

# The Seder In Rabbinic Literature

By: Rabbi Noah Gradofsky. Last edited March 25, 2012.

**Preface:** This is a compilation of selections from rabbinic literature relating to the seder, combined with my own comments and thoughts, as well as the comments and thoughts of some of my teachers. Later sources are added where appropriate. The selections follow the order of our Haggadah, and not necessarily the order in which these texts appear in their classical sources. Most of the texts are my selections from the 10th Chapter of Pesachim in the Babylonian Talmud, with other texts added where I was both aware of the text and found the text particularly interesting. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of the text are my own. Where a Mishnah is quoted, I quote the text as it appears in the Babylonian Talmud and note variations between that text and our printed Mishna or the Mishnah as it appears in the Jerusalem Talmud only when I am aware of those differences and feel that those differences are of particular interest.

Please note: The discussions in this compilation may well be of halachic import. However, this is by no means a halachic work. Please consult your rabbi about any halachic issues.

The following is the order of sections in this compilation:

## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Care for the Poor .....	3
Women and the Four Cups.....	3
Should We Rush Through the Seder .....	4
The Four Cups and the Four Languages of Salvation .....	4
The First Cup .....	5
The Vegetable .....	6
Why Do We Wash Before Karpas?.....	6
How Much Karpas Should Be Eaten?.....	6
The Seder Plate .....	7
What Does Charoset Symbolize?.....	7
מה עניא This Poor Bread? .....	8
מה נשתנה (Mah Nishtana) .....	9
Who Says מה נשתנה?.....	9
Even If We Were All Scholars . . . ..	11
The Different Sets of Questions .....	11
עבדים היינו - We Were Slaves .....	13
The Four Children.....	14
How the Children Came to Be Four.....	17
How The Biblical Verses Were Used to Create the Four Children .....	17
The Four Verses.....	21
Rabban Gamliel - The Three Things One Must Mention.....	22
Raising the Items.....	23
As If We Left Egypt . . . ..	23
הלל Hallel.....	24
How Much of Hallel Is Said Before The Meal?.....	24
The Closing Of מגיד ( <i>Magid</i> ).....	24
"Redeemer of Israel" versus "Who redeemed Israel." .....	25
The Broken Matsah and The Number of Matsas .....	25
Matsah, Bitter Herbs, and the Sandwich.....	27
The Nature of the Obligation .....	27
Dueling Mitsvot and the Sandwich Solution.....	29
The Meal Must Finish By Midnight (or must it?).....	31
What Does The Word Afikoman Mean? .....	32
No Afikoman After Matsah .....	33
הלל (Hallel) and ברכת המזון (Birkat Hamazon) .....	34

## INTRODUCTION

### *Care for the Poor*

**Talmud Bavli Pesachim 99b (Mishnah 10:1)** (משנה י:א) תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף צט עמוד ב ערבי פסחים סמוך למנחה לא יאכל אדם עד שתחשך ואפילו עני שבישראל לא יאכל עד שיסב ולא יפחתו לו מארבע כוסות של יין ואפילו מן התמחוי:

*On the eves of Passover, near Mincha time, a person should not eat until it gets dark. And even a poor person in Israel should not eat until he reclines. And they should not give him less than four cups of wine, even if [the money comes] from the charity plate.*

**Question for thought:** The Mishnah informs us that even a poor person is supposed to recline on Passover and that a poor person is also to have four cups of wine, even if that must be provided from charity. Reclining, as well as drinking the four cups of wine is a symbol of freedom and affluence. What does this Mishnah tell us about the obligations of a community for the spiritual and psychological wellbeing? What does it tell us about individual importance, and self-worth?

### *Women and the Four Cups*

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 108a - 108b** תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קח עמוד א - עמוד ב ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: נשים חייבות בארבעה כוסות הללו, (עמוד ב) שאף הן היו באותו הנס . . . תנו רבנן: הכל חייבין בארבעה כוסות הללו, אחד אנשים ואחד נשים, ואחד תינוקות.

And Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: Women are obligated in these four cups, (108b) since they were also in the same miracle. . . . Our Rabbis taught: Everyone is obligated in these four cups, both men, women and children.

Notes:

- Regarding children, see the following piece.
- Note that Rabbi Joshua ben Levi used this same rationale for women's obligation to read מגילה (Megillah) (see Megillah 4a and Arackhin 3a) and Channukah lights (see Shabbat 23a).
- According to Rashi, Rashba"m, and others, the point here is that women were actively involved in bringing the miracle about, referring to e.g. Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b which says that the Israelites were redeemed due to the righteousness of the women. Others read Rabbi Joshua ben Levi simply saying that the women were saved by the same miracles.

## ***Should We Rush Through the Seder***

(the answer may surprise you . . . don't tell the impatient relatives)

### **Talmud Bavli Pesachim 108b - 109a**

**תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קח עמוד ב - קט עמוד א**

תנו רבנן: הכל חייבין בארבעה כוסות הללו, אחד אנשים ואחד נשים, ואחד תינוקות. אמר רבי יהודה: וכי מה תועלת יש לתינוקות ביין? אלא, מחלקין להן (קט). קליות ואגוזין בערב פסח, כדי שלא ישנו, וישאלו. אמרו עליו על רבי עקיבא שהיה מחלק קליות ואגוזין לתינוקות בערב פסח כדי שלא ישנו וישאלו. תניא, רבי אליעזר אומר: חוטפין מצות בלילי פסחים, בשביל תינוקות שלא ישנו. תניא, אמרו עליו על רבי עקיבא: מימיו לא אמר הגיע עת לעמוד בבית המדרש חוץ מערבי פסחים וערב יום הכפורים. בערב פסח - בשביל תינוקות, כדי שלא ישנו. וערב יום הכפורים - כדי שיאכילו את בניהם.

