



Likkutei Sichos

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Finding Order in the Seder

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1.

THE ORDER OF THE HAGGADAH AND THE SEARCH FOR THE POINT

As known, the obligation and *mitzvah* of remembering the Exodus from Egypt on the night of *Pesach* differs, in a number of respects, from the obligation to do so all year round.¹ One of the differences:² During the year, a mere mention suffices — “We are commanded to **mention** the Exodus.”³ But on the night of *Pesach*, the *mitzvah* is to **recount** the story of the Exodus. As *Rambam* says:⁴ “It is a positive commandment of the Torah to **relate** the miracles and wonders wrought for our ancestors in Egypt....”

Retelling and mentioning the story of the Exodus is a “great foundation and strong pillar of our Torah and our belief,” and “we have received so many precepts, both negative and positive, regarding this... and for this reason, we always recite in our blessings and prayers, ‘commemorating the Exodus.’”⁵

Thus, it seems reasonable to presume that in recounting the story of the Exodus on the night of *Pesach*, the *Haggadah* also evinces the general point and message of the Exodus, i.e., how it is “a great foundation and strong pillar of our Torah....”

The *mitzvah* to retell the story of the Exodus on the night of *Pesach* is inferred from the verse,⁶ “And you shall tell your son.” This is the *mitzvah* of reciting the *Haggadah*.

Thematic ideas are generally expressed overtly and underscored at the beginning and end {of a Torah narrative or event}. Thus, the depth behind the story of the Exodus, i.e., the emphasis on it being a general message and concept,

¹ Noted and referenced in *Haggadah Shel Pesach Im Likkutei Taamim Uminhagim* (Kehot Publications) p. 15.

² *Haggadas Maaseh Nissim* (written by the author of the *Chavos Daas*) in the Introduction; *Shevach Pesach*; *Siddur Maharid*; *Malbim* on *Shemos* 13:8; see the *Haggadah Shel Pesach* mentioned above, *ibid*; see at length *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 21, p. 71 ff.

³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Krias Shema*,” ch. 1, par. 3.

⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Chametz Matzah*,” ch. 7, par. 1.

⁵ See *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Shevel* ed. (*mitzvah* 10), in our version of *Sefer HaChinuch* (*mitzvah* 21).

⁶ *Shemos* 13:8.

will be found primarily in the beginning and end of “the fundamental text of the *Haggadah*, which our Sages ordained as an obligation for everyone”⁷ (as the *mishnah* says,⁸ “He begins with disgrace and concludes with praise”). We begin from the beginning of the passage “We were slaves,” followed by the passage, “In the beginning, our ancestors worshipped idols.” Then we continue, “It was this that stood by our ancestors...,” which concludes the “topic of Egypt.”⁹ We then get into the pivotal part, “the stories of Lavan and Yaakov”¹⁰ (“and he expounds from) the passage: ‘An Aramean tried to destroy my father.’”¹¹

Moreover, according to the text of the *Haggadah*, as “is the custom practiced by the entire Jewish people from the earlier generations,¹²” we begin from the declaration, “This is the bread of affliction.” We recite this passage at the very beginning even before the “*Mah nishtanah*.”¹³ Thus, presumably, **this** beginning also accentuates a general concept.

The same applies to the “conclusion” of the “wonders and miracles that Hashem performed for us in that time.”¹⁴ The exposition concludes, “How many levels of favors has the Omnipresent bestowed upon us,” “and built for us the *Beis HaBechirah*¹⁵ to atone for all our sins.”

In order to understand the general message of the *Haggadah* and the story of the Exodus, we need to first explain some nuances in the aforementioned paragraphs.

⁷ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 473, par. 43.

⁸ *Pesachim* 116a.

⁹ Commentary of *Zevach Pesach*, on the *Haggadah*.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ {*Devarim* 26:5.} *Pesachim*, loc. cit.

¹² Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 473, par. 43.

¹³ {“Why is this night different...,” the four questions.}

¹⁴ *Abudraham*, *Seder Haggadah U’Pirushah*.

¹⁵ {Lit. “the chosen house,” a reference to the *Beis Hamikdash*, the Temple in Jerusalem.}

2.

“THIS IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION THAT OUR ANCESTORS ATE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT...”¹⁶

The paragraph, “This is the bread of affliction” is found at the beginning of “*Maggid*.”¹⁷ This proves the following: We recite this paragraph at the commencement of the *seder* not (only) because it contains an invitation to the *Seder* for all people who lack what they need for the Pesach meal and the {*mitzvos* of the} *Pesach Seder*. Had this been the case, we would have needed to recite this paragraph before starting the *Seder*, when we come home from *shul*¹⁸ (or even earlier — while still in *shul*). Because the phrase, “whoever is in need,” includes even those who need help obtaining the four cups of wine, etc., including the first cup for *kiddush*¹⁹ {which, as the first step of the *Seder* and the *Haggadah*, was already recited by this time}. Rather, the reason why we recite this paragraph is (also, and primarily) because it serves as the (introduction and) opening to the story of the Exodus. That is why this paragraph follows (immediately) at the beginning of “*Maggid*.”

This is difficult to understand: What connection do the following have to the story of the Exodus? In fact, the opposite seems to be the case: a) The beginning of the paragraph, “the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt” is not part of the story of the **Exodus**. On the contrary! It recounts the suffering in Egypt. b) The conclusion of the paragraph, “This year we are here... This year we are slaves,” also emphasizes the fact that we live in times of exile and slavery — the opposite of (the story of) redemption.

