicates that the sin of lashon hara had been corrected.

This also explains, said R’ Senter, why, as long as Bnei Yisrael were in exile, Moshe had a speech impediment. After the redemption, a Midrash relates, Moshe’s speech impediment was healed. (Heard from R’ Senter, 20 Tevet 5769)

This mnemonic is nothing more than an acronym of the names of the plagues! What does it add to our understanding?

R’ Elazar Rokeach z”l (Germany; 1160-1238) explains: In the book of Tehilim (78:44-51; 105:28-36), the plagues are listed in two different orders. With his mnemonic, Rabbi Yehuda teaches us that the order in which the plagues are listed in the Torah is the historical order in which they occurred [which we would not necessarily have known, as our Sages teach that the Torah is not entirely in chronological order.]

In addition, Rabbi Yehuda is highlighting a pattern within the Ten Plagues. In each set of three, Pharaoh was warned before the first two plagues, but the third occurred without warning. This is consistent with the opinion in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 81b) that a person who sinned twice after being warned and received the punishment of makkot / lashes each time can be punished for his third offense even without a warning. (Haggadah Shel Pesach im Peirush Rokeach)
"Pharaoh approached, and Bnei Yisrael raised their eyes and behold! -- Egypt was journeying after them, and they were very frightened; and Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem." (Shmot 14:10)

The Midrash Mechilta records that Bnei Yisrael were divided into four groups, and for each of them Moshe had a different message. One group said, “All is lost; let’s throw ourselves into the sea.” To them, Moshe said (14:13), “Stand fast and see the salvation of Hashem.” A second wanted to return to Egypt, but Moshe told them: “As you have seen Egypt today, you shall never see them again.” A third wanted to fight, but Moshe said (14:14), “Hashem shall do battle for you.” The last group wanted to cry out. To them Moshe said, “You shall remain silent.”

R’ Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z”l (Yerushalayim; 1910-2012) observes that in every generation, whatever the challenge facing the Jewish People, there are multiple groups of well-meaning people suggesting different approaches to addressing the issues of the day. But, what is usually missing from the discussion, as was the case at the Yam Suf, is a Torah perspective. One group says (verse 11), “Are there no graves in Egypt?” That group does not have faith in the eternity of the Jewish People. Another group says, “Let us return to Egypt.” That group mistakenly thinks that there would be no anti-Semitism if we would only integrate with our neighbors. And so on. Moshe Rabbeinu--i.e., the Torah--has an answer for each of them, as the Midrash describes. (Mishnat Ha’Grish: Pesach p.397)
“And you [Moshe] -- lift up your staff and stretch out your arm over the sea and split it.” (Shmot 14:16)

Our Sages teach that Moshe Rabbeinu did not hit the water to initiate the plagues of Blood and Frogs because he owed the water a debt of gratitude for saving his life when he was an infant. Instead, Aharon brought about those plagues. Why, then, asks R’ Nosson Teomim z”l (1913-1983; the Krystynopoler Rav in Brooklyn NY), did Moshe not show the same deference to the water at the Red Sea? Indeed, the question is especially strong because our Sages say that the guardian angel of the seas was pained by the splitting of the Red Sea. Shouldn’t Moshe have shown consideration for the Sea in this case?

R’ Teomim answers: Moshe, in fact, did nothing to initiate the splitting of the Red Sea. Rather, it was all Hashem’s doing. The only reason Moshe was commanded to lift the staff over the Sea was to allow the Egyptians to think that Moshe was practicing magic. [Had an unambiguous miracle occurred, the Egyptians would never have chased Bnei Yisrael.]

We read (Shmot 14:31), “Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem had inflicted in Egypt.” How did they see at the Sea the great hand that Hashem had inflicted in Egypt? R’ Teomim explains that when Bnei Yisrael saw at the Sea that Moshe played no role in the miracle, they realized that, in Egypt also, it was Hashem that caused the miracles, not Moshe.

We say in the Ma’ariv prayer: “Your children beheld Your majesty, as you split the Sea before Moshe: ‘This is my G-d,’ they exclaimed; then they said, ‘Hashem shall reign for all eternity’. ” When Bnei Yisrael saw that Hashem split the Sea in front of Moshe, but Moshe himself played no part, then they acknowledged G-d. (Bar Pachtai)

“On that day, Hashem saved Yisrael from the hand of Egypt.” (Shmot 14:30)

The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni relates that there was a great tumult in the Heavenly Court on the seventh night of Pesach, the night before the Splitting of the Yam Suf. Uza, the guardian angel of the Egyptians, argued that Bnei Yisrael were no better than the Egyptians, since even Bnei Yisrael had worshiped idols. Also, he asserted that the 400 years of exile that were decreed had not yet passed. Hashem was, so-to-speak, forced to answer Uza before He could save Bnei Yisrael.

Why now? asks R’ Shlomo Eliasoff z”l (1841-1926; leading early 20th century kabbalist; grandfather of R’ Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z”l). Why didn’t Uza object before the Exodus?

R’ Eliasoff explains: On the night of the Exodus, Bnei Yisrael were protected by two Mitzvot that they had just performed. First, a mass brit milah had taken place on Erev Pesach (since Bnei Yisrael had previously stopped circumcising their children). Second, the Korban Pesach had been offered. Likewise, during the ensuing days, Bnei Yisrael were protected in the merit of blindly following Hashem into the desert (see Yirmiyah 2:2--“Thus said Hashem, ‘I recall for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your nuptials, your following Me into the wilderness, into an unsown land.’”). However, when it came time to split the Yam Suf, another accounting was performed, and, since there were no new Mitzvot to weigh in the balance, G-d’s special intervention to defend Bnei Yisrael was required. (Quoted in Niglot Leshem Shvo V’achlamah)
“Yisrael saw Egypt mait on the seashore.”  (Shmot 14:30)

This verse is commonly translated, “Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.” However, R’ Eliezer Nachman Foa z”l (rabbi of Modena, Italy; died 1701) translates it differently: “Yisrael saw the Egyptians dying on the seashore.” As a precedent for this translation, he cites Bereishit 35:18, “And it came to pass, as her [Rachel’s] soul was departing—ki maitah / for she was dying—that she called his name Ben Oni.” Although some translate “ki maitah” as “she died,” this cannot be correct, for how could she give her son a name after she died?

What is the significance of the fact that “Yisrael saw the Egyptians dying on the seashore”? R’ Foa explains that just as the Jewish People saw the Egyptians dying, the Egyptians saw in their last moments that the Jewish People had survived. This increased even more the sanctification of G-d’s Name that resulted from the miracle. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Midrash B’chiddush p.110)

“This is my G-d and I will make Him a naveh.”  (Shmot 15:2)

Rashi writes: Onkelos translates “naveh” in the sense of a dwelling as in (Yeshayah 33:20), “a peaceful habitation” and in (Yeshayah 65:10) “a dwelling for flocks.” [According to this, Bnei Yisrael were referring prophetically to the future Mishkan or Bet Hamikdash.] Rashi continues: Another explanation of is that it has the sense of “noy” / beauty, and the meaning is, “I will relate His splendor and praiseworthiness to the inhabitants of the world.”

Similar to the latter explanation, the Gemara (Shabbat 133b) cites this verse from Az Yashir / the Song at the Sea as a basis for performing Mitzvot in the most beautiful way possible. [For example, this is why we decorate the sukkah.] What is the connection between this concept and the splitting of the Yam Suf?

R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z”l (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995) explains: We read in Pirkei Avot that Avraham Avinu was tested ten times, and he passed all his tests. Commentaries write that it was the self-sacrifice that he demonstrated during these tests which caused him to merit many miracles during his lifetime. Similarly, before the Exodus, Hashem commanded that Bnei Yisrael circumcise themselves and slaughter a korban Pesach and put its blood on their doorposts, two Mitzvot that required self-sacrifice. [Slaughtering the korban Pesach and putting its blood on the doorposts required self-sacrifice because the Egyptians considered the sheep to be a deity.]

Therefore, when Bnei Yisrael reflected on the awesome miracles involved in splitting the Yam Suf, they were inspired to accept upon themselves a higher level of Divine service, i.e., to not only perform the Mitzvot, but to make the necessary sacrifice to perform Mitzvot in a more beautiful way. (Minchat Avot p.115)
“You will bring them and implant them on the mount of Your heritage, the foundation of Your dwelling-place that You, Hashem, have made—the Sanctuary, my Master, that Your hands established. Hashem shall reign for all eternity. Because Pharaoh’s cavalry came with his chariots and horse-men into the sea, and Hashem turned back the waters of the sea upon them . . .” (Shmot 15:17-19)

Rashi z”l to Sukkah 41a derives from our verse ("the Sanctuary . . . that Your hands established") that the future Bet Hamikdash will come down from Heaven already built.

In this light, R’ Moshe Alshich z”l (1508-1593; Tzefat, Israel) explains the causal relationship ("Because Pharaoh’s cavalry . . .") between the above verses as follows: In the first verse above, Bnei Yisrael requested that the Temple descend from Heaven immediately. However, a prerequisite to that event is that G-d be known throughout the world. That condition has been met, Bnei Yisrael argued, “Because Pharaoh’s cavalry came with his chariots and horsemen into the sea and Hashem turned back the waters of the sea upon them.” They all died in the Yam Suf, but Pharaoh himself survived to proclaim G-d’s greatness throughout the world! (Torat Moshe)

Based on this, writes R’ Shlomo Kluger z”l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia), we can understand the Midrash Eichah Rabbah which states, “If you had merited, you would have read (our verse), ‘You will bring them and implant them . . .’ Now that you have not merited, you read (Eichah 1:22), ‘Let all their wickedness come before You.’” What is the relationship between these verses?