*Our Rabbis taught: Everyone is obligated in these four cups, both men, women and children. Rabbi Joshua said: Is there any benefit for children in wine? Rather, we given them (109b) parched ears and nuts on the eve of Passover, so that they not sleep and will ask. They said about Rabbi Akiva that he used to give parched ears and nuts to children on the Eve of Passover so that they not sleep and will ask. It is taught: Rabbi Eliezer says, we break matsah in haste\* on the eve of Passover, so that the children do not sleep. It is taught: They said regarding Rabbi Akiva that throughout his life he never said in the Bet Midrash "It has come time to leave" except on the eve of Passover and the eve of Yom Kippur. On the eve of Passover - for the children, so that they do not fall asleep. On the eve of Yom Kippur - so that they feed their children.*

\*: Soncino, following Rashi, renders: "The mazzoth are eaten hastily." Jastrow prefers: "Matzah is distributed among the children before the regular turn in the Passover ceremonies, in order that they may not fall asleep." See Rashi and Rashba"m on this page of Talmud Pesachim for some discussion.

### **Shulchan Aruch 272a**

**שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן תעב סעיף א**

יהיה שלחנו ערוך מבעוד יום, כדי לאכול מיד כשתחשך; ואף אם הוא בבית המדרש, יקום מפני שמצוה למהר ולאכול בשביל התינוקות שלא ישנו . . .

*His table should be set while it is still day, in order to eat immediately after it gets dark. And even if he is in the Beth Midrash, he should get up, because it is a Mitzvah to hurry and eat, so that the children won't sleep. . . .*

## ***The Four Cups and the Four Languages of Salvation***

### **Exodus 6 v. 6-8**

**שמות פרק ו פסוק ו-ח**

(ו) לכן אָמַר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֻלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדוֹתָם וְגֹאֲלֹתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים: (ז) וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִיִּיתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֻלֹת מִצְרַיִם: (ח) וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת יָדִי לְתֵת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לְכֶם מוֹרְשָׁה אֲנִי ה':

*(6) Therefore say to the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I shall save you from their bondage, and I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. (7) And I shall take you for myself as a nation, and I shall be for you a God, and you will know that I am the Lord your G-d who took you out from beneath the burdens of Egypt. (8) And I will bring you into the land which I have raised my hand (i.e. swore) to give it to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I shall give it to you as an inheritance - I am the Lord. Note: Translation my own, with some aid from the Jerusalem Bible.*

### Exodus Rabbah 6:4

שמות רבה (וילנא) פרשה ו ד"ה ד וארא אל

ד' גאולות יש כאן, והוצאתי, והצלתי, וגאלתי, ולקחתי, כנגד ד' גזירות\* שגזר עליהן פרעה, וכנגדן תקנו חכמים ד' כוסות בליל הפסח, לקיים מה שנא' (תהלים קטז) כוס ישועות אשא ובשם ה' אקרא,

*There are here four expressions of redemption: "I will bring you out", "I will delivery you", "I will redeem you", and "I will take you." These correspond to the four decrees\* which Pharaoh issued regarding them. The Sages accordingly ordained four cups to be drunk on the eve of Passover to correspond with these four expressions, in order to fulfill the verse: "I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord (Psalms 116:13).*

Trans. Soncino

\* For the four decrees, see א:יב (וילנא) שמות רבה (Exodus Rabbah 1:12 and following).

### Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 37b (10:2)

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת פסחים פרק י דף לז טור ב/מ"ב

מניין לארבעה כוסות רבי יוחנן בשם (טור ג) רבי בנייה כנגד ארבע גאולות לכן אמור לבני ישראל אני יי' והוצאתי אתכם וגו' ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם וגו' והוצאתי והצלתי וגאלתי ולקחתי רבי יהושע בן לוי אמר כנגד ארבע כוסות של פרעה וכוס פרעה בידי ואשחט אותם אל כוס פרעה ואתן את הכוס על יד פרעה ונתת כוס פרעה בידו וגו' רבי לוי אמר כנגד ארבע מלכיות\* ורבנן אמרי כנגד ארבעה כוסות של פורענות שהקב"ה עתיד להשקות את אומות העולם. . . וכנגדן עתיד הקב"ה להשקות את ישראל ארבע כוסות של נחמות יי' מנת חלקי וכוסי דשנת בשמן ראשי כוסי רויהה והדין כוס ישועות אשא תריין

Jerusalem Talmud, Pesachim, Chapter 10 law 2. Page 37 columb b-c. Translation my own.

*From whence do we get 4 cups? Rabbi Yochanan [said] in the name of (Folio c) Rabbi Benayah, "parallel to the 4 redemptions, 'therefore say to the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I shall take you out etc., and I wil take you for myself as a nation etc,' 'and I shall take out, and I shall save, and I shall redeem, and I shall take.' Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said "parallel to the 4 cups of Pharoa - 'and the cup of Pharoa was in my hand . . . and I squoze them into his cup . . . and I placed the cup in the hand of Pharoa' (Gen 40:11), 'and you shall place Pharoa's cup into his hand.' (Gen 40:13)." Rabbi Levi says, "parallel to the four kingdoms\*. And the Rabbis say: "parallel to the four cups of retribution that the holy one blessed be he will make the nations of the world drink." (4 verses are cited wherein G-d's retribution includes a reference to cups, with one verse given further explication) . . . and parallel to them, the holy one blessed be He will in the future give Israel to drink four cups of consolation [as demonstrated in these verses:] "G-d is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup", (Psalms 16:5) "you anointed my head with oil, my cup runs over" (Psalms 23:5), and this "the cup of salvation I shall lift" (Psalms 116:13) is two (note: the word salvation is written in the plural in the Hebrew text).*