What place does this paragraph have in the story of the Exodus? In the general order of *mitzvos* and rites performed on this night, “**this year**,” and all the more so, at the very beginning of the *mitzvos* and rites performed on this night is the recitation of the *Haggadah* and retelling the story of the Exodus, we

¹⁶ {Unlike other subtitles, this subtitle, as well as the ones for Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 were translated from the *sichah*. In the *sichah*, however, they were incorporated at the beginning of their respective Sections.}

¹⁷ {The *seder*, lit. “order,” is a feast/series of rites, including reading the “*Haggadah*,” drinking four cups of wine, and eating *matzah*, etc. The *seder* is divided into fifteen “steps.” *Maggid* is the fifth of the steps. During *Maggid*, most of the *Haggadah* is read, recounting the story of the Exodus.}

¹⁸ {Synagogue.}

¹⁹ {Which takes place before the onset of *Maggid*.}

should emphasize and demonstrate the fact that **now** we are free. For this reason, “one must carry out all the practices of this night in a manner that reflects freedom.”²⁰ But here we discuss and talk about how “this year we are here... this year we are slaves” — the opposite of freedom.

3.

THE PARAGRAPH SAYS NOTHING ABOUT THE EXODUS

Ostensibly, we can offer the following (strained) answer: By saying, “This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt,” we seek to emphasize how only our ancestors lived in the land of Egypt but we do not live in the land of Egypt. And so, too, regarding the conclusion, “This year we are here... **next year...**” The intent here is similar to the *mishnah*, “He begins with disgrace (and concludes with praise).”

But, in truth, this answer doesn’t work for the following reasons:

a) Were this the case,²¹ we would not talk about (these ideas, and recite) this paragraph before the *Mah nishtanah* questions, but after them (just like the rest of the *Haggadah*). “Because it is a *mitzvah* to relate the *Haggadah* as a response to the questions asked of him.”²²

b) This formula of beginning “with disgrace” (in order to clearly demonstrate and contrast the later “glory”) only makes sense about something that happened in the past. For the Sages make this statement regarding the fact that we begin reciting the *Haggadah* with the passage, “We were slaves to Pharaoh... In the beginning, our ancestors were idolaters...” (“He begins with disgrace”). Subsequently, we continue (“and concludes with praise”) regarding **the present**, “Hashem took us out from there....” — “**Now**, the Omnipresent has drawn us close to His service.” For in this way, the glory and praise to

²⁰ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 472, par. 7.

²¹ {Meaning, if the purpose of this paragraph is to focus on the Exodus, then it is considered as part of relating the story of the Exodus (i.e., the *Haggadah*), and it should come after the *mah nishtanah*.}

²² Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 473, par. 14.

Hashem is more evident and more intensely experienced, thereby, automatically, awakening feelings of freedom.

However, obviously, this does not apply when we begin by describing the disgrace of the **present**, “**this year we are here... this year we are slaves...**” Although we pray and are confident (and comforted) that “next year in the land of Israel,” and, “next year we will be free,” this is only a hopeful feeling about (freedom in) the future, not a feeling of freedom **now**, on this night.

Likewise, we need to clarify, as mentioned, regarding the second passage: “Whoever is hungry let him come and eat, whoever is in need let him come and conduct the Pesach {*seder*}.” Of what relevance is this passage to *Maggid* – the story of the Exodus?

Based on all the above, we must conclude that indeed, the paragraph, “This is the bread of affliction,” is not a part of the story of the Exodus itself (for the story follows, primarily, as an answer to the *Mah nishtanah* questions, as mentioned). Nevertheless, it is relevant to the theme of *Maggid* – the story of the Exodus. This paragraph serves as a general introduction which helps us clarify and resolve a general question that can be asked regarding the entire *Seder* held on this night and regarding the Exodus narrative, as will be explained.

4.

IT IS THE WRONG MATZAH

Additionally, we need to clarify: We recite: “This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate **in the land of Egypt...**” The commentators ask: Doesn’t the *matzah* that we eat nowadays commemorate the *matzah* that the Jewish people ate **while they were leaving** Egypt, and not the *matzah* that they ate while living **in** Egypt? As it says further in the *Haggadah*, “**This** *matzah* that we

eat... it recalls that the dough didn't have time to rise... as it says:²³ "They baked the dough as unleavened cakes... for **they had been driven out of Egypt...**"

One answer offered:²⁴ In Egypt, the Jewish people ate *matzah* because captives were customarily fed *matzah* since it is hard and not as quickly digested as *chametz*." (Alternatively, (*Seforno*²⁵ answers): "The bread that they consumed under duress. For they did not have time to let their dough rise because their oppressors hurried them.") But *Maharal* asks,²⁶ "These words appear to contradict the verses and the facts! For we find no source in Scripture, *Mishnah*, or *Gemara* that the Egyptians fed the Jewish people *matzah*."

Additionally: If this was the intended meaning, the *Haggadah* would have cited a supporting source (as it does for all its narrative-related expositions).

5.