He explains: As noted, the time right after the Exodus would have been a propitious time for the final Bet Hamikdash to descend from Heaven already complete. Why didn’t it? Because, soon after, Bnei Yisrael made the Golden Calf.

As a result, based on the above explanation by R’ Alshich, we have to await a new opportunity for G-d to be known throughout the world. How will this come about? Through the fulfillment of the verse from Eichah quoted by the Midrash: “Let all their wickedness come before You.” This is a plea that Hashem take all the hurt done to the Jewish People over the millennia as a personal affront so that, when He takes retribution from our oppressors, it will not be in our honor, but rather a proclamation of His Name. Then, again, we will be ready to see the fulfillment of our verse, “You will bring them [to] the Sanctuary, my Master, that Your hands established. (Dimat Ha’ashukim p.2)

A Midrash states: “From the day that G-d created man until that day, no one had sung in praise of Him. He created Adam, but Adam did not sing. He saved Avraham from the furnace, but Avraham did not sing, etc.”

Why, in fact, did the Patriarchs not sing in praise of Hashem when He performed miracles for them? R’ Yehoshua Segal Deutsch z”l (rabbi of the Katamon neighborhood of Yerushalayim) explains as follows in the name of R’ Yoel Teitelbaum (1888-1979; the Satmar Rav): We read, “When the people dedicate themselves [to Him] -- bless Hashem.” The Talmud Yerushalmi comments on this verse, “The heads of the nation dedicate themselves to bless Hashem.” The word used in the verse and in the Yerushalmi for “dedicate” comes from the root הנב, which means to
make a voluntary offering. In other words, if the heads of the nation, i.e., the righteous, sing to Hashem, it is a voluntary offering. They have no obligation to sing to Hashem because they have earned whatever good He gives them.

In contrast. Bnei Yisrael did not deserve to be saved from the Egyptians. To the contrary, our Sages relate that the angels argued before Hashem, “How are these [Bnei Yisrael] different from these [the Egyptians]? They are all idolators!” Thus, Bnei Yisrael were obligated to sing when they were saved.

The question still remains: Why did the Patriarchs not offer voluntary songs of praise (as the Yerushalmi suggests later generations of tzaddikim did)? The answer is that one is not permitted to offer a voluntary prayer or song unless he is capable of doing his subject justice. Precisely because the Patriarchs had a greater appreciation of G-d’s awesomeness, they were afraid to attempt to offer a voluntary song. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Kol Yeshuah p. 154)
R’ Aharon Yosef Auerbach shlita (Bnei Brak, Israel) asks: The text of the “Maggid” portion of the Haggadah is derived from Mishnah, Gemara, and Midrashim. In contrast, this poem--while more than 1,000 years old--does not date to the time of the Talmud or Midrashim. Why then is it recited or sung in the middle of Maggid?

He explains: Much of Maggid is an exposition of verses in Parashat Ki Tavo--beginning with (Devarim 26:5), “An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather,” and continuing with the three following verses. In fact, the Mishnah (Pesachim 116a) states that we are supposed to expound upon the entire section in which that verse appears, but we don’t do that. Instead, we conclude with verse 8, and we do not expound upon verse 9, “He brought us to this place, and He gave us this Land, a Land flowing with milk and honey” (or the two verses that follow).

Apparently, writes R’ Auerbach, when the Bet Hamikdash stood and each of the Jewish People held his Seder in Yerushalayim, he would expound on verse 9 as well. They could say, “He brought us to this place…” Even though entering Eretz Yisrael and building the Bet Hamikdash did not happen until long after the Exodus, they were the purpose of the Exodus, and they therefore are discussed as part of the Seder.

In later generations, when the Jewish People were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, Europe, and other places of exile, it no longer made sense to say (and expound upon) the verse, “He brought us to this place…” Even so, the Haggadah’s authors did not want to erase all memory of that part of Maggid. Therefore, they introduced this poem that speaks of Hashem’s kindness to us, concluding with, “He built for us the Bet Ha’bechirah,” i.e., the Bet Hamikdash.

R’ Auerbach concludes: This explains as well why we begin the Seder proclaiming, “This year we are here; next year in Eretz Yisrael!” We are telling our children: Know that the story that you are about to hear is incomplete. Next year, in Eretz Yisrael, we will tell the whole story.

(Parenthetically, R’ Auerbach notes that there is a Midrash stating that Bnei Yisrael were transported miraculously to Yerushalayim on the night of the Exodus to offer their Korbanot Pesach at the future site of the Bet Hamikdash. According to that Midrash, the verse, “He brought us to this place…,” is literally part of the Exodus story.) (Haggadah Shel Pesach Pitchei Avraham)
R' Yaakov Halevi Lifschutz z"l (1838-1921) was the long-time secretary to R’ Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z”l (1817-1896; rabbi of Kovno), who was one of the leading halachic authorities of the second half of the 19th century as well as a spokesman and lobbyist for Russian Jewry in the Czar's court. Through his position, R’ Lifschutz was a witness to, and a participant in, many important events of that era. His memoirs are entitled “Zichron Yaakov.”

[R’ Lifschutz begins his memoir by discussing the concept of history. He writes:] The histories of other nations revolve around the development of their states, the stories of their kings, their wars, and their influence on world politics; also, on the activities of their wise men in all areas of wisdom and science.

Jewish history is different from the history of all other nations. Even when the Jewish People lived in their own land under their own rule, the foundation of its existence was its religion and its Torah. When Yisrael went straightforwardly in the way of Hashem and His Torah, they accomplished great things and succeeded. When they turned away from Hashem's path, their power and strength declined wondrously. [A writer] observed in [the Hebrew newspaper] Ha' tzefirah, issue 49, 5644 [1884]:

The Jews suffer their oppressors silently, as if they feel nothing. However, when the oppressor touches their holy delights, then they are disturbed from their restfulness and they become strong like lions. Their lives, their lowly condition, and their lack of political standing are light in their eyes, but the desecration of the Torah they cannot tolerate. . . The greatest tragedy that befell them, the loss of their independence and the end of their status as an independent nation at the hand of the Roman legions, is referred to as the “Destruction of the Bet Hamikdash”--that is what serves as a milestone in their history, whereas the loss of political independence is not mentioned.

R’ Moshe Chaim Luzzato z”l (1707-1746; prolific author recognized as one of the leading kabbalists of all time) writes in Mesilat Yesharim (ch.1) that everything in this world, whether good or bad, is a Nisayon, usually translated, a “test.” If so, many ask, why do we pray every morning, “Do not bring us to a condition of Nisayon / being tested”?

R’ Itamar Schwartz shlita (popular author and speaker in Yerushalayim) explains: The word “Nisayon” comes from the word “Nes.” The common root of these words can have three meanings: to flee (as in Bereishit 14:10 and 39:12); to test (as in Bereishit 22:1); and to elevate (as in Bemidbar 21:8, where it refers to a stick held aloft). These three meanings, writes R’ Schwartz, parallel three stages in a person’s spiritual development.
Early in a person’s development, he should flee from any Nisayon. He should avoid situations in which his spiritual mettle will be tested. It is at this stage that we pray, “Make us regular students of your Torah . . . and do not bring us to a condition of Nisayon.” True, even being a regular student of Torah is a Nisayon for most people. However, our prayer means: Do not place before us other challenges that will disturb us from taking the first step in Your service, i.e., being regular students of Torah.

When a person has developed further, he is ready to be tested in a more dramatic fashion. We read in Mishlei (24:16), “A tzaddik will fall seven times and arises.” In Chassidic thought, this verse is interpreted, not that a tzaddik will arise even though he has fallen seven times, but rather that a tzaddik will arise because he has fallen seven times. At this stage, tests are integral to the person’s development.

Finally, after one has completed the stage of being tested, he reaches the third level where he has been elevated.

R’ Schwartz adds: These three phases parallel three stages of the Exodus and ensuing events. First, Bnei Yisrael fled from Egypt (see Shmot 14:5). Later, they were prepared to be tested by turning to face the pursuing Egyptians (see Shmot 14:5 – “Stand still and see G-d’s salvation”). Finally, they were elevated by receiving the Torah. (B’lvavi Mishkan Evneh Vol. V, p. 173)

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Behold! I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day’s portion on its day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My Torah or not.’” (Shmot 16:4)

R’ Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z”l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: It is well-known that the entire Exodus was meant to repair the sin of Adam. If Adam had not eaten from the Etz Ha’daat and contaminated his soul, he would have lived forever. Man is a combination of a spiritual, supernatural soul and a material, natural body; as long as man did not sin, his existence was not dependent on nature. The fruit of the Tree, though, was purely natural, with no spiritual content; accordingly, G-d directed Adam not to eat it. When Adam disregarded G-d’s command, he subjected himself to the forces of nature, one of which is death.

“Achilah” / “eating” has several meanings in Tanach. Prophecy is called eating, as in the verse (Shmot 24:11), “They gazed at God; they ate and drank.” In Mishlei (9:5), Torah study and Mitzvah performance are referred to as “bread.” This is because, just as physical food--bread, in particular--sustains the body, so Torah and Mitzvot sustain the soul.