\* קרבן העדה: "כנגד ד' מליות: ששיעבדו בנו והם כשדיים ומדי ויון ואדום"  
Commentary of Korban Ha'edah: "Parallel to the 4 kingdoms - that subjugated us, and these are the Chaldeans, the Medians, the Greeks, and Romans"

## THE FIRST CUP

### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 114a (Mishnah 10: 2)

תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קיד ע"א (משנה י:ב)

מזגו לו כוס ראשון, בית שמאי אומרים: מברך על היום, ואחר כך מברך על היין, ובית הלל אומרים: מברך על היין, ואחר כך מברך על היום.

*They mixed him the first cup; Bet Shammay says he blesses on the day and then he blesses on the wine, and Bet Hillel says he blesses on the wine, and then he blesses on the day.*

## THE VEGETABLE

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 114a (Mishnah 10:3)** (משנה יג:א) תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קיד ע"א  
הביאו לפניו מטבל בחזרת עד שמגיע לפרפרת הפת . . .  
*They brought before him, he dips with the lettuce until he reaches the breaking of bread.*

### Notes:

Many texts of this Mishnah read " . . . הביאו לפניו ירקות מטבל . . . *they brought before him greens, he dips with lettuce.*"

### *Why Do We Wash Before Karpas?*

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 115a** תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטו עמוד א  
אמר רבי אלעזר אמר רב אושעיא: כל שטיבולו במשקה - צריך נטילת ידים.  
*Rabbi Eliezer said in the name of Rabbi Oshayah: Anything that is dipped in liquid requires washing hands.*

**Rashi on Talmud Pesachim 115a** רש"י מסכת פסחים דף קטו עמוד א  
צריך נטילת ידים - משום המשקין, שהידים שניות - וכל הפוסל בתרומה מטמא משקין וכו'.  
*Requires washing hands: Because of the liquids, since the (unwashed) hands are of secondary impurity, and anything that invalidates tithes makes liquids impure etc.*

**Note:** The rule that objects dipped in liquids require one to wash ones hands before eating them, though not in common practice today is recorded in *Mishneh Torah of Maimonides, laws of Berachot 6:1* and *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 158:4*, though there is a difference of opinion as to whether such washing requires a blessing. "Liquids" refers to the liquids listed in Mishnah Machshirim 6:4: Water, wine (likely including vinegar), [olive] oil, [bee] honey, dew, and blood.

Daniel Goldschmidt, *Haggadah shel Pesach*, p.7. notes that all of the ancient Hagaddot (e.g. from the Cairo Geniza), early medieval rabbis (geonim), Rashi, and Maimonides prescribe a blessing for the washing of the hands for Karpas. As the practice of washing for dipped items became less prevalent, the blessing became less prevalent.

### *How Much Karpas Should Be Eaten?*

Common practice today is for people to eat a very small volume of Karpas (i.e. less than an olive's volume). Perhaps this is due to a concern for having an appetite for the matzah. However, others argue that eating Karpas is a *mitzvah*, and therefore must involve eating a proper amount. Daniel Goldschmidt, *Haggadah shel Pesach*, p.7 notes that the ancient practice was to say a grace (*borei nefashoth*) after Karpas, indicating that the ancients used to eat a volume of Karpas.

## THE SEDER PLATE

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 114a (Mishnah 10:3) (משנה יג:א)** . . . הביאו לפניו מצה וחזרת וחרוסת ושני תבשילין, אף על פי שאין חרוסת מצוה. רבי אליעזר (בן) +מסורת הש"ס: [ברבי] + צדוק אומר: מצוה. ובמקדש היו מביאין לפניו גופו של פסח. . . . *They brought before him Matsah and lettuce and Charoseth and two cooked foods. [They bring the charoseth] Even though the Charoseth is not a commandment. Rabbi Eliezer son of Tsadok says: It is a mitsvah. And in the temple they would bring before him the body of the Passover [offering]*

**Notes:** Babylonian Talmud 114b-115a mentions that in theory one could use lettuce as both a vegetable for קרפס (Karpas) as well as for the מרור (bitter herb). However, the Talmud discusses that there is a difference of opinions as to which blessings would be made over the lettuce and when. Therefore, רב אחא בריה דרבה (Rabbi Acha son of Rava) recommends using a different vegetable.

### What Does Charoset Symbolize?

The Mishnah, sited immediately above said that Charoset is placed on the table even though it is not a Mitsvah (though Rabbi Eliezer son of Tsadok says that eating it is a mitsvah).

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a** תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א  
רבי אלעזר ברבי צדוק אומר מצוה וכו'. מאי מצוה? רבי לוי אומר: זכר לתפוח. ורבי יוחנן אומר: זכר לטיט, אמר אביי: הלכך צריך לקהוייה, וצריך לסמוכיה. לקהוייה - זכר לתפוח, וצריך לסמוכיה - זכר לטיט. תניא כוותיה דרבי יוחנן: תבלין זכר לתבן, חרוסת זכר לטיט. אמר רבי אלעזר ברבי צדוק: כך היו אומרים תגרי חרך שבירושלים: בואו וטלו לכם תבלין למצוה.