"WE WERE SLAVES TO PHARAOH IN EGYPT ... HASHEM, OUR L-RD TOOK US OUT WITH A STRONG HAND ... IF THE HOLY ONE HAD NOT TAKEN OUR ANCESTORS... THEN WE, OUR CHILDREN ... WOULD BE ENSLAVED..."

A well-known question:²⁷ Hashem's decree to enslave the Jewish people in Egypt was only "(and they will enslave them, and they will oppress them) for 400 years."²⁸ Thus, what does the statement, "if the Holy One had not taken out...{they would still be slaves}," mean? In any event, the exile could not have lasted longer than 400 years. Immediately after the 400 years elapsed, the enslavement of the Jewish people would have ended.

Had the Jewish people been enslaved owing to their essence-character and mentality, then understandably, Hashem would have needed to perform a specific action to extricate them from their slave mentality. But the Jewish

²³ {*Shemos* 12:39.}

²⁴ *Abudraham*, ad loc.

²⁵ *Devarim* 16:3.

²⁶ *Gevuros Hashem*, ch. 51.

²⁷ Commentary of *Ritva* on the *Haggadah*; et al.

²⁸ *Bereishis* 15:13.

people had been, inherently, a free people. It was only a result of the “covenant between the parts”²⁹ that they had been enslaved. Thus, as soon as the predetermined time arrived, automatically, the servitude should have ended and they should have, as a matter of course, **reverted** to being a free people.

Perhaps we can answer: The reason why the Jewish people needed Hashem to redeem them was because they left Egypt not after 400 years, but after 210 years. This cannot be the reason, however: Firstly, this has nothing to do with the actual milestone of their departure; rather with how the 400 were calculated. Meaning, Hashem counted the 400 years from the birth of Yitzchak and not from their descent into Egypt. Thus, this does not change the fact that after the conclusion of the designated time, even according to the earlier calculation, the Jewish people would become free people **automatically**.

Secondly, we say, “then **we, our children, and our children’s children** would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.” This statement (that “we, our children...,” would still live in Egypt) runs contrary to the biblical promise, “the **fourth** generation will return here {i.e., to the land of Israel}.”³⁰ How can we say that “if the Holy One had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt then we, our children, and our children’s children, would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt?”

6.

“IN THE BEGINNING, OUR ANCESTORS WERE IDOLATERS. BUT NOW THE OMNIPRESENT HAS DRAWN US CLOSE TO HIS SERVICE”

We need to clarify:

a) “The Omnipresent has drawn us close to His service,” refers to the generations beginning with Avraham (the first one whom Hashem drew close to His service [following, “In the beginning our ancestors...,” i.e., Terach]).³¹ Thus,

²⁹ {Hashem’s covenant with Avraham in *Bereishis*, ch. 15.}

³⁰ *Bereishis* 15:16, see Rashi, *ibid*.

³¹ {Avraham’s father.}

why do we say, “but **now** the Omnipresent has drawn us close to His service,” as opposed to, “but **afterwards**, the Omnipresent drew us close to His service?”

Even were we to suggest that the expression “but now” refers (not literally to *now*, i.e., the time that we recite the *Haggadah*, but rather) to the time of the Exodus, the question stands. For Hashem drawing us close began much earlier, before the exile to Egypt, even before “the covenant between the parts.” As the proof from the verse, mentioned in the paragraph under discussion, indicates,³² “And I took your patriarch Avraham from the other side of the river....”

b) The purpose of the *Haggadah* is to recount the story of the Exodus, “with the miracles and wonders that were wrought upon us, and our freedom.”³³ Seemingly, this entire matter, “In the beginning, our ancestors were idolaters. But now the Omnipresent has drawn us close to His service...,” has no relevance to the story of the Exodus. The only relevance seems to be that since “we begin with disgrace” (i.e., “In the beginning, our ancestors were idolaters”) we must then continue and say that following this, Hashem drew us close to His service, until eventually, “He {Yaakov} descended to Egypt.” But on this basis, it is not altogether smooth: Why is it relevant to mention that **Hashem** drew us close to His service? Seemingly, we could just say that “now (afterwards)” we (or more specifically, Avraham) became close and bound with Hashem, and with His service (or something along those lines).

All the above indicates that the clause, “but **now** the **Omnipresent** has drawn us close,” is germane to the story of the Exodus (*Maggid*) not only regarding “afterwards” (i.e., Avraham) but also regarding all the generations of Jews who follow, until “now,” literally (as will be discussed).

³² *Yehoshua* 24:3. {I.e., Avraham's connection with Hashem ("Hashem drawing us close") began when he was still living on “the other side of the river” .}

³³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah*,” ch. 7, par. 4.

7.

“IT WAS THIS THAT STOOD...”

We need to clarify:

a) If the people who rose up against the Jews “to destroy us” would have been more righteous than the Jews, we would understand the *chiddush*:³⁴ Despite their superior righteousness, “the Holy One saves us from them.” However, since they were wicked and evil, why would we have even thought that our foes could, Heaven forbid, destroy the Jewish people so that we should have to praise and thank Hashem for saving us?.