The food Bnei Yisrael ate in the desert was called “mahn” (spelled “mem-nun”). “Mem” equals 40, the number of days Moshe was on Har Sinai, and “nun” equals 50, the number of days between the Exodus and Giving of the Torah. This hints that mahn nourished the soul, enabling it to receive the Torah, which was the purpose of the Exodus. And, mahn had to be eaten fresh every day to teach that the Torah should be accepted anew, with freshness, every day. All of this was to repair Adam’s sin of eating “natural” food. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)
Rashi (to Shmot 12:11) writes: “For Hashem skipped over the houses of the Jews which were among the houses of the Egyptians. He jumped from Egyptian to Egyptian, and the Jew was in the middle. As for you, serve Him for the sake of Heaven.”

What does Rashi’s last comment mean and how is it related to his explanation of the word “Pesach”? R’ Nosson David Rabinowitz z”l (early 20th century) explains:

Sometimes a person witnesses a powerful event which inspires him to strengthen his service of Hashem. However, that is not the ideal. Rather, we should serve Hashem because, and only because, that is His will.

Moshe was concerned that the plague of the firstborn would have an undesirable effect on Bnei Yisrael. This is why, according to Rashi, Moshe instructed them: “As for you, do not serve Hashem because you will see Him skipping over your houses. Instead, serve Him for the sake of Heaven.”

In this light, we can understand why the Korban Pesach is referred to (in verse 12:43) as a “chok” — a Mitzvah whose reason is unknown. Although the Korban Pesach (whose blood was placed on the doorposts to identify a Jewish house) recalls the great miracle that Hashem performed and our gratitude to Him, that should not be our reason for performing the Mitzvah. Rather, we should observe the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach as if its reason is unknown to us.

The Torah tells us (12:50), “All of Bnei Yisrael did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did.” The Torah is informing us that Bnei Yisrael took Moshe’s message to heart and sacrificed the Korban Pesach solely for the sake of the Mitzvah. (Ve’eileh Ha’devarim She’ne’emru L’David p.101)

One of the laws of the Korban Pesach is that we may not break any of its bones while eating it. An anonymous 13th century scholar who identifies himself only as “A Levi from Barcelona” (Spain) explains:

One of the “roots” of this Mitzvah is to remind us of the Exodus. It is not fitting for princes and those close to the king to break bones as dogs do. Such behavior befits someone suffering from starvation. Therefore, at our inauguration as the Chosen People, a kingdom of priests and holy nation—and, likewise, on the annual anniversary of that event—it is appropriate that we act in a way befitting our majesty. Through such actions, we will establish this feeling of majesty in our hearts forever.
The “Levi from Barcelona” continues: Do not challenge me by asking, “Wouldn’t one remembrance of the Exodus be enough?” That would not be a wise question. Know! “האדם נפעל לפי عملיו/ Man is inspired by his actions, and his heart and thoughts follow his deeds, whether good or bad. If one occupies himself with Torah and Mitzvot, even without the proper intentions, he will turn toward good. His deeds will vanquish the Yetzer Ha’ra, because the heart follows one’s deeds. This is what our Sages mean when they say, “Hashem wants to bring merit to Yisrael; therefore, he gives them many Mitzvot.” Once you understand this, you will understand why there are so many Mitzvot commemorating the Exodus, which is the pillar of our beliefs. (Sefer Ha’chinuch No.16)

R’ Aharon Dovid Goldberg shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Teshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio) notes that the words of the Sefer Ha’chinuch regarding the importance of recognizing one’s majesty are echoed in the work Pitchei Sha’arei Ha’avodah, sometimes attributed to Rabbeinu Yonah z”l (Spain; died 1263). That work teaches:

“The first step [in serving Hashem] is to know one’s own worth, and to recognize one’s own value and the value of his ancestors--their greatness, importance in the eyes of Hashem and His love for them.”

R’ Goldberg writes: There are two aspects to this attitude. First, one should be aware of the importance that he has merely because he is a member of the Jewish People. As kabbalists explain, the actions of every member of the Jewish People have cosmic effects that we can barely imagine. Second, one should know that he is important as an individual. Every person has unique strengths and abilities, and it is critical for serving Hashem that one be aware of his own strengths. As one of the great teachers of mussar said: “Woe to a person who does not recognize his faults, for then he does not know what to fix. Even worse off is someone who doesn’t recognize his strengths, for then he does not know how to fix what needs fixing.” (Oto Ta’avod Al Pitchei Sha’arei Ha’avodah)

“Moshe called to all the elders of Yisrael and said to them, ‘Mishchu / Draw forth or u’kechu / buy for yourselves one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Pesach-offering.’” (Shmot 12:21)

The words “mishchu u’kechu” literally mean, “Pull and take.” The Midrash records that the Sages offered two explanations for this phrase. Rabbi Yose Ha’Glili says, “Pull yourselves away from idolatry--the lamb being an object of veneration for the Egyptians--and take Mitzvot,” while Rabbi Yishmael says, “From here we learn that one can join a partnership for the Pesach-offering (‘take’) and withdraw from it (‘pull away’) until the time it is slaughtered.”

R’ Raphael Hamburger z”l (1722-1803; rabbi of Altona-Hamburg-Wandsbeck, Germany) writes: It is unusual for two Sages to argue about the meaning of a verse, with one giving it a halachic meaning and the other giving it an aggadic / moralistic meaning. In reality, though, these two interpretations not only are complementary, they are saying the same thing. He explains:

R’ Yose Ha’Glili agrees with the Halachah that one can join a partnership for the Pesach-offering and withdraw from it until the time it is slaughtered. However, he was bothered by the wording of the verse; since one cannot withdraw from a partnership unless one has first joined that partnership, the verse should have said the opposite of what it actually says, i.e., “kechu u’mishchu” / “Take” first, and only afterward, “pull away.” Therefore, R’ Yose Ha’Glili explains the
verse as incorporating a command to “pull away” from idolatry by setting aside a lamb for slaughter. Indeed, since every one of Bnei Yisrael had an obligation to take a lamb in order to distance himself from idolatry, there seemingly could have been no partnerships that first year.

R’ Hamburger continues: The above demonstrates the unity of Halachah / the legal part of the Torah, on the one hand, and aggedata, the non-legal, philosophical and moralistic teachings of the Torah, on the other hand, though each has a separate role. Halachah relates to Yir’ah / fear of G-d, for one fears that he will not fulfill his legal duty, while agгадeta relates to ahavah / love of G-d, for it teaches man to appreciate G-d and the world. (Da’at Kedoshim: Introduction)

The following are selected laws of the Pesach offering from Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Korban Pesach, chapter 1, by Rambam z”l:

(3) The Pesach offering is slaughtered only in the Azarah / Temple Courtyard like other sacrifices. Even in those historical periods when private altars were permitted by Halachah, the Korban Pesach could not be offered on a private altar, but only on the central public altar.

(9) The Pesach offering is slaughtered in three groups, as we read (above), “The entire congregation of the assembly of Yisrael shall slaughter it in the afternoon”--“Congregation” is one group, “Assembly” is a second group, and “Yisrael” is a third group. There had to be no fewer than thirty people in a group.

(10) If only fifty people came, in total, thirty would enter the Azarah and slaughter their sacrifices, ten would leave and another ten would enter, and, again, ten would leave and ten would enter. If it ever happened that fewer than fifty people came, the Pesach should not be slaughtered.

(11) The first group would enter the Azarah until it was full; then the doors were locked. As long as the Shechitah and offering continued, the recitation of Hallel took place as well.

(12) With each repetition of Hallel, the Shofar was blown.

The Gemara (Pesachim 64b) records that once, during the Second Temple Era, King Agrippas wanted to know how many Jews there were. He told the Kohen Gadol, “Take note of the Pesach offerings!” The Kohen Gadol then took one kidney from each Pesach offering that was brought. When the kidneys were counted, they were found to number 1.2 million. And, every Korban Pesach was shared by at least ten people. These figures do not account, notes the Gemara, for those who did not participate because they were Tamei / ritually impure or far away. That Pesach, the Gemara concludes, was referred to as the “Thick--i.e., crowded--Pesach.”

יִבְלָהּ הַמָּצָא יְיָאָר
מָצֶא צִיאָר אָרוֹלָא, עַל שָׁמָּה מָה; עַל שָׁמָּה שְׁלָא הַסְּפִיק בֶּצַּקִּים, שֵׁל אָבָהִיתִי
לָהַמִּימֵי; עַל שָׁנַגְלִי הַעַלְיָה מַלְאָה מַלְאָה, נָפְלָךְ בֶּצַּקִּים, הַֽזָּדָה בְּרֹזָּה, רוֹחָֽמוֹ, נָפְלָךְ.
שֵׁנִיָּא: יָאָרֶא יָאָר תַּתָּךְ, אֶשְׁר תַּעֲבְרוּ בְּרֹשֲׁת מַמְּסִרֵי, גַּלְּעַת מְזַח, כֵּֽי לָא תַּחְיָֽת; כֵּֽי
גֶּרֶשׁ מַמְּסִרֵי, לָא נְכָלָת לְחַנְטָהֵֽם, גַּלְּעַת לָא עִשָּׁו לָא.
“They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for they could not be leavened, for they were driven from Egypt for they could not delay, nor had they made provisions for themselves.”

This passage in the Haggadah implies that Matzah recalls the Exodus, especially the aspect of Chipazon / the hastiness of our departure from Egypt. But, earlier in the Haggadah (in “Ha lachma anya”), we say that Matzah is the bread that our ancestors ate in Egypt, implying that Matzah recalls the slavery. These two statements seem to contradict each other!