*Rabbi Eliezer son of Tsadok says it is a mitsvah etc: Why is it a mitsvah? In memory of the apple-tree\*. But Rabbi Yochanan said: As a reminder of the clay. Abaye said: Therefore, it is necessary to make it acrid-tasting, and it is necessary to make it thick. To make it acrid-tasting - in memory of the apple-tree; and it is necessary to make it thick - in memory of the clay. It is taught in accordance to Rabbi Yochanan: the condiments (in the charoset) are a reminder of the straw, the charoset is as a reminder of the clay. Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabi Tsadok says: Thus the sellers of parched grain (Jastrow Dictionary: Who also sold spices) in Jerusalem would say: "Come purchase spices for the mitsvah."*

**Babylonian Talmud Sotah 11b** \* תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף יא עמוד ב  
וכיון שמתעברות באות לבתיהם; וכיון שמגיע זמן מולדיהן, הולכות ויולדות בשדה תחת התפוח, שנאמר: +שיר השירים + תחת התפוח עוררתיך וגו'

*And when they (the Israelite women in Egypt) became pregnant they went to their homes. And when the time of their birthing came, they went out and gave birth in the field under the apple-tree. As it says: (Song of songs 8:5) "I awoke you under the apple-tree."*

**Song of Songs 8:4** שיר השירים פרק ח פסוק ה  
מי זאת עלה מן המדבר מתרפקת על דודך תחת התפוח עוררתיך שמה תבלין אמה שמה תבלין ילדתך:  
*Who comes up from the desert, leaning on her loved one? I awoke you under the apple-tree, there your mother conceived you, there conceived the one who gave birth to you.*

**Note:** It is possible that the Rabbis are reading this verse as, "There the one who conceived gave birth do you."

## THIS POOR BREAD? **הא לחמא עניא**

### Deuteronomy 16:3

**דברים פרק טז:ג**

לֹא תֹאכַל עִלְיוֹ חֶמֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל עִלְיוֹ מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בְּחַפְזוֹן יֵצְאֶת מִאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

*Do not eat with it (the Passover offering) anything leavened, seven days you shall eat with it matsah, bread of affliction, for you left in haste from Egypt; so that you remember the day of your leaving Egypt all the days of your life.*

### Babylonian Talmud 36a

**תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף לו עמוד א**

רבי עקיבא אומר: . . . לחם עני - פרט לעיסה שנילושה ביין ושמן ודבש. מאי טעמא דרבי עקיבא? - מי כתיב לחם עוני עני כתיב. ורבי עקיבא: האי דקרינן ביה עוני - כדשמואל, דאמר שמואל: לחם עני - לחם שעונין עליו דברים הרבה.

Rabbi Akiva said: . . . Lechem Oni [excepts] dough needed with wine honey or oil. What is the reason for Rabbi Akiva's statement? [Rabbi Akiva reasons] Is it written "lechem oni" (bread of affliction)? It is written "lechem ani" (poor bread). And for Rabbi Akiva that which we read it "lechem oni" is as Shemuel [explained], for Shemuel said: "Lechem Oni" means bread upon which we say many things.

### Babylonian Talmud 115b-116a

**תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד ב - קטז עמוד א**

אמר שמואל: +דברים טז+ לחם עני (כתיב) - לחם שעונין עליו דברים. תניא נמי הכי לחם עני - לחם שעונין עליו דברים הרבה. דבר אחר: לחם עני - עני כתיב, מה עני שדרכו בפרוסה - (קטז). אף כאן בפרוסה. דבר אחר: מה דרכו של עני - הוא מסיק ואשתו אופה, אף כאן נמי - הוא מסיק ואשתו אופה.

*Shemuel said: (Deut 16:) "Lechem Oni" [means] bread upon which we things. It is also taught similarly: Bread upon which we say a lot. Another explanation: "Lechem Oni" - is written "lechem ani" (bread of the poor), just as a poor person normally [eats bread] in a piece, (116a) so too here with a broken one. Another explanation: Just like a poor person normally heats [the oven] and his wife bakes, so too here, he heats [the oven] and his wife bakes.*

### rashba"m, 116a

**רשב"ם מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א**

**דרכו של עני הוא מסיק ואשתו אופה.** ונותנו מיד לתנור כשנגמר היסקו שירא שמא יצטנן התנור קודם שיזדמן עוסקין שניהם זה בהיסק התנור וזה בעיסה אף כאן הוא מסיק ואשתו אופה כדי שלא תחמיץ.

*A poor person normally heats [the oven] and his wife bakes: And puts it immediately into the oven once it is hot, since he fears lest the oven cool down before [dough] will be ready. They work together, one with the heating of the oven, one with the dough; so too here (with matsah) he heats [the oven] and his wife bakes, so that it [the dough] doesn't become leavened.*

**Note:** There are four understandings of the import of the term "lechem oni/ani"; (1) That it has many things said on it (the word לענות - *la'anot*) means to say or answer; (2) That it is eaten with a broken piece, as a poor person normally eats (3) That the timing between needing the matsah and putting it into the oven is very precise, as a poor person would do in order to conserve energy; (4) That it is poor bread in that it is plain, and not mixed with certain other liquids.



## מה נשתנה (MAH NISHTANA)

### Who Says מה נשתנה?

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a (Mishnah 10:4)** (משנה י:ד) תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קטז ע"א (משנה י:ד) משנה. מזגו לו כוס שני, וכאן הבן שואל אביו. ואם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו: מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות. . . .