Moreover, the world and everything in it was created for the Jewish people. As taught,³⁵ “*In the beginning*, בראשית — For the sake of Israel, who are called ‘the first, ראשית...’”³⁶ Meaning, the purpose of the entire creation (including non-Jews) is in order {for creation} “to be his companion”³⁷ — to assist the Jewish people. So why is this not obvious, and why are they {the nations of the world, and particularly, those who rise up against us} unaware of this? The reason is clear: In order to enable the possibility of free-choice, and the *avodah* of *iskafya*³⁸ and *ishapcha*,³⁹ etc. But this does not change the real truth. The Jewish people, in fact, are saved from those who seek to destroy them because it cannot be otherwise.

b) The whole passage, “For it was not only one... and the Holy One saves us from them,” seems not uniquely relevant to the story of the Exodus. After all, we say explicitly, “**In every single generation**, they rise up against us.” Also, why do we only use this wording in the *Haggadah* on the night of *Pesach* and not on other occasions that commemorate our salvation (like *Purim*, and the like)?

³⁴ {A novel idea; in this context, something out of the ordinary.}

³⁵ Rashi on *Bereishis* 1:1.

³⁶ {*Yirmiyahu* 2:3.}

³⁷ {*Berachos* 6b; *Shabbos* 30b.}

³⁸ {Lit., “bending,” the *avodah* of a person subduing his negative impulses and overcoming his urges.}

³⁹ {Lit., “transformation,” the *avodah* of a person transforming his negative impulses and urges into good.}

Moreover, during the Egyptian exile, our enemies did not “rise up against us to destroy us.” As it says further in the *Haggadah*, “Pharaoh issued a decree only against the males.” In contrast, “Lavan sought to uproot everything.” Similarly, an existential threat was faced during the times of Achashveirosh, when the decree was upon “all the Jewish people, young and old, woman, children....”⁴⁰

8.

“AND BUILT FOR US THE BEIS HA'BECHIRAH TO ATONE FOR ALL OF OUR SINS”

We need to clarify:

a) Regarding the previous fourteen “levels of favors that the Omnipresent bestowed upon us,” the *Haggadah* does not explain the nature of each “favor.” Indeed, we find that regarding some of the favors, the commentators go to great lengths to clarify the actual benefit of the favor. (For example: “If he had brought us before Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah.”) And yet, specifically, in the context of the final favor, “Built for us the *Beis HaBechirah*,” the *Haggadah* adds and explains the meaning and reason for the favor {to atone for all our sins} ?

b) Even if (for whatever reason) the *Haggadah* deems it necessary to clarify the meaning behind this particular favor, why does it not choose **the most simple** explanation, mentioned **explicitly** in the verse,⁴¹ “Make for Me a Sanctuary, and **I will dwell among them.**” The primary role of the *Beis HaMikdash* was to facilitate the indwelling of the *Shechinah*. (Although the verse discusses the *Mishkan*, while the author of the *Haggadah* refers to the favor of the *Beis HaBechirah*, which was built after the Jewish people entered the land of Israel, this is not problematic. Because, on the contrary, the advantage of the *Beis HaMikdash* [over the *Mishkan*] was that in the *Beis HaMikdash*, one could witness the revealed, indwelling of the *Shechinah*⁴²

⁴⁰ {*Esther* 3:13.}

⁴¹ *Vayikra* 25:8.

⁴² {The Divine Presence.}

empirically. [“Ten wonders were wrought for our ancestors in the *Beis HaMikdash*.”]⁴³ Why does the *Haggadah* choose to explain specifically {that the purpose of the *Beis HaBechirah* was} “to atone for all our sins” {and not to provide for the indwelling of the *Shechinah*}?

c) Furthermore: In addition to the fact that “I {Hashem} will dwell among them” is the primary role of the *Beis HaMikdash*, this advantage is of benefit to all Jewish people (even those who require no atonement). In contrast, “to atone for all **our sins**” is an advantage that benefits just those who require atonement for sins.

d) What is the significance of referring to the *Beis HaMikdash* using the nuanced wording, “*Beis HaBechirah*,” rather than the usual term (used by the *Haggadah* itself), “*Beis HaMikdash*,” or the like.

e) Most importantly: How is the final favor (“and built for us the *Beis HaBechirah* to atone for all our sins”) germane to the Exodus and recounting the story of the **Exodus**? Regarding all the other favors until, “He brought us into the land of Israel,” we can appreciate the relevance. Since as long as the Jewish people remained in the desert and did not yet enter a settled land, the redemption and Exodus from Egypt was incomplete. This is borne out by the fact that following the expressions of redemption, “I will take {you} out,” “I will save,” “I will redeem,” “I will take,”⁴⁴ which Hashem told Moshe in Egypt, Hashem immediately continues and concludes, “I will bring you to the land....”⁴⁵ The building of the *Beis HaMikdash*, however, seemingly has nothing to do with the redemption.

⁴³ *Pirkei Avos*, ch. 5, *mishnah* 5.

⁴⁴ *Shemos* 6:6, 7.

⁴⁵ *Shemos* 6:8.

9.