R’ Shlomo Zarka z”l (Algeria; died 1876) and R’ Yehuda Chermon z”l (Algeria; 1812-1911) explain that these two reasons for eating Matzah are complementary. They write: Why was the Exodus Be’chipazon / with hastiness, as alluded to in our verse? The answer is that it exactly paralleled the Egyptians’ treatment of Bnei Yisrael in slavery. When our ancestors were slaves, the Egyptians fed them Matzah, which is digested slowly, so they would go longer between meals and work more. And, when Bnei Yisrael tried to bake bread at home, the Egyptians came and rushed them off to work, forcing them to eat their bread before it leavened. Middah K’negged Middah/measure-for-measure, when Hashem redeemed Bnei Yisrael, he rushed them out of Egypt, forcing them, once again, to eat Matzah. This time, however, it was eaten with a feeling of great joy because it represented something different--freedom! (Haggadah Shel Pesach Rinah V’yeshuah p.101)

R’ Chaim Paltiel z”l (13th century; France) asks: Why do we say that they baked Matzah because they had to rush out of Egypt? In fact, they already had been commanded (12:15), “For seven days you shall eat Matzot”!

Therefore, he answers, our verse should be read as follows: “They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for they could not be leavened [because of the Mitzvah to eat only Matzah. And, why did they bake their Matzah outside of Egypt?] For they were driven from Egypt and they could not delay, [and they had nothing else to eat] nor had they made provisions for themselves.”

If this is the case, however, how can we say in the Pesach Haggadah: “Why do we eat Matzah? Because their bread did not have time to rise, as is written (in our verse), ’They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes . . . for they could not delay’”? In fact, we eat it because of the command! Rather, R’ Chaim Paltiel concludes, the way to reconcile our verse with the earlier command to eat Matzah is to realize that Hashem knows the future. When He commanded us to eat Matzah, He already knew Bnei Yisrael would not have time to leaven their dough at the time of the Exodus. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Torat Ha’Rishonim p.163)

Rashi z”l comments on the last phrase (“nor had the made provisions for themselves [for the journey]”): “This is stated to tell how praiseworthy Yisrael was. They did not say, ‘How can we go forth into the wilderness without provisions?’ Rather, they had faith and set forth. This is what is referred to in the prophets (Yirmiyahu 2:2), ‘I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your nuptials, how you went after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown’.”
R’ Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg z’l (1910-2012; Rosh Ha’yeshiva of Yeshivat Torah Ohr in New York and later in Yerushalayim) asks: Seemingly, the act of going into the wilderness with no provisions was an expression of Bnei Yisrael’s faith in Hashem. Why does Rashi attribute it to kindness and love?

He explains: The ability to have emunah / faith is inextricably intertwined with the ability to love and to perform kindness. In human relationships, one is able to love other people when he is able to trust them. In relation to Hashem, one is able to love Him when one recognizes His greatness, and this manifests itself in faith as well. Further, only a person who is capable of placing his faith in other people is capable of trusting in Hashem.

R’ Scheinberg adds: This is the meaning of a passage in the Midrash Mechilta, commenting on the verse (Shmot 14:31), “They had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.” The Mechilta asks: If they had faith in Moshe, is it not a given that they had faith in Hashem? The Midrash answers: This teaches that if one has faith in His trustworthy shepherd, it is as if one has faith in the Creator. On the other hand, the Midrash concludes, that if one does not have faith in His trustworthy shepherd, one cannot have faith in the Creator. [The ability to have faith in Moshe and the ability to have faith in Hashem go hand-in-hand.] (Derech Emunah U’vitachon p.60)

R’ Yitzchak Al-Achdab z”l (Spain and Sicily; late 14-th-early 15-th centuries) writes: Many commentaries write that, at this time, Bnei Yisrael were not yet commanded not to eat Chametz for seven days. Therefore, after eating the korban Pesach with Matzah, they began to bake bread. However, they were suddenly expelled from Egypt and their bread had no time to rise. In commemoration of this, we eat Matzah for seven days.

However, he continues, this is difficult to accept, for if they wanted leavened bread and they were forced to eat Matzah, why is that worth commemorating? Furthermore, although it is true that they were not yet commanded not to own Chametz for seven days, they certainly were not permitted to bake Chametz on the first day of Pesach!

Rather, he writes, after Bnei Yisrael finished eating their korban Pesach and Matzah, they began baking Matzah for the next day. Suddenly, however, G-d revealed Himself in Egypt and, in the ensuring uproar, which was followed by preparing to leave, Bnei Yisrael were unable to bake the dough which they had prepared. That dough should have risen during the night that followed and become Chametz, but a miracle happened and it remained unleavened. It is to commemorate that miracle that we eat Matzah for seven days. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Pesach Dorot p.112)

“They could not delay [leaving Egypt].”

Our Sages say that, had Bnei Yisrael remained in Egypt a moment longer, they would have sunk to the “50th gate of impurity” from which there is no return. R’ Zalman Sorotzkin z”l (rabbi in Lithuania and Israel) observes that Bnei Yisrael reached that stage after only 210 years in exile. In contrast, the Jewish People apparently have not fallen that low after the nearly 2,000 years in the current exile. Why?
He answers: The key difference between us and our ancestors who were in Egypt is that we have the Torah and they did not. True, our Sages say that they preserved their unique style of dress and they spoke the Hebrew language, but that wasn’t enough to preserve their identity. Only the Torah can accomplish that. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ha’shir Ve’hashevach p.105)

R’ Gedalia Schorr z”l (1911-1979; Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn) asks: What does it mean that there is no escape from the “50th gate of impurity? Chazal’s statement implies that even Hashem could not have removed them from there, but surely there is nothing that is impossible for Hashem to do!

R’ Schorr explains: Hashem promised Avraham that his (Avraham’s) descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years and then redeemed. But not all of Avraham’s descendants were enslaved in Egypt, only those who carried Avraham’s physical DNA and were his spiritual heirs. Had Bnei Yisrael sunk down to the fiftieth level of ritual impurity, the spiritual link with the Patriarchs would have been severed. Of course Hashem still could have saved them, but He would not have been saving the spiritual descendants of Avraham. Rather, it would have been a new people that He was taking out of Egypt. That could not be permitted to happen. (Ohr Gedalyahu)

R’ Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam z”l (1905-1994; Klausenberger Rebbe) writes: There is a longstanding custom to make the Matzot for the Seder round, not square. The reason is that square Matzot can be placed next to each other so that they look like one; round Matzot cannot be joined in this way. This reminds us that the cause of our long exile is our inability to get along. There is jealousy and hatred between us, and what one person considers to be a Mitzvah, another considers to be a sin. Additional reminders of this sad situation are the custom to have a Matzah cover with three separate compartments so that the Matzot are kept separate, and the custom to name the Matzot, “Kohen, Levi and Yisrael,” emphasizing their individuality. Appropriately, the holiday of Pesach is known as “Chag Ha’matzot” – plural – not “Chag Ha’matzah” – singular. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Halichot Chaim p.21)

גבור הפורר יאמר

“ar zeh yashav asagilim, al shome kah? Ul shome shamorot hemezrim av ha’kohanim
hemezrim, shanemo: Yimram av halkehem mishakav ha’shita, behem melehim, be’al yafeh
be’erah: Adet kal yivehe, asher avehe kum befa’ar.

“They embittered their lives with hard work, with mortar and with bricks, and with every labor of the field.”

R’ Shlomo Zarka z”l (Algeria; died 1876) and R’ Yehuda Chermon z”l (Algeria; 1812-1911) ask: Why does the verse begin with construction work (“with mortar and with bricks”) and then switch to farm work (“every labor of the field”)?

They explain: Bnei Yisrael had a quota of bricks they had to produce each day. If they finished early, they could go home for the day. However, on their way home, Egyptians would grab them and force them to do farm work and perform other tasks, i.e., “every labor of the field.” (Haggadah Shel Pesach Rinah V’yeshuah p.102)
In every generation, one is obligated to regard himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt, as it is written (Shmot 13:8), “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt.’” It is not only our fathers whom the Holy One redeemed [from slavery]; we, too, He redeemed with them, as it is written (Devarim 6:23), “He took us out of there in order to bring us, to give us the Land that He swore to our forefathers.”

R’ Dr. Norman Lamm shlita (Chancellor of Yeshiva University) writes: Most of us, as we attend the Seder, tend to think back to the Sedarim of our youth. As a child -- beginning as a little boy of age six or seven and through my bar Mitzvah -- I, my parents and my siblings attended the Seder presided over by my maternal grandfather [R’ Yeshoshua Baumol z”l (1880-1948; author of She’eilot U’teshuvot Emek Halachah)]. Zeyde, of blessed memory, was a man short in stature, but great in rabbinic scholarship and personal warmth. The first part of the Seder was most enjoyable: the chanting, the singing, the expectation of rewards for the younger grandchildren for reciting the Four Questions successfully, and the Divrei Torah interspersed by the more knowledgeable participants. The memory I most cherish was that of Zeyde, who chanted certain passages of the Haggadah in the melodies of his Chassidic home before World War I. His face beamed when he had us, his American-born grandchildren, sing along with him.

But then, when it came to the Haggadah’s description of the torments of Bnei Yisrael by the sadistic Egyptian taskmasters, Zeyde’s mood changed abruptly. He was totally silent as we continued to read aloud from the Haggadah. He said nothing, but tears streamed down his face and onto his beard. I do not recall if anyone else noticed it, but I did.

It took me a few years to begin to understand. He was reciting the suffering of the Israelites -- and he wept for them, but also for himself, for he knew that his elderly mother had been shot by the SS when she resisted climbing aboard a cattle car taking Jews to the death chambers. His tears were shed for her -- and for his brothers and sisters and their large families, and for his teachers and his study partners and his students . . .