*They mix him the second cup, and here the child asks his father. And if there is insufficient understanding in the child, the father instructs him: Why is this night different from all other nights?*

**Note:** It appears that *Mah Nisthana* is said by the father if the child does not ask on their own. This is demonstrated in the following piece of Talmud:

### Babylonian Talmud 115b

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד ב

אמר רב שימי בר אשי: מצה לפני כל אחד ואחד, מרור לפני כל אחד ואחד, וחרוסת לפני כל אחד ואחד, ואין עוקרין את השלחן אלא לפני מי שאומר הגדה. רב הונא אומר: כולהו נמי לפני מי שאומר הגדה. והלכתא כרב הונא. למה עוקרין את השולחן? אמרי דבי רבי ינאי: כדי שיכירו תינוקות וישאלו. אביי הוה יתיב קמיה דרבה, חזא דקא מדלי תכא מקמיה. אמר להו: עדיין לא קא אכלינן, אתו קא מעקרי תכא מיקמן? אמר ליה רבה: פטרתי מלומר מה נשתנה.

*Said Rav Shimi son of Ashi: Matsah [is set] before each person, bitter herbs are set before each person, and charoseth is set before each person. And we only remove the table from the one who says the Haggadah. Rav Hunah says: all these [are set] only before the one who says the Haggadah. And the law follows Rav Huna. Why do we remove the table? They say in the school of Rabbi Yannay, [that the table is removed] so that the children notice [the unusual practice] and ask [why it is happening.]*

*Abaye was sitting before Rabbah [at a seder]. He saw that they removed the tray from before him. He (Abaye) said to him (Rabbah): we still haven't eaten, and they come and remove the tray from before us? Rabba said to him (Abaye): You have exempted us from saying "Why [is this night] different."*

**Note:** Another supposed instance of the phrase "You have exempted us from saying "Why [is this night] different" appears in Babylonian Talmud 116a, which is discussed below in the section on עבדים היינו (*Avadim Hayinu*). However, this phrase seems to be out of place in the context of that piece of Talmud:

### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

אמר ליה רב נחמן לדרו עבדיה: עבדא דמפיק ליה מריה לחירות ויהיב ליה כספא ודהבא, מאי בעי למימר ליה? אמר ליה: בעי לאודווי ולשבוחי. אמר ליה: פטרתי מלומר מה נשתנה. פתח ואמר עבדים היינו.

*Rav Nachman said to his servant Daro: A slave whose master frees him, and gives him silver and gold, what does he have to say. He (Daro) answered: He needs to thank him and praise him. He (Rav Nachman) said to him (Daro): you have exempted us from saying Mah Nishtana. He began and said "we were slaves."*

### Note:

It is very difficult to understand how Daro's statement could have exempted Rav Nachman from saying *Mah nishtana*, since the essence of that requirement is that a question be asked

(preferably by the less educated member of the group, though the father is to instruct the child with the *Mah nishtanah* text if the child doesn't ask). If anything, Rav Nachman's question to Daro might have been an adequate question. However, his question doesn't carry the same interest as the questions in *Mah nishtanah*. Additionally, as this text reads, Rav Nachman says that Daro exempted them from reading *Mah nishtanah*. He is not saying that his question qualified as saying *Mah nishtanah*.

דקדוקי סופרים (*dikdukei soferim*), a mid 19th century work which catalogs variant manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud reports that the phrase "פטרן מלומר מה נשתנה - *you have exempted us from saying Mah Nishtana*" does not appear in the Munich, Oxford and second Roman manuscript (I think this is what כ"י ב' means, but I am unsure of this) nor in the text of אבודרהם (*Avudraham*). The author of דקדוקי סופרים (Raphael Rabbinovicz) then states (in note ש):

וכ"ה נכון דודאי לא איפטר בהכי ממה נשנה דמדות דוקא בשאילה וכי ישאלך בנך כתיב ואפי' ת"ח שואל לעצמו אלא דקאמר ליה לדרו הכי לחבב את הנס וכן לא היה לפני הרשב"ם וכבר נתקשו בדבריו בס' יד דוד ובס' זרע אפרים" *And thus it is proper [not to have the phrase in question], because he did not make exempt through this from [saying] "Mah Nishtanah" since its requirement is specifically with asking a question (rather than answering a question, which is what Daro did) and "when your son asks" (Ex. 13:14) is written. And even a wise person asks himself. Rather that which he (Rav Nachman) said to Daro thus was in order to endear the miracle. And so to [the phrase in question] was not before rashba"m, and the book "Yad David" and "Zera Efraim" have already asked about his (Rashba"m's) words.*

Rabbinovicz is sensitive to the fact that there is a need for a question to be asked by the younger or less educated participant in the seder. Only when the child asks the question, as in the case of Abaye above, is the adult exempted from saying *Mah Nishtana*. Rabbinovicz also indicates that the medieval commentator Rashba"m did not have the suspect phrase, "*you have exempted us from saying Mah Nishtana*" in this story. This is fairly evident from Rashba"m's words:

### Rashba"m Pesachim 116a

רשב"ם פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

פתח ואמר. לאחר שאילת הבן התחיל לומר עבדים היינו . . .

*He began and said. After the question of the son, he began to say "we were slaves."*

rashba"m must explain that when Rav Nachman began with "*we were slaves*," was after the child's question. Had Rashba"m had the words "*you have exempted us from saying Mah Nishtana*", he would have had to explain how Rav Nachman's conversation with Daro constituted an acceptable question. Instead, Rashba"m simply says that a question occurred before Rav Nachman continued with "*we were slaves*."

In a conversation with Rabbi/Professor David Weiss Halivni, Rabbi Halivni indicated that he is not convinced that Rabbinovicz is correct. Rabbi Halivni argued that it is possible that any form of questioning and discussion of leaving Egypt might actually suffice for the *Mah nishtanna*, and that Daro's ability to answer and discuss the issue in some way exempted Rav Nachman from further questioning. The ultimate issue is how formal the requirement of the child asking questions is.