THE QUESTIONS THAT SURFACE EVEN BEFORE WE BEGIN

The explanation of all the above:

When we sit down to the *Seder* and we are about to begin the *Haggadah*, even before the “son” (to whom we recite the *Haggadah*, “And you shall tell your son”) knows about the **details** of the slavery, the miracles, and the wonders of the redemption, a number of questions arise that must be answered even **before** reciting the *Haggadah* beginning with, “We were slaves”:

a) Why was the redemption from Egypt not everlasting? If the redemption had come about by means of a human of flesh and blood, we would understand. Just as the person himself (is finite and) is subject to change, so, too, the effect of his actions can change and be replaced. But the redemption of the Exodus was executed by Hashem — “Hashem, the L-rd, is **true**,”⁴⁶ and all of His actions are true and eternal. Thus, the Egyptian redemption should have been eternal. How then is it possible that we are still in exile? And not just in an ordinary exile. We are in such a bitter exile that in every generation, they rise up against us to destroy us, just as (and actually worse than) it was during the exile and servitude of Egypt.

b) As Hashem had promised, the Jewish people left Egypt with great wealth. Why, then, is there poverty among Jewish people? (This poverty is even evident at the *Seder* table, at which we seat whomever “is in need” and whomever “is hungry”⁴⁷ — poor guests.)

c) Furthermore, regarding the *mitzvah* of *haggadah* {relating the story of the Exodus} at the *Seder* — “and you shall tell your son” — “the Torah speaks of four children.”⁴⁸ Meaning, seated at the *seder* table is not only a Wise Son but also a Wicked Son (and a Simple Son, as well a son who does not know how to

⁴⁶ *Yirmiyahu* 10:10.

⁴⁷ {*Haggadah*, par. “*Hei lachma anya.*”}

⁴⁸ {*Haggadah*, par. “*Baruch haMakom.*”}

ask). This is difficult to understand: As known,⁴⁹ the sinners in the generation of the Exodus were not redeemed; they did not leave Egypt (they died during the three days of darkness). Thus, if there were **no** sinners among the Jewish people when they left Egypt, from where, suddenly, did the Wicked Son — a member of the Jewish people — appear?

[We cannot answer that the Wicked Son spoken about in the *Haggadah*, sitting at the *Seder* table, is a different type of sinner than those who died in Egypt during the three days of darkness, because in the *Haggadah*, in response to the Wicked Son, we say explicitly, “If he **had been** there, he would **not** have been redeemed.”]

These are not merely questions of intellectual inquiry and understanding; these questions **disturb** the entire thrust of the *Seder* and the retelling of the story of the Exodus, the purpose of which is that “in every generation, a person is required to imagine himself as having, now, personally left Egyptian slavery.” For this reason, “One should prepare a seating place so that he will be able to recline in a manner that reflects freedom, as kings and men of great stature do while eating.”⁵⁰ Now, the Torah is the Torah of truth, meaning, a person needs to honestly experience this feeling. But how can a Jew experience feelings of freedom in the manner of truly “having, now, personally left Egyptian slavery,” when he finds himself in exile? He finds himself in a situation where, “(In every generation) they rise up against us to destroy us,” and there are poor people among the Jewish people. Furthermore, there are some with “impoverished understanding,” including those like the Wicked Son.

⁴⁹ *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 14, sec. 3; *Tanchuma*, “*VaEra*,” sec. 14; Rashi on *Shemos* 10:22.

⁵⁰ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 472, par. 7.

10.

THE BEGINNING OF REDEMPTION

In order to settle the confusion, we preface with the paragraph, “This is the bread of affliction.” This introduction clarifies the general point of the story of the Exodus which begins with, “We were slaves....”

The *matzah* that our ancestors ate **after** they left Egypt (“for they did not have time to leave their dough to rise before they left..”) in this paragraph is called {the *matzah*} “that our ancestors ate **in the land of Egypt.**” This is intentional, to emphasize that their Exodus from Egypt was incomplete. The Jewish people themselves, so to speak, lingered in Egypt.

This explains the rest of the paragraph, “whoever is hungry... whoever is in need.” The reality is that there are poor people and “now we are here... now we are slaves,” i.e., we are still in exile and slavery. This {sad reality} is because “our ancestors (are) in the land of Egypt.” Meaning, because the Jewish people did not (fully) leave Egyptian slavery.

This raises a question:

If so, what did the Exodus — which requires us to celebrate the *Seder* in a manner of freedom — accomplish? To answer, we continue and recite, “now we are here (but) next year in the land of Israel,” and, “now we are slaves (but) next year we will be free.” The redemption from Egypt paved the way and created the possibility of redemption,⁵¹ leading to the complete redemption — “Next year in the land of Israel... Free.”

Therefore, we, nowadays, can fulfill the *mitzvah* of recounting the story of the Exodus on this night — and the obligation “to picture.. {ourselves} as having, now, personally left Egyptian slavery” — in the complete sense. Indeed, by fulfilling the *mitzvah* of recounting the story of the Exodus, and doing so “as having... personally left Egyptian slavery,” a person escapes the environment and

⁵¹ *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5708 (1948), s.v., “*Kimei Tzeischah*,” sec. 12.

slavery of Egypt, and becomes (next year) a free man. As known:⁵² From the time of the Exodus until the time of the Future Redemption, the Jewish people live in an ongoing state of leaving Egypt.

This pivotal point, which we establish immediately at the beginning of *Maggid* to answer the above question, is further emphasized in the details of the Exodus narrative which is recounted after the *Mah nishtanah* questions, as will be explained.

11.

GEHENOM OR EXILE

As known, our Rabbis⁵³ teach that Hashem gave Avraham a choice: “Which do you prefer — that your children be incarcerated in *Gehenom*⁵⁴ or in exile?” Avraham (or Hashem, depending on the two opinions) chose exile instead of *Gehenom*.