Zeyde’s change of mood was his personal illustration of the dual mode of the historic Jewish experience as represented in the Haggadah. Sadness and singing are both part of the Seder / order of life. (The Royal Table Haggadah p.13)

R’ Yehuda Amichai shlita (Director of the Torah Ve’ha’aretz Institute, formerly located in Gush Katif) observes: The language of the Haggadah implies that there are two parts to the obligation discussed. The first is taught by the verse, “And you shall tell your son,” while the second is found in the verse, “He took us out.” But what is the difference between these two obligations?
He explains: The first part of the paragraph refers to personal redemption. I must regard myself as if I personally was a slave and I was redeemed. The second part refers to communal redemption. G-d took us, the community of Yisrael, out of Egypt in order to give us the Land that He swore to our forefathers.

Significantly, the verse connected with the first part of the obligation is the verse that the Haggadah lists as the answer to the wicked son. To him we speak of the personal aspect of the Exodus, for we cannot hope that he will ever appreciate the communal aspect of the redemption. The second verse, on the other hand, is the source of the answer given to the wise son.

R’ Amichai adds: Rambam z”l appears not to agree that there is a two part obligation here, for Rambam’s version of the Haggadah is different. Instead of, “In every generation, one is obligated to regard himself . . .,” Rambam’s text reads, “In every generation, one is obligated to show himself.” According to Rambam, it would seem, the entire obligation described in this paragraph is directed outward, referring exclusively to the communal redemption. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Gush Katif p.30)

What does it mean in practice to see oneself as if he had personally gone out of Egypt? R’ Shlomo Wolbe z”l (1914-2005) explains:

In Egypt, Bnei Yisrael were enslaved. They were lowly slaves to a corrupt nation. Bnei Yisrael’s masters controlled both their bodies and their minds, subjecting them to back-breaking labor and to negative spiritual influences. Thus, Midrash Rabbah records that Bnei Yisrael who left Egypt had been idolaters. Indeed, four-fifths of Bnei Yisrael did not even merit to leave Egypt; instead, they died during the plague of Darkness. And, even those who did leave Egypt were, in a sense, stuck in Egypt until Hashem “extracted” them, as we read (Devarim 4:34), “Or has any god ever miraculously come to take for himself a nation from inside a nation.”

And yet, the moment they left Egypt, they turned into new people. We read (Shmot 14:8), “Bnei Yisrael were going out with an upraised arm.” Rashi z”l explains: “With elevated and public Gevurah / strength.” This Gevurah was manifested, writes R’ Wolbe, by rising above their previous lowly state, breaking free of the dominion of evil and impurity, and entering the dominion of holiness.

We say in Ma’ariv that Hashem “removed His people Yisrael from their midst to eternal freedom.” What is this “eternal freedom”? It is more than freedom from physical slavery; it is freedom from the dominion of evil and impurity. To see ourselves as having gone out of Egypt means to free ourselves from whatever evil or impurity holds dominion over us, R’ Wolbe writes.

How is this accomplished? R’ Wolbe explains: Pirkei Avot (ch.5) describes the Ten Plagues as “Ten Nissim that were performed for our ancestors.” “Nes” is often translated “miracle,” but it also means “banner.” At each of the plagues, Hashem elevated our ancestors like a banner held high, and He drew them close to Him. As idolaters, they should have experienced the same fate as the Egyptians, but Hashem’s Hashgachah Peratit / Divine Providence directed to the individual protected them miraculously.
גבייה הקוס, יכשה המצות ויאמר

לפיו כל מצות מביסים לחוותה, כללו, למשה, לארו, צהר, זמיל, מלך, לברא, לקחה
הלאים, לוכי שעשועים לאבודתינו ולעשת כל המצות באה. והConfigurer מברكات
לחוות, ממזון שלמה, ומאלולים לחוות, וממעדים לחוות.
ואמר לקחי שירת תרצה. hele לחוות.

אני אמר את לך שירת תרצה. hele לחוות.

ביאת ישראל ממתנים, בית יٻסך מעש לעש: ייחודו העד לחוות. ישראל
 tốılması: שנא ראה לאל, הפך וייסל אלחור: והיה רקדיו כלילם. עבות
כנפי צא: מה כל הרים כי חסנש. חידות תשב לוחור: והיה חידדו כלילם.
מבחון зубני צא: מדפני אודוחולא צא. מלבני כלילת יٻס: חכה/logo2.png
יום. חלוימו לקאני מום.

ככל אדיא חיק גוזי

ברוח אהבה, בין אלחנין猕ך חוותים, אושר כלים והאל את עבדינו מביאים, מהעניק לכול לחוות, השכל בו פзна ווורונ. כי, כי אלחנין והאל את עבדינו, מדינו
לሎודים לבהיראמים, חביב נלכטנאי שוללים. שמחים בכנף עירד
ישועי בעבודתנו, ואספקים נ snapchat ומי הפלאים (במהלך שבע אתרים
התפילין ומי הזריעים), אושר ויושע דם, על כי מזבחו לברא, והנני לק שיר.
ה çıוע על אלהים, על פידת פשים: בורק אתה, כי, ישראל.

כש שי

הני ממקו וממקו לקוס מעות כוס שיעיה מאגרב כיסות לקוס יṉות יṉות קדושא בריך
הוז השכינה על ידי הווא טמייר טстал בשם כל ישראל.

בורק אתה, כי, אלחנין猕ך חוותים, בורא פר נפגש.
ברוח אתיה בינאלהי מלך ח.blurם, אשר קדשה בֶּמַזִּימים, זָנוּנָו על טוֹיוֹלָם ובֵיתוֹ:

מָזוּנָו. מָזוּנָו

ונהל את המזון שלְלָךְ ובְּגָרָם:
ברוח אתיה בינאלהי מלך חثورם, חפורויה לַחֲמָו מְלֻבָּם.

מָזְרוֹן

לְחַמָּו דִּיוֹר, שבֵּויֵם בֵּרַוְוָה מָכָּה וּצְרָּוָם:
ברוח אתיה בינאלהי מלך חثورם, אשר קדשה בַּמַּזִּימים, זָנוּנָו על טוֹיוֹלָם בתוֹלָם.

מָזְרוֹן

פָּרָס כִּי מִזְמַרְתָּּו שִׁילָשָׁית וְכָיָית מָזְרוֹן, טובֵּל בֵּרַוְוָה, כִּי מִזְמַרְתָּו וְנָּכוֹל בֵּרַוְוָה בֵּרַעְיָה:
צֵר בֵּמַזִּימוֹ צַלְלֶם: כִּי עֲשָׂה חַלָּל בֵּמוֹ יֵשְׂבַּיָּו בֵּמַזִּימוֹ חֹמַּה קָטָּנָה. כִּי מָזְרוֹן פָּשַׁה
פָּנִיתוֹ מָזְרוֹן בֵּאָוָל בֵּיתוֹ. כִּיָּוִים מְזַמְּרוּ: עַל מִזְמַרְתָּו מָזְרוֹרִים עֲלֵם.

שִׁלָּחֵי עִירָה

אוכלים את האפיקומים.
ברכת המזון

ברך

ה哙: רבحيح בברך.

המסבור: כיış כי מברך מעינת ודע עלה.

הוזומ: כיيش כי מבך מעינת ודע עלה. ברושת מרחב ורבתי, ברך

(אללהים) שאכלהו משלא.

המסבור: ברך (אללהים) שאכלהו משל והמטובה חיות.

הוזומ: ברוך (אללהים) שאכלהו משל והמטובה חיות.

ברך והנה תורה]

ברך אתיה ? אללהים מלך העולם, חה את העולה כהל ביטוב ב gratuite
וגר病因ו היא נופה את כל ביש פ"ע עולמות חסד. ובפרטיו ההודד טמיד ליא האר
ולא יאכלה לו מון עולמה תד. עבורה שומע תנוしたもの, כי הוא יא ז"ז מפורס
לכל מתייב תלב, ומוכן מון לאל ברייתא אוש ברך. ברך אתיה, כי נזר את חכלי:

נודיה ק"י אללהים על שכרתתלב אברחות, אריך חמדה טוחב ורחבו, על
שוחטאנין יא אללהים אברח מארים, ופריסים, מוויית שבידיו, ועל בריית שוחטת
בƗבנה, על תורת חרוסין, על חיקי שוחטאנין, על חיקי שוחטאנין נל בריתת
שוחטאנין, על אכלה מהו שערתה פ"ע ופריסים לוהטת טמיד, בכל יהו בבל עת

בבל טעה:

ועל התל כי אללהים אברח יא///////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////י ובלי פריסים לוהטת פ"ע כי}

طيبיו עולם עת. בברכת, אוכלפי נטריה, וברך אתיה כי אללהים על הראה טמיד

אשר יבך קך. ברך אתה כי על מאור ועל חפשים.
כֹּלֶלָלוֹת וּכְרָחַיִם, מָזוֹן בְּבִינָם בֶּן עָלָיוֹת, בְּכֶנֶרֶת בְּבִינָם וְכֹרֶכֶת בְּבִינָם מָזוֹן, כֹּלֶלֶת בְּבִינָם וְכֹרֶכֶת בְּבִינָם מָזוֹן.

כֹּלֶלָלוֹת וּכְרָחַיִם, מָזוֹן בְּבִינָם בֶּן עָלָיוֹת, בְּכֶנֶרֶת בְּבִינָם וְכֹרֶכֶת בְּבִינָם מָזוֹן, כֹּלֶלֶת בְּבִינָם וְכֹרֶכֶת בְּבִינָם מָזוֹן.