## *Even If We Were All Scholars . . .*

### **Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

תנו רבנן: חכם בנו - שואלו, ואם אינו חכם - אשתו שואלתו. ואם לאו - הוא שואל לעצמו. ואפילו שני תלמידי חכמים שיודעין בהלכות הפסח - שואלין זה לזה מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות.

*Our rabbis taught: If his son were wise - he (the son) asks him (the father). And if he (the son) is not wise, his wife asks him (her husband). And if not, he asks himself. And even two scholars who know the laws of Passover - ask each other "why is this night different from all other nights."*

### **Question for thought:**

- Note that this text may indicate that it is the less wise person saying "*mah nishtana*." There are several attempts to explain this. The Goldschmidt Haggadah argues that the words "*mah nishtana*" are not actually the Talmud speaking, but an introduction of the next section of the Mishnah which the Talmud is going to explain. Rabbi/Professor David Weiss Halivni (in מקורות ומסורות *sources and traditions*) argues however that this is unlikely, and that it is more likely that the narrator of this text believed, in contradistinction to the pieces seen above, that it is the child/less educated person who asks the "*mah nishtana*". Another possibility that I would suggest is that perhaps when this text refers to the question "why is this night different," it is not a reference to the formulaic text of the Mishnah, but to the fact that there is an expectation that the child will ask why the structure of the night is different. This idea may be supported by the fact that Maimonides quotes this piece of Talmud, including its implication that the child says "*mah nishtana*" (משנה תורה הלכות חמץ ומצה ז: ג) (*Mishneh Torah Laws of Chamets and Matsah* 7:3), but specifically says that the leader of the seder asks a list of questions at משנה תורה הלכות חמץ ומצה כ: ב (*Mishneh Torah Laws of Chamets and Matsah* 8:2).

- What is the trajectory of the questions and answers discussed in the Talmud? Is it teaching of history, religion, law or a combination? Note how the wisdom of the scholars here is explained as "who know the laws of Passover." This is a question to keep in mind as we read the questions and answers of the four children.

- What does the fact that scholars are required to ask and discuss the laws of Passover tell us about the continual nature of learning?

## *The Different Sets of Questions*

### **Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a (Mishnah 10:4) (משנה י: ד) תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קטז ע"א**

**Note: This is the Mishnah as it appears in the Babylonian Talmud.**

. . . מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות, שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה כולו מצה? שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות, הלילה הזה מרור? שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בשר צלי שלוק ומבושל, הלילה הזה כולו צלי? שבכל הלילות (אין) אנו (חייבים לטבל אפילו) + מסורת הש"ס: [מטבילין] + פעם אחת, הלילה הזה שתי פעמים? . . .  
*Why is this night different from all nights? For on all nights we eat either leavened products or unleavened bread; this night [we eat] all unleavened bread? For on all nights we eat all types of vegetables; this night [we eat] only bitter herbs? For on all nights we eat meat that is roast, stewed, or boiled; this night [we eat] only roast? For on all nights we dip once; this night we dip twice.*

### Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 37b

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת פסחים פרק י דף לז טור ב/מ"ד

**Note: This is the Mishnah as it appears in the Jerusalem Talmud.**

... מ"ד/ד' . . . מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות שבכל הלילות אנו מטבלין פעם אחת והלילה הזה שתי פעמים שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה והלילה הזה כולו מצה שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בשר צלי שלוק ומבושל והלילה הזה כולו צלי . . .

*Why is this night different from all nights? For on all nights we dip once; this night [we dip] twice? For on all nights we eat leavened products or matsah; this night, [we eat] all unleavened bread? For on all nights we eat meat that is roasted, stewed or boiled; this night [we eat only meat that is] roast.*

### Berlin Edition of the Mishnah:

... מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות, שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה כולו מצה שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבלין אפילו פעם אחת, הלילה הזה שתי פעמים שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות, הלילה הזה מרור. . .

*Why is this night different from all nights? For on all nights we eat leavened products or matsah; this night, [we eat] all unleavened bread? For on all nights we do not dip even once; this night [we dip] twice? For on all nights we eat all types of vegetables; this night [we eat] only bitter herbs?*

### The questions by sources:

Babylonian Talmud	Jerusalem Talmud	Berlin Mishna
Chamets - Matsah	Dipping	Chamets - Matsah
Vegetables	Matsah	Dipping (We do not dip)...
Roasted Food	Roasted food	Vegetables
Dipping		

**Note:** Several changes of reality impact on the changes in the questions. Dipping appears to have become less common at the average meal. Without the Passover offering, the rule of eating roasted food did not resonate. Note also that the question in our haggadah, about reclining at the seder, is nowhere to be found in these sources. This is not surprising, as in the Roman culture of our Mishnah's rabbis, reclining was a normal manner of eating. This question was probably added as one of the other questions became less understandable. The fact that changes of reality lead to changes in the text of the questions, can be seen in the following piece of Talmud:

### Babylonian Talmud 116a

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

שבכל הלילות אנו מטבלין פעם אחת, הלילה הזה שתי פעמים. מתקיף לה רבא: אטו כל יומא לא סגיא דלא מטבלא חדא זימנא? אלא אמר רבא, הכי קתני: שבכל הלילות אין אנו חייבין לטבל אפילו פעם אחת, הלילה הזה שתי פעמים. מתקיף לה רב ספרא: חיובא לדרדקי? אלא אמר רב ספרא, הכי קתני: אין אנו מטבלין אפילו פעם אחת הלילה הזה שתי פעמים.