This indicates that the purpose of exile -- and the Egyptian exile foremost — is the same purpose as that of *Gehenom*: Cleansing and atonement of sin.

The sin (at first glance) for which the Jewish people needed cleansing and atonement was (the source and cause of all sins —) the first sin — the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. This sin caused the *Shechinah* to depart from earth and ascend to the Heavens.⁵⁵ Accordingly, the cleansing needed to correct this sin was told to Avraham. Following the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, which caused the *Shechinah* to ascend from Earth to the Heavens, six further sins followed which caused the *Shechinah* to ascend higher, from one heavenly sphere to the next, until eventually reaching the seventh Heaven. The first person to begin bringing the *Shechinah* back down was Avraham (who brought the *Shechinah*

⁵² *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5708 (1948), s.v., “*Kimei Tzeischah*,” sec. 1.

⁵³ *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 51, sec. 7; *Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 44, sec. 21.

⁵⁴ {Purgatory, where a person is cleansed of the spiritual blemishes caused by sin.}

⁵⁵ *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, ch. 5, sec. 1; see *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5710 (1950), s.v., “*Basi Legani*.”

down from the seventh Heaven to the sixth).⁵⁶ Therefore, Hashem specifically told him that the consummate cleansing, purification, and refinement, {to counteract the effects of} the sin, which would finally bring the *Shechinah* down to the place where it was before any sin, would be accomplished through the Egyptian exile.

Had we been worthy, the Egyptian exile would have been the final and only exile. Consequently, the redemption from Egypt would have been a complete redemption, “and neither Exile nor the Angel of Death would wield power over them,”⁵⁷ as was the case prior to the first sin.

Since, however, in actuality, the Egyptian exile did not bring complete cleansing and atonement, as will be explained, Hashem had to take us out from there “**with a mighty hand**,”⁵⁸ in opposition to the Attribute of Justice. For from the perspective of the attribute of justice and logic, the following claim has credence: Since the purpose and goal of the Egyptian exile and slavery — to refine and elevate the Jewish people (and the world) to reach the level they were at before any sin — had not yet been fully reached, it makes no sense for the Exodus and redemption to take place.

12.

WHY HASHEM HIMSELF

This also explains the nuanced wording, “**Hashem, our L-rd, took us out** from there with a strong hand.” Meaning, Hashem initiated the Exodus. Based on their condition at the time, the Jewish people were not entirely worthy of redemption. As known,⁵⁹ the Jewish people in Egypt were entrenched in the 49 “gates” of impurity. Had they tarried in Egypt for even one extra moment, they would have become unredeemable, G-d forbid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 32, sec. 1.

⁵⁸ {*Devarim* 26:8.}

⁵⁹ See the sources referenced in *Haggadah Shel Pesach Im Likkutei Taamim Uminhagim* (Kehot publ.), p. 30; see also *Ritva* commentary on the *Haggadah Shel Pesach*, on the par., “*Avadim Hayinu*.”

In the parlance of *Chassidus*, as the *Alter Rebbe* explains that the Exodus took place {hurriedly and almost frantically}, as the verse describes,⁶⁰ “the people **fled**,” “because the evil in the {animalistic} souls⁶¹ of Israel was still strong in the left part of the heart.”⁶² The redemption came because “the Holy One, the King of kings, revealed Himself to them.”⁶³ This revelation took hold of their essential Jewishness.⁶⁴ As a result, they could no longer be fooled by the spirit of foolishness, which conceals the truth and persuades a Jew that he can remain connected to Hashem even in this {sinful} situation⁶⁵. Consequently, “the people fled.” [This is similar to what *Tanya*⁶⁶ explains: When faced with a test of faith, this test reaches the *chochmah* in his soul — even the most indifferent of Jews (whose G-dly soul’s *chochmah*⁶⁷ is in “exile” and dormant). Then, “it awakens from its slumber and exerts its influence,” and they, too, surrender their lives {if need be} to sanctify Hashem’s name.]

13.

WE ARE NOT YET DONE

For this reason we say, “if the Holy One had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt then we, our children, and our children’s children, would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.” If Hashem Himself had not initiated our redemption, the

⁶⁰ *Shemos* 14:5.

⁶¹ {The *animalistic soul* is one of the two souls possessed by every Jew, the other being the G-dly soul. A fundamental element of the animalistic soul is that it desires physicality, and all negative traits are rooted in the *animalistic soul*.}

⁶² *Tanya*, ch. 31.

⁶³ {*Haggadah*, par. “*Matzah Zu*.”}

⁶⁴ {In the original Hebrew, “*nekudas ha’Yehadus*.”}

⁶⁵ {See *Tanya*, ch. 14.}

⁶⁶ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 19.

⁶⁷ {Lit., “wisdom,” the highest of the three intellectual faculties.}

Egyptian exile would have extended⁶⁸ until the Jewish people had attained full refinement and cleansing, all the way until the time of the Future Redemption.

We emphasize and clarify this further according to the other (first) opinion regarding {the *mishnah's* directive that} “He begins with disgrace” — “In the beginning, our ancestors were idolaters. But **now** the Omnipresent has drawn us close to His service.” Meaning, Hashem brings us close also **now** (not prompted by our situation or our *avodah*. But rather) “the **Omnipresent** has drawn us close to His service.”