כֹּלֶלָלוֹת וּכְרָחַיִם, מָזוֹן בְּבִינָם בֶּן עָלָיוֹת, בְּכֶנֶרֶת בְּבִינָם וְכֹרֶכֶת בְּבִינָם מָזוֹן, כֹּלֶלֶת בְּבִינָם וְכֹרֶכֶת בְּבִינָם מָזוֹן.
הוהי, הנה על ידך הוראה הזאת: זה בידך עומד כדי להשלים ולקבלו בידך.

בראשך, הגנן את עליו מעלה אברכים ולהיותך כוכב לאמריה:

барאך את מלך העולמות, בורא פנים עולם, בורא פנים עולם, בורא פנים עולם.
R’ Aryeh Levin z”l (1885-1969; known as the “Tzaddik of Yerushalayim” and as the “Prisoners’ Rabbi”) and R’ Chaim Shmuelevitz z”l (1902-1979; Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva) met at a brit milah. There was a long delay in beginning the brit, so R’ Shmuelevitz turned to R’ Levin and asked, “I am supposed to be at the yeshiva. What should I do?”

R’ Levin replied: “I cannot tell his honor what to do, but I can tell you a story.” This is the story he told:

When I [R’ Levin] was younger, I met R’ Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z”l (1848-1932; rabbi of the Eidah Ha’chareidit in Yerushalayim) at a brit milah. There was a long delay in beginning the brit, so I turned to R’ Sonnenfeld and asked, “I am supposed to be at the yeshiva. [R’ Levin was Mashgiach Ruchani at Yeshivat Etz Chaim.] What should I do?”

R’ Sonnenfeld replied: “It is difficult to pass-up an opportunity to meet Eliyahu Ha’navi. It is a rare occasion.”

When R’ Levin finished his story, R’ Shmuelevitz said, “If so, we must wait.” (Quoted in Brito L’hodi’am p.92)

From the same work:

R’ David Cohen z”l (1887-1972; instructor at Yeshivat Merkaz Ha’Rav; known as the “Nazir”) posed the following question at the brit milah of his grandson (son of R’ Shlomo Goren z”l): Why is Eliyahu Ha’navi such a central figure at a brit milah? After all, this is a Mitzvah associated with Avraham Avinu, as demonstrated by the blessing we recite--“To bring [the child] into the brit/covenant of Avraham Avinu”!

R’ Cohen explained: The covenant that is made at the brit milah is the joining together of the past, the present and the future of the Jewish people. Avraham Avinu represents our past. Those assembled at the brit represent the present. Finally, Eliyahu Ha’navi, the harbinger of the Redemption, represents the future.

The Gemara (Megilah 14a) asks why we recite Hallel on Pesach but not on Purim. After all, argues the Gemara, “If we recite Hallel on a holiday that commemorates the transition from slavery to freedom [i.e., Pesach], how much more so should we recite it on a holiday that commemorates the transition from death to life [i.e., Purim].” The Gemara answers that we do not say Hallel on Purim because, even after the Purim miracle, “We are still slaves to Achashveirosh,” i.e., we are still subjugated by, or subservient to, the nations of the world.
R’ Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z’l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) asks: Why then do we say Hallel on Pesach? Why don’t we say, “We are still slaves to Pharaoh,” as long as we are still subjugated by, or subservient to, other nations? Moreover, we say in the Pesach Haggadah, “In every generation, one is obligated to see himself as if he had personally gone out of Egypt.” Why do we view ourselves as having gone out of Egypt if we are once again subservient to other nations?

R’ Elyashiv explains: The Gemara (Berachot 9a-b) teaches that Hashem asked Bnei Yisrael to “please” ask the Egyptians for gold and silver (see Shmot 11:2) so that Avraham would not accuse Hashem of keeping His promise to enslave Avraham’s descendants, but not keeping His promise to take them out of Egypt with great wealth (see Bereishit 15:13-14). However, writes R’ Elyashiv, this is difficult to understand. Is gold and silver what the Torah means when it refers to “great wealth”? Surely “great wealth” is the closeness to Hashem that one obtains by performing Mitzvot and studying Torah!

He answers: When Hashem spoke of “great wealth,” He was, indeed, referring to the Torah that Bnei Yisrael would receive after the Exodus. However, not everyone appreciates the immense pleasure that can be obtained from studying Torah; not everyone considers that to be “great wealth.” Because of such people, Hashem had to make sure that Bnei Yisrael left Egypt with gold and silver also.

Nevertheless, concludes R’ Elyashiv, true wealth is spiritual wealth, which is something that the other nations of the world can never take away from us, no matter how much they subjugate us. Once we left Egypt and received the Torah, that wealth is ours to keep forever. That is why we recite Hallel on Pesach even though we are still subjugated by, or subservient to, other nations. And, that is why every person is obligated to see himself as if he had left Egypt--so he can appreciate that which we gained and never lost. (Mishnat Ha’Grish: Pesach p.412)
We read that, following the splitting of the Yam Suf and the drowning of the Egyptians, “Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt; and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.” The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni comments: In the merit of having faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant, they merited to inherit the Land.

R’ Chaim Palagi z”l (1788-1868; rabbi of Izmir, Turkey) writes: This indicates that the generation that entered the Land had two merits—having faith in Hashem and having faith in Moshe. In contrast, Moshe, who did not enter the Land, had only one merit—that of having faith in Hashem. In that merit, he was able to die in Eretz Yisrael. How so? Although Moshe never crossed the border, Hashem miraculously folded the entire Land under the place where he stood, so that he did merit to die in Eretz Yisrael.

This, R’ Palagi continues, is alluded to in the verse in Hallel, “I shall walk before Hashem in the land of the living. I have kept the faith, for I speak...” “I have kept the faith,” is what Moshe Rabbeinu said of himself. Also, “I speak”—therefore others believed in You. In that merit, they entered the “the land of the living” (i.e., Eretz Yisrael). Seeming, Moshe did not enter the Land. However, the final letters of the four words, “Lifnei Hashem b’artot ha’chaim” / “before Hashem in the land of the living” make up the letters of the word “mitah” / “death.” This hints that Moshe’s end was in “the land of the living.” (Artzot Ha’chaim p.4)
“This is the day Hashem has made, let us rejoice and be glad ‘bo’.”

The Midrash states: I do not know whether “bo” means “with it” [i.e., the day] or with Him [i.e., Hashem]. Therefore King Shlomo writes (Shir Ha’shirim 1:4), “let us rejoice and be glad with You.”

R’ David Dov Meisels z”l (1814-1875; rabbi of Lask, Poland) explains: The Midrash is teaching that, when a person experiences any type of salvation, his primary joy should not be over the salvation itself. Rather, it should be because the salvation means that G-d cares enough about the one who was saved to save him. (Haggadah Shel Pesach: Rei’ach Duda’im p.94)
[Give thanks] to Him Who divided the Yam Suf le'gezarim / in parts.

The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni states that the word “le'gezarim” alludes to the brit milah. [The word comes from the root which means “to cut.”] What is the connection between brit milah and the splitting of the Yam Suf?

R’ Yehonasan Steif z”l explains: The guardian angel of the sea argued, “How can the sea divide? That is against the laws of nature and therefore a violation of G-d’s intent when He created the world!”

In reality, however, that is not a good argument. Our Sages teach that, as far as nature was concerned, Avraham and Sarah were not capable of having children. However, Hashem lifted them out of the framework of nature and gave them a son at unnaturally advanced ages. Why? Because the world was created for Yisrael. Nature serves Yisrael, not the other way around; provided, of course, that we are observing the Torah.

What is the ultimate proof that the Jewish People live outside of nature? It is the fact that a father and mother take their newborn son and subject him to brit milah. Indeed, in the blessing following the brit milah, that Mitzvah is referred to as a chok / a commandment which is not understood. There is no natural explanation for the fact that parents not only perform this Mitzvah, they do so happily. Therefore, the Yam Suf too could change its nature, and split. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mahari Steif p. 212)
presence, writes R’ Kook, is a far greater gift than the specific good that was given.

R’ Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z”l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: The word “tehilah” refers to “light,” as in the verse (Iyov 31:26), “If I ever saw light as yahel / it shone.” To give thanks (“hoda’ah”) means to recognize that one is surrounded by Hashem’s goodness. In contrast, “tehilah” means recognizing that the goodness that one receives is a result of being surrounded at all times by a Divine “light.” In effect, it means recognizing that every individual good that is received is due to Hashem's constant presence. That “light,” Hashem's presence, writes R’ Kook, is a far greater gift than the specific good that was given.
The ability to recognize this, R’ Kook adds, is itself a gift from Hashem, for how else could mankind see beyond the darkness of this world and notice Hashem’s light! (Olat Re’iyah I pp. 193 & 197; II p.62)

R’ Moshe Bleicher shlita (Rosh Ha’yeshiva of Yeshivat Shavei Chevron) elaborates: Giving thanks (“hoda’ah”) is not unique to the Jewish People; all the peoples of the world do that. However, our verse teaches, tehillah -- recognizing and declaring Hashem’s constant presence and living a life that reflects that awareness -- is the unique mission for which the Jewish nation was created. (V’rav Shlom Banayich p.14)

R’ Avigdor Miller z”l (prominent mussar personality in New York; died 2001) observed that the verse (Yeshayah 43:21), “I fashioned this people for Myself that it might declare My praise,” teaches that the life’s mission of the Jewish People is to praise Hashem. This is the primary reason that we ask for the redemption-- to be able to praise Hashem, as we read (Tehilim 106:47), “Save us, Hashem, our G-d, and gather us from among the nations, to thank your Holy Name, and to be glorified through Your praise.”