*"On all nights we dip once; this night [we dip] twice." Rava demurred: Is it insufficient on all nights if we don't dip once (i.e. is there a requirement of dipping on other nights)? Rather, Rava said it teaches thus: "On all nights we are not required to dip even once; on this night [we are required to dip] twice." Rav Safra demurred: Is this an obligation for children?\** Rather, Rav Safra said it teaches thus: *"We don't dip even once; this night we dip twice."*

## Rashba"m on Pesachim 116a

\*רשב"ם פסחים דף קטז עמוד י"א

חיובא לדרדקי. בתמיהה הא משום הכירא דתינוקות כדי שישאלו קעבדינן:

*Is this an obligation for children? With surprise (i.e. the statement is a question), for we do this (the dipping) so the children will recognize [the different practice] and ask (i.e. the dipping isn't really a requirement per se).*

## עבדים היינו - WE WERE SLAVES

Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a (Mishnah 10:4) תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קטז ע"א (משנה י:ד)

... מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח . . .

*We start [telling the story] with disgrace, and end with praise.*

### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח מאי בגנות? רב אמר: מתחלה עובדי עבודת גלולים היו אבותינו. [ושמואל] אמר: עבדים היינו. אמר ליה רב נחמן לדרו עבדיה: עבדא דמפיק ליה מריה לחירות ויהיב ליה כספא ודהבא, מאי בעי למימר ליה? אמר ליה: בעי לאודוויי ולשבוחי. אמר ליה: פטרתי מלומר מה נשתנה. פתח ואמר עבדים היינו.

*We start [telling the story] with grace, and end with praise. What is disgrace? Rav\* said: "In the beginning our ancestors were worshipers of idols." [Samuel]\* said "we were slaves." Rav Nachman said to his servant Daro: A slave whose master frees him, and gives him silver and gold, what does he have to say. He (Daro) answered: He needs to thank him and praise him. He (Rav Nachman) said to him (Daro): you have exempted us from saying Mah Nishtana\*\*. He began and said "we were slaves."*

\* There is significant divergence in Talmudic and other manuscripts as to which sages made these statements. See דקדוקי סופרים על פסחים קטז. אות ק

\*\* On the significance and confusion regarding this phrase, see the above section titled "Who Says מה נשתנה?"

**Note:** It would appear that Rav Nachman accepted the position that one starts with "we were slaves," as is current practice. Note that later in the haggadah we have the text referred to by Rav. This prompts ריטב"א (*Ritba*) to say in his commentary on haggadah that the disagreement was not on whether or not these texts should be said, but which should be the opening of the telling of the story.

**Question for thought:** What is the significance of the arrangement of the story in this manner? Why start by bringing up an ugly past? Does this ordering tell us anything about our future?

## THE FOUR CHILDREN

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a (Mishnah 10:4)** (משנה י:ד) תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קטז ע"א . . . ולפי דעתו של בן, אביו מלמדו . . .

*And according to the wisdom of the child, his father teaches him . . .*

**Question for thought:** What educational values are embedded in this statement?

**Please Note:** The following discussion of the Jerusalem Talmud is based on a class with Rabbi/Professor David Novak which I attended some years ago.

**Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 37d (10:4)** תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת פסחים פרק י דף לז טור ד ה"ג  
תני ר' חייא כנגד ארבע בני דיברה תור' בן חכם בן רשע בן טיפש בן שאינו יודע לשאל  
*Rabbi Chiya taught: The Torah speaks about four children, a wise child, an wicked child, a unintelligent child, and a child who doesn't know to ask.*

בן חכם מהו אומ' מה העדות והחקים והמשפטי אשר צוה יי' א'הינו אותנו אף אתה אמור לו בחזק יד הוציאנו יי' ממצרים מבית עבדים

*The wise child what does he say? "What are the testimonies, statutes and judgments which the Lord our God has commanded us?" You shall tell him "with a strong hand God took us out of Egypt from the house of bondage.*

**Note:** This text differs significantly from our haggadah in that (1) The wise child says that the laws were commanded to "us" rather than "you," which would clear up some questions as to why the wicked child is chastised for the use of the word "you." (2) The answer which is given to the wise child is different. In our haggadah, this answer is given to the simple child, while the wise child is given the answer that is given here to the simple child.

בן רשע מהו אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם מה הטורה הזה שאתם מטריחין עלינו בכל שנה ושנה מכיון שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל אף אתה אמור לו בעבור זה עשה יי' לי עשה לאותו האיש לא עשה אילו היה אותו האיש במצרים לא היה ראוי להיגאל משם לעולם

*The wicked child what does he say? "What is this worship to you? What is this bother to you, that you bother us every year?" Since he removes himself from the community, you should say to him, "because of this G-d did for me" (Ex. 13:8) - for me he did it, for 'that person' he did not do it. Were 'that person' in Egypt, he would not have been fit to be redeemed from there forever.*

**Notes:**  
- The wicked child's complaint seems to be about the ritual requirements of the day.  
- Note the juxtaposition of text and commentary. The wicked child's question, which is from Exodus 12:26 is "what is this worship to you." The narrator expands on this question "What is this bother . . ." Similarly, the father's response "because of this . . ." Is interpreted by the narrator "for me he did it, for 'that person' . . . Similar interpretation is found in our haggadah in the wicked child's answer.  
- The phrase "אותו האיש *that man*" is believed by many to be a euphemism for Jesus.