On this basis, we can also appreciate how a Wicked Son can possibly exist also nowadays, even after the redemption from Egypt. Additionally, we can appreciate how it is possible that “in every single generation they rise up against us to destroy us,” and that the only way this does not reach fruition is because “Hashem saves us from them.” As mentioned, this is because as long as the ultimate purpose and goal has not been reached — the complete refinement {of the Jewish people} — the Jewish people, in and of their own state of being, are not fully refined and cleansed of negativity (thus, allowing for the existence of a Wicked Son). Therefore, Hashem’s Attribute of Justice allows that “they rise up against us to destroy us.”

14.

THE EGYPTIANS WERE ALSO AT FAULT

However, a question emerges:

How was it possible that the Jewish people were vulnerable to becoming so entrenched in the impurity and negativity in Egypt, to the extent that they

⁶⁸ {As mentioned in Section 5} At the end of 400 years, the Egyptian exile would have ended regardless. Nevertheless, had the redemption not come about from Hashem Himself, then the Jewish people would have naturally {acclimatized to Egypt, and as a result, eventually} returned there on their own accord, winding up as slaves again to Pharaoh. This is evident from the fact that even though the redemption was indeed realized by Hashem Himself, nevertheless, there were several times that the Jewish people expressed their sentiment to return to Egypt (*Bamidbar* 11:4-5, 14:4). {Thus, we can presume that had Hashem Himself not redeemed the Jewish people, they would have, in fact, carried out their desire and would have fallen back to Egypt.}

themselves and their {spiritual} state stood in the way of them leaving Egypt? In order to address this question, the author of the *Haggadah* continues and emphasizes: “The Egyptians harmed us {*osanu*}.⁶⁹” Meaning, the Egyptians made **us** bad. (For this reason, the Hebrew word “*osanu*” {(harmed) us} is used, not “*lanu*” {(caused harm) to us}.)⁷⁰ The Egyptians dragged the Jewish people down to a lower state than the Jewish people could naturally relate to. (This negative state was even lower than the “evil” that the Jewish people were meant to purify through their exile and bondage in Egypt.)

This idea is similar to the explanation as to why Hashem punished Pharaoh and Egyptians if they merely fulfilled the decree that “they shall be enslaved and oppressed.”⁷¹ (One of the answers:)⁷² The Egyptians were punished because they submitted the Jewish people to **bitter** slavery, which was not part the Divine decree.

15.

THE ESSENTIAL CHOICE

However, even after all the above discussion, a question still remains: At the end of the day, the Egyptian exile did not bring complete refinement and elevation {to the Jewish people}. Thus, why the great tumult, etc., and what is so special about the Exodus and recounting its story? To answer this, we conclude: “and built for us the *Beis HaBechirah* to atone for all our sins.”

True choice applies only when the choice is not not made for any reason, but is exclusively the result of the free choice of the one choosing.⁷³ Only Hashem, in His Essence, can choose in **this** way, since nothing outside of Him is of any consequence to Him.

⁶⁹ {*Devarim* 26:6.}

⁷⁰ {“*Oisanu*” literally means “us,” and “*lanu*” literally means “to us.” This nuance is almost imperceptible in the English language.}

⁷¹ {*Bereishis* 15:13.}

⁷² *Ramban* on *Bereishis* 15:14.

⁷³ See *Toras Shalom*, p. 220; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, pgs. 1147, 1309, 1341; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 11, p. 5, et passim; et al.

From the perspective of Hashem's Essence, {Esav and Yaakov are equivalent, as the verse says},⁷⁴ “After all, is Esav not Yaakov's brother?” Only on account of the free choice of His Essence does He choose the Jewish people: “I have loved Yaakov and have rejected Esav.”⁷⁵

Meaning, the root and truth behind this choice is the fact that the Jewish people are one, so to speak, with Hashem's Essence: “The Jewish people, and the Holy One are all one.”⁷⁶ Below, this choice is manifest such that superficially and overtly, it appears that “Esav is Yaakov's brother” — they are equivalent, but nevertheless, “I have loved Yaakov, and have rejected Esav.”

This is the essence of the exile and Exodus from Egypt. Outwardly and openly, as matters appear in the world (*sefer hishtalshelus*),⁷⁷ {to effect redemption, Hashem has to overcome}, “with a mighty hand,” His Attribute of Justice. This {tension} is expressed in the fact that had the Jewish people remained in Egypt for even one more moment, they would never be redeemed. At their level then, they were unworthy of Redemption — “Esav is Yaakov's brother”; “these {the Egyptians} are idol worshippers, and these {the Jews} are idol worshippers.”⁷⁸ But, on a deeper level, and in truth, Redemption is rooted in Hashem's Essence, Who, by exercising His choice, chooses the (souls of the) Jewish people. For they are one essence with Hashem. And therefore, “I cannot exchange them for another nation.”

⁷⁴ *Malachi* 1:2.

⁷⁵ *Malachi* 1:2,3.

⁷⁶ {See *Zohar*, vol. 3, 73a, 93b.}

⁷⁷ {*Seder Hishtalshelus* refers to the chain-like descent of spiritual worlds until this world. Each spiritual world denotes a complete realm of existence, resulting from its general proximity to or distance from Divine revelation.}

⁷⁸ *Zohar*, vol. 2, 170b (quoted in *Yalkut Reuveni*, *parshas Beshalach* 14:28); *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 43, par. 8; et al.