How does one come to a state of being able to praise Hashem? R’ Miller answers that one is able to praise Hashem when one recognizes Hashem through one’s senses, i.e., when one can see, hear and feel the presence of Hashem in his life. Praise is merely the result of careful study, the outward manifestation of true recognition of Hashem’s presence.

How does one achieve this? The most basic tool is to carefully examine in detail the kindness that Hashem does for each of us.

On another occasion, R’ Miller gave an example of the type of reflection to which he refers. A common pastime for many people is complaining about the weather. But how often do we stop to reflect on Hashem’s kindness when we have good weather? The Torah (Shmot 13:4) expressly records that the Exodus from Egypt occurred in the spring, when the best weather for traveling occurs. Why is this detail singled out? Does the fact that the weather was nice have any significance when compared to the Ten Plagues and the other awesome miracles of the Exodus, or compared to our ancestors’ joy at being freed from slavery?

Yes, answers R’ Miller in the name of R’ Nosson Zvi Finkel z”l (the Alter of Slobodka). The Torah is teaching us to appreciate even the “small” acts of kindness that Hashem does for us. Amidst your greatest joy -- for example, when our ancestors were freed from slavery -- take a moment to notice how beautiful the weather is. (Sha’arei Orah Vol. I, pages 101 & 132)
ברוח אתנה, יא אלוהים מלך עולם, בראת פיר חמא.
ברוח אחרנית יא אלהיםملך הurrection על כל העולם ובריר חמא, על הנבון השד, ועל
אפר חמא, את נבון תחתי וחברית, ש׳ץ נבון לאבמותי, לברך בהבר הלאבמותי, رسولך,erald, על צדד(wait, על צדד
ברון, ועל מ kapsam ועל הי קנה. הבנים הורשלים עם הקדש במחנה, מגמלים
ל/png, כשמהם בברכה לברך בהבר הלאבמותי, ונברך עליה עלאה שבך והבנה
ונברכה.
(בשבת ורצה) ולאלוהים בינך השבך חזך.
ושמהו בינו לבין הפועה חזך. כי אתה יא סופר וمشارי לכל, ונווה לך על זארא
ועל פיר חמא, בראת אתנה יא, על זארא על פיר חמא.
ברעת
השבת ורצה פסה כהלקות, כל שמחות יחוא. פאשך זניא ליטר און, כל נכמה
לעשות. צא שומ מוענה, קומם כהלה עדות מכמנה. בברעב נחל יעש צח, פזרים
לפיון ברכה.
לשהה bềאת可能な: ובסך דייחט בקלהו.
אה רוד בכיólica דילוק, יבשות עשומות זא לילוק, ובר ו部門י זא לילוק
ול לילוק, ויהי בשמא לילוק.
זונת לילוק בר רחלו לילוק, הפ◑ת ארמי זאמו לילוק, ובר נשרו לילוקי
ויתק לילוק, ויהי בשמא לילוק.
orgia זכרוי פרווס מ phận זניא לילוק, לילוק לא זיאו בקוה לילוק, וחאת
גידי חישה ס留ק בכנכת לילוק, ויהי בשמא לילוק.
יש מﻚר לילוק איו, זוחש פסיי לילוק, ברע בימיוכא באישו לילוק, לאשה
המותה hindsight יא זרוח לילוק, ויהי בשמא לילוק.
משתבח בך כל קדש נחרת בו ביהולו, ושוב מברך אריה פרות במתוחיו ליהו. שמעה
כשהאנניםそれで ספרי ליהו, ויהי במתוחו ליהו.

אורות נמחה עלינו בוכל נחל ליהו, פורת דרכון שלאמר מיהו פיתחו, אךеш משומר
ושא אתא ב sécurון ליהו, ויהי במתוחו ליהו.

ישבעו לו רבות חיות לא ישים ליהו, כי התייכן כי כל חיות איב ליהו,
שlanmış מקדש עיראכ כל חיות לכל היללך, ס=====.getChildren ימים חצא ליהו, ייהי
באת כל לילה:

וכל ימי פשת
ובכ"ו "אמדות גוז פשת".

אימי בברוחו הפילות הפשת, ברוח כל מושדות ושאצ פשת, גণית א좀ראיה
הלות ליל פשת, אמדות גוז פשת.

דלילות דפקות хозяй פשת, חסעי נוצסים עוגת מצות פשת, יאל נברר זרא
בר לווער עץ פשת, אמדות גוז פשת.

_ANDROID

זנגו סדנוכותendraلجונת באשה פשת, חיק לול מיים, נמצות אפק בקרה פשת.
שאתאנא אדמת מלח ליב טבש פשת, אמדות גוז פשת.

Echo

ataires את משותי לבא במקחי פשת, אמדות גוז פשת.

בתך קט ומעｨים באתות פשת, כלמה מבדי שלפי פשת, צורפ משומרים
פול יזם ינק יזם פשת, אמדות גוז פשת.

אם כי חיות יבש ולאעוד, עד גוהי עונת פשת, פס די אביה לאעבר צאל בפשת, זמה
ה אברהם עֻז leased פשת, באשת, אמדות גוז פשת.

קהל כנאה הרצה זם לשלש בפשת, ראש מבית רעש מחמדת הבזא המסוים בפשת,
שטיי אלח דרי, תבכיא לועזת בפשת, סאוו ודראת ודוא, כלל הנקדש וה
פשת, אמדות גוז פשת.
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

אמדת במלוכת, בחור פקלה, פרודייםيونו
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

זאא במלוכת, חסין פקלה, ספקתי יאמר
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

יהודי במלוכת, בני פקלה, למודיו יאמר
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

מושלח במלוכת, وغير פקלה, שיבכיו יאמר
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

עונ במלוכת, פופה פקלה, עדכתיו יאמר
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

קדוש במלוכת, רוחם פקלה, שבאתיו יאמר
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.

נכון במלוכת, חומם פקלה, חכמיים יאמר
ולך ולח, לך כילך, לך כים לוח, לך מפקלה
כדי להגנה, כדי להגנה.
אֵיזֶר הָאָם

יַבְנֵהֶ בִּיתָ בְּכוּרֵב, בָּמוֹרֶה בְּמַחְרָה, בְּפַּמֶּיֶּנֶּ בְּכֹרֵב. אֲלֵ בָּנָ, בָּנָ בֵּיתָ בְּכֹרֵב.

בְּכוּרֵב הוּא, דִּודָל הָאָם, לָעִי הָאָם, יַבְנֵה בִּיתָ בְּכוּרֵב, בָּמוֹרֶה בְּמַחְרָה, בְּפַּמֶּיֶּנֶּ בְּכֹרֵב.

בְּכֹרֵב. אֲלֵ בָּנָ, בָּנָ, בָּנָ בֵּיתָ בְּכֹרֵב.

הָדוֹר הָאָם, דִּודָל הָאָם, זָכָרָי הָאָם, בָּנָ בִּיתָ בְּכוּרֵב, בָּמוֹרֶה בְּמַחְרָה, בְּפַּמֶּיֶּנֶּ בְּכֹרֵב.

בְּפַּמֶּיֶּנֶּ בְּכֹרֵב. אֲלֵ בָּנָ, בָּנָ, בָּנָ בֵּיתָ בְּכֹרֵב.

שֵׂרֵה הָאָם, קָחָר הָאָם. בָּרָי הָאָם, לָעִי הָאָם, מַלְקָל הָאָם, נָרָה הָאָם, שְׁבֵי הָאָם.

עָנָי הָאָם, פַּרְוָה הָאָם, אוֹכְלָי הָאָם, יַבְנֵה בִּיתָ בְּכוּרֵב, בָּמוֹרֶה בְּמַחְרָה, בְּפַּמֶּיֶּנֶּ בְּכֹרֵב.

בְּכֹרֵב. אֲלֵ בָּנָ, בָּנָ, בָּנָ בֵּיתָ בְּכֹרֵב.

קָדְשָי הָאָם, רָחוֹם הָאָם, שְׁציָי הָאָם, בְּנֵי בִּיתָ בְּכוּרֵב, בָּמוֹרֶה בְּמַחְרָה, בְּפַּמֶּיֶּנֶּ בְּכֹרֵב.

אַחַד מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן?

אָחָד צְאֵי יָדוּ: אֲחָד נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

שֵׁנֵי מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: שֵׁנִי נְלָכֵי יָדוּ: שֵׁנִי לָוֹחַ הַבְּרִית, אֲחָד נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

שֵׁלָשָׁה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: שֵׁלָשָׁה אֲחָדָא יָדוּ: שֵׁלָשָׁה לָוֹחַ הַבְּרִית, שֵׁלָשָׁה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

אָרְבָּעָה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: אָרְבָּעָה אֲחָדָא יָדוּ: אָרְבָּעָה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

אַחָד נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

הָמֵמָשָׁה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: הָמֵמָשָׁה אֲחָדָא יָדוּ: הָמֵמָשָׁה הָוֹמֶשָׁ הַנּוֹרָה, אָרְבָּעָה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

שְׁלָשָׁה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: שְׁלָשָׁה אֲחָדָא יָדוּ: שְׁלָשָׁה הָוֹמֶשָׁ הַנּוֹרָה, אָרְבָּעָה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

אָרְבָּעָה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: אָרְבָּעָה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

שְׁלָשָׁה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: שְׁלָשָׁה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.

אָרְבָּעָה מְיָ קְדַשְׁתָּן: אָרְבָּעָה נְלָכֵי נְשֵׁפַמְיָ נְבוֹאָרָא.
The Gemara states that the techelet of the tzitzit is meant to remind a person of G-d’s “throne” in the Heavens. R’ Gedaliah Schorr z’l (1911-1979; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vo’daas) was asked: Is this not far-fetched? He answered that it depends where a person’s thoughts are. One who regularly thinks of spiritual matters will indeed be reminded of G-d’s throne when he sees techelet. In a similar vein, the Gemara says that one who looks at certain items will think immoral thoughts. This latter Gemara, said R’ Schorr is referring to a person whose thoughts are regularly occupied with such matters.

Based on this idea, R’ Avraham Schorr shlita (rabbi in Brooklyn, N.Y.; son of R’ Gedaliah Schorr) explains: The Seder is meant to elevate us to the point that we occupy out thoughts with spiritual matters. At the end of the Seder, we test ourselves by playing a game of “association.” “Who knows one?” Hopefully we answer, “One is G-d.” “Who knows two?” Hopefully we answer, “Two are the luchot.” And so on. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Halekach Ve’halibuv p.212)
R’ Avraham Aharon Prag z”l (1870-1921; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Shomrei Ha’chomot in Yerushalayim) writes: It is likely that this song and the one after it (“Chad Gadya”) contain much wisdom as well as mussar / ethical guidance, but they were written in the form of riddles and metaphors in order to keep the children awake. A precedent for this is the Midrash which relates that Rabbi Akiva saw that his students were dozing off, so he said: “Why was Esther queen of 127 provinces? Because Sarah lived 127 years.” [Many commentaries offer lessons that can be learned from that cryptic statement.]

R’ Prag continues: This song can serve as a educational tool for a father to use throughout the Seder. He can say to his children, “We are now making this Seder in honor of the Unique One. Who knows who that One is? We have two cooked items on the Seder plate. Do you know something else that the number two represents? We have three Matzot. Do you know something else that the number three represents? Also, there are:

- **Four** cups of wine.
- **Five** items on the Seder plate according to the custom of the Vilna Gaon z”l: Maror, Charoset, Matzah and two cooked items.
- **Six** Berachot over the wine: Ha’gaffenn four times, plus Kiddush and She’he’chianu.
- **Seven** blessings before we reach the Matzah [apparently referring to the three blessings of Kiddush, plus Ha’adamah, Ga’al Yisrael, the second Ha’gaffenn and Al Netilat Yadayim]
- **Eight** sections of Hallel recited at the Seder: six in “Hallel Ha’mitzri” [the same chapters we recite as Hallel on every festival], one in Hallel Ha’gadol [the poem beginning “Hodu . . . ki l’olam chasdo”], and the praise beginning “Nishmat.”
- **Nine** expressions of praise in the paragraph beginning “Le’fichach” with which we conclude Maggid and introduce the first section of Hallel.
- **Ten** Makkot.
- **Eleven** blessings recited over food: Ha’gaffenn four times, Ha’adamah, Ha’motzi, four blessings in Birkat Ha’mazon, and the blessing after the last cup of wine. [This does not include the blessings of Al Achilat Matzah and Al Achilat Maror, which are not blessings over food but rather blessings over Mitzvot.]
- **Twelve** Mitzvot performed at the Seder: four cups of wine, Charoset, Karpas, two hand-washings, the blessings of Ha’motzi, Al Achilat Matzah and Al Achilat Maror, and Koraich.
- **Thirteen** Mitzvot performed at the Seder if the Mitzvah of telling the story of the Exodus is added to the twelve “tangible” Mitzvot listed above.

Upon reaching each of these items during the Seder, a father can say: “Now we will do/say something involving the number ‘x.’ Do you know something else that involves that number?” (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tavlin L’mitzvah)
R’ Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z”l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suwalk, Lithuania, and a prolific author in all areas of Torah study) explains this poem as an allusion to all of Jewish history.

“One kid goat” refers to the Jewish People, as is written (Yechezekel 34:17), “You are My flock.” The Jewish People is called “one,” as in the verse (Divrei Ha’yamim I 17:21), “Who is like
Your nation, *Yisrael*, one nation in the land.” In particular, the Jewish People, a nation that is stubborn and brazen (in Hebrew, “זע” / “az”), is likened to a goat (in Hebrew, “איז”).

“That father bought for two zuzim” is an allusion to the sacrificial service, toward which every person contributed half a shekel, *i.e.*, two zuzim, every year. The sacrificial service atones for the sins that result from our stubbornness and brazeness.

“That a cat came and ate the kid goat” refers to the sale of Yosef by his brothers, after which the brothers slaughtered a kid goat.

“That came a dog” refers to the exile in Egypt, which resulted from the sale of Yosef.

“That came a stick” refers to Moshe’s staff [which assisted in bringing about the Exodus].

“That came a fire” refers to the sin of the Golden Calf, to which one can apply the verse (*Iyov* 31:12), “For it is a fire, it consumes until doom.”

“That came water” refers to Moshe’s prayers, which are likened to water, as in the verse (*Eichah* 2:19), “Pour out your heart like water.”

“That came an ox” refers to the golden calves erected by King Yerovam [in the First Temple period; see *Melachim I* 12:28]. These new calves undid the atonement that Moshe’s prayer had achieved and reawakened the “fire” of the Golden Calf.

“That came the shochet” refers to the *Anshei Ha’knesset Ha’gedolah* / Men of the Great Assembly [at the beginning of the Second Temple period] who prayed successfully that the *Yetzer Ha’ra* for idolatry be “slaughtered,” *i.e.*, eradicated from the Jewish People.

“That came the angel of death” refers to sin’at chinam / unjustified hatred that led to the destruction of the Second Temple and our present long exile.

“That came Ha’Kadosh Baruch Hu” alludes to the eventual fulfillment of the verse (*Yeshayah* 11:11), “On that day, Hashem will again show His Hand to acquire the remnant of His people.” At that time, [in the words of *Yeshayah* (25:8)], “He will eliminate death forever.” Then, concludes R’ Chaver, He will enlighten our eyes with a clear light - speedily in our days, *Amen!* (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)

“On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves . . . a seh / lamb or kid for the household. . . It shall be yours for examination until the fourteenth day of this month. . .” (*Shmot* 12:3, 6)

*Rashi* z”l notes that setting aside a lamb for the *Korban Pesach* four days before the time for slaughtering was not required in succeeding generations. Why was it required here? The Sage Rabbi Matia ben Charash explains (based on *Yechezkel* 16:7-8): The time had come for Hashem to redeem Avraham Avinu’s descendants (*i.e.*, *Bnei Yisrael*), but they lacked any merit in which to be redeemed. Therefore, Hashem gave them two Mitzvot, one involving the blood of the *Pesach* lamb and one involving the blood of *Brit Milah*. Another answer is that, because they were mired in idolatry, He [Hashem] told them (paraphrasing *Shmot* 12:21), “Withdraw your hands from idols [*i.e.*, the lamb, which was an Egyptian deity] and take a lamb to fulfill a Divine command.” [Until here from *Rashi*]
How does Rabbi Matia’s teaching answer the question: Why was the first Pesach different from every Pesach in succeeding generations? R’ Tevele Bondi z”l (1796-1885; Germany) explains: In order to bring the Korban Pesach, Bnei Yisrael had to buy lambs from the Egyptians. Of course, Bnei Yisrael could not tell the Egyptians why they were buying the lambs. Therefore, the Egyptians presumed that Bnei Yisrael wanted the lambs to worship them as deities, as the Egyptians did, and they happily sold the lambs at bargain prices. Subsequently, however, Bnei Yisrael tied the lambs to their bedposts for four days and inspected their fitness to be used for the Korban Pesach, an action that angered the Egyptians and endangered Bnei Yisrael, thus bringing them great merit. That merit was only necessary that first year, and that is what Rabbi Matia is teaching.

For the same reason, writes R’ Bondi, Hashem commanded that the bones of the Korban Pesach not be broken in the process of eating the sacrifice. Let the bones remain whole so there would be no doubt that Bnei Yisrael had eaten the Egyptian deity!

R’ Bondi adds: The requirement to roast the Korban Pesach whole recalls Avraham Avinu’s self-sacrifice, choosing to be thrown into a furnace rather than worship idols. King Nimrod worshiped fire, but Avraham told him (according to a Midrash), “Fire cannot be god because water can extinguish it. Water cannot be god, because clouds carry it. Clouds cannot be god, because the wind can disperse them,” and so on.

R’ Bondi concludes: That conversation between Avraham and Nimrod is recalled through the format of Chad Gadya. That song speaks about a goat that was purchased—like the first Korban Pesach—for a bargain price, but which cannot be a deity, since it can be eaten by a cat, which can be bitten by a dog, which can be hit by a stick, etc. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Im Peirush M’eit R’ Tevele Bondi p.75)

The 19th century Chassidic Rebbe, R’ Yechiel Meir of Gostynin z”l, barely slept all of Pesach. His family was worried about his health and asked him why he would not sleep. He replied, “If I had won the lottery, would you ask me why I couldn’t sleep? Believe me! Every minute of Pesach is like winning the lottery.”

What did he mean by this? Why did he feel more fortunate on Pesach than on any other day? The Amshinover Rebbe explained: Our Sages say that Chametz represents the Yetzer Ha’ra. Thus, Pesach is a time that is free of the Yetzer Ha’ra. Every minute of such a time is priceless.