16.

THIS COMES TO FRUITION IN THE *BEIS HAMIKDASH*

On this basis, we can also appreciate how the *Beis HaBechirah* functions “to **atone** for **all** our sins” (and not only effects forgiveness or pardon). At the level of *seder hishtalshelus* — where it is unclear how the Jewish people and Hashem are one, so to speak (analogous to a child, whose identity is distinct from his father’s, in this world)⁷⁹ — and where the sin has an effect and is harmful, there must be atonement to **remove** the stain and blemish. This is accomplished through bondage and exile. However, from the perspective {and on the level of} the essential connection between the Jewish people and Hashem through **choice** — “to atone (fully and truthfully) for all our sins” — this level **automatically** brings about atonement and cleansing from sin. Because at this level, sin and transgression, from the outset, has no effect. This {essential connection}, then, also affects the manifest existence of the Jewish people. In other words, even they themselves, as they are, become refined and succeed in cleansing their souls.

However, as this process⁸⁰ is channeled into the confines of time, it adheres to an orderly and graduated process: During the time of the Egyptian exile and the Exodus, redemption was expressed commensurate with *seder hishtaleshelus*, “the people fled,” and Hashem had to redeem them with a mighty hand. The revelation of the source of the redemption, i.e., that it came as a result of Hashem’s Essence choosing the Jewish people, and the effect of this connection on the Jewish people, bringing about complete atonement for them, was revealed {later,} when {Hashem} “built for us the ***Beis HaBechirah to atone for all our sins.***”

This also relates to the actual *Beis HaBechirah*. For in the *Beis HaBechirah*, atonement came not through slavery and suffering, etc., but through sacrifices. For Hashem’s choice {of the Jewish people, which brings about atonement} was revealed in the *Beis (HaBechirah) HaMikdash*.

⁷⁹ Except that the soul is not at all separated from Him (*Likkutei Torah*, “*Rosh Hashanah*,” 62d).

⁸⁰ {The essential connection between Hashem and the Jewish people.}

Perhaps, this is the deeper meaning behind the statement, “He begins with disgrace and concludes with praise.”⁸¹ At the beginning of the *Haggadah* and the story of the Exodus, we emphasize how the redemption was initiated from On High. It was as if the Jewish people, because of their level and {spiritual} state down below, were unworthy of redemption (as discussed above at length). But we “conclude with glory” in describing how even down here, the truth is revealed — {Hashem built the} “*Beis HaBechirah* to atone for all our sins,” as discussed.

17.

THE FUTURE REDEMPTION

By recounting the story of the Exodus experientially, as it says, “a person is required to picture himself as having, now, personally left Egyptian slavery” — we will merit to witness that “in Nisan, they are destined to be redeemed,” in actuality, in Nisan this year, in accordance with Rabbi Yehoshuah’s⁸² opinion. (The *Midrash*⁸³ concurs with his opinion, and the record of his statement goes unchallenged.) Namely, “in Nisan they were redeemed, and in Nisan they are destined to be redeemed.” The redemption will come from a place “completely exceeding the reach of any *isarusa dilesata*,⁸⁴ i.e., even beyond the reach of *teshuvah*.”⁸⁵ And an awakening originating from this plane brings about that “she gives birth to a male.”⁸⁶ Meaning, it will trigger a redemption that will endure, an eternal redemption, even when, “a man emits seed first,”⁸⁷ i.e., it is initiated from On High.

⁸¹ It is interesting to note that according to the opinion of the *Rashbatz* (and see also the phraseology of the *Meiri*), it is implied that seemingly, that this {mention of the *Beis HaBechirah*} constitutes fulfillment of the directive to “conclude with glory.”

⁸² *Rosh Hashanah* 11a.

⁸³ *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 15, sec. 11.

⁸⁴ {Literally, “awakening from below.” This term refers to self-induced inspiration and growth achieved through an individual’s own hard-work.}

⁸⁵ *Or HaTorah*, “Bo,” p. 260, 272.

⁸⁶ {*Vayikra* 12:2. When a person’s divine service begins with an awakening from below, then “she gives birth to a male” — this service endures. See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Vayikra*,” s.v., “*Adam ki yakriv*,” end of ch. 1. This case is exceptional, because although the redemption will be initiated On High, it will nonetheless endure.}

⁸⁷ {*Berachos* 60a, et al.; quoted in Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 46:15.} *Torah Or*, s.v. “*Rani VeSimchi* (2),” at the end; and its elucidation; *Or HaTorah*, “Bo,” p. 272.

“Next year in the land of Israel” and “next year we will be free.” As the Previous Rebbe explains:⁸⁸ We do not need to wait, G-d forbid, until next year. Rather, the redemption will take place immediately, this month of Nisan. Then, automatically, next year, we will be in the land of Israel and we will be free. “We will sing to You a new song (in the masculine form)⁸⁹ for having redeemed us and freeing our souls.”⁹⁰

— Based on a talk delivered on the 2nd night of *Pesach*, 5726 (1966)

⁸⁸ *Sefer Hasichos* 5705, p. 85.

⁸⁹ See *Tosafos*, s.v., “*VeNomar*,” on *Pesachim* 116b.

⁹⁰ {From the blessing “*Gaal Yisrael*,” in the *Haggadah*.}