טיפש מהו אומר מה זאת אף את למדו הילכות הפסח שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקימון שלא יהא עומד מחבורה זו ונכנס לחבורה אחרת

*The unintelligent [child] what does he say? "What is this." You should teach him the laws of Passover, that we don't add an Afikoman after the Passover [offering is eaten]. So that he won't get up from one group and enter into another group.*

**Notes:**

- The unintelligent child is given the answer that is given to the wise child in our haggadah. The key is telling the child about an important law of Passover that says that the meat of the Passover sacrifice must be eaten within a predetermined group of people, and therefore, one may not go "seder hopping," so to speak. Hopping from meal to meal was a regular practice in Roman festivals. It is reasonable that the more simple and less learned child, who is not evil *per se* would need to be instructed not to do this. The meaning of the word "afikoman" is discussed further in a section below, p. 32.

בן שאינו יודע לשאל את פתח לו תחילה אמר ר' יוסה מתניתא אמר' כן אם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו  
*The child who does not know to ask, you open for him. Rabbi Jose said: Thus the mishnah said, "And if there is insufficient understanding in the child, the father instructs him."*

Note that the Yerushalmi does not quote a verse in reference to the response to the child that does not know how to ask.

**Mehilta of Rabbi Yishael Bo ch. 17**      מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בא - מס' דפסחא בא פרשה יז ד"ה והגדת לבנך

והגדת לבנך. שומע אני מראש חדש ת"ל ביום ההוא אי ביום ההוא יכול מבעוד יום ת"ל בעבור זה בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך על שולחנך:

*"And you shall tell your child" (Ex. 13:8): I hear (i.e. would think) that [telling the child may be performed any time] from the beginning of the month [of Nissan onward]. Therefore it teaches [and you shall tell your child] "on that day" (id.). If "on that day" [demonstrates when the telling should occur] I might think [the rituals should be done] while it is still day. Therefore it teaches, "because of this." (id.) [meaning you should tell your children] at the time when matsah and bitter herbs are resting before you on your table.*

בעבור זה עשה ה' לי למה נאמר לפי שהוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם אלא זה בן רשע הוא שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל אף אתה הוציאהו מן הכלל בעבור זה עשה יי' לי בצאתי ממצרים לי ולא לך ולפי שהוצאת את עצמך מן הכלל אלו היית שם לא היית נגאל.

*"Because of this God did for me" (id.) - why is this said? Because he [the child] says "what is this worship for you" (id.) - This is the wicked child, who removes himself from the group. And since he removes himself from the group, you should also take him out of the group "because of this God did for me when I left Egypt" (id.) - "For me" and not "for you". And since he removed himself from the group, had he been there, he would not have been saved.*

**Notes:**

- The first paragraph above, in a slightly different form, appears in our haggadah immediately after the four children.

- The response of the father is "because of this G-d did for me . . ." and continues "for me, and not for you" In our haggadah (similar to the Jerusalem Talmud), the father merely says, "because of this G-d did for me . . ." and the narrator explains the response of the verse as "for me, and not for him."

**Mehilta of Rabbi Yishmael Bo Ch. 18** מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בא - מס' דפסחא בא פרשה יח ד"ה והיה כי 18 מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אותנו (דברים ו כ) נמצאת אומר ארבעה בנים הם אחד חכם ואחד רשע ואחד תם ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול.

*"What are the testimonies and statutes and judgments which the Lord has commanded us?" (Deut 6:20) It (the Torah) is found to say that there are four children, one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know to ask.*

חכם מה הוא אומר מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' א'הינו אותנו אף אתה פתח לו בהלכות הפסח אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן.

*The wise [child] what does he say? "What are the testimonies and statutes and judgments which the Lord our G-d has commanded us?" You should tell him the laws of Passover, "We do not add an Afikoman after the Passover [offering is eaten]."*

Note that like the Jerusalem Talmud above, the wise child uses the word "us" rather than "you." The response given, however, is the same as in our haggadah. Also note that the wise child is told about the laws of Passover. The reference to the rule of the Afikoman is probably made because it is one of the last rules of the seder found in the Mishnah (Pesachim chapter 10), and therefore the instruction is essentially to teach the wise child all the laws of the seder.

רשע מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם לכם ולא לו ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל וכפר בעיקר אף אתה הקהה את שיניו ואמור לו בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים (שמות יג ח) לי ולא לך אלו היית שם לא היית נגאל.

*The wicked [child] what does he say? "What is this worship to you?" "To you," and not to him. And since he removed himself from the community, and denied the essence (i.e. spoke heretically), you should set his teeth on edge and say to him "because of this God did for me when I came out of Egypt." (Exodus 13:8) "For me", and not "for you". Were he there he would not have been redeemed.*

**Note:** The response of the father is "because of this G-d did for me . . ." and continues "for me, and not for you" In our haggadah (similar to the Jerusalem Talmud), the father merely says, "because of this G-d did for me . . ." and the narrator explains the response of the verse as "for me, and not for him."

תם מה הוא אומר מה זאת ואמרת אליו בחוזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים.

*The simple [child] what does he say? "What is this?" "And you shall say to him with a strong hand God took us out of Egypt from the house of bondage."*

ושאינו יודע לשאול את פתח לו שנא' והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא וגו'.

*The one who does not know to ask, you shall open for him, as it says "and you shall tell your child on that day etc."*

**Note:** The responses to each of the children are consistent with the verses quoted in response to the children in our haggadah.



## *How the Children Came to Be Four*

Daniel Goldschmidt, *Haggadah shel Pesach*, p.24-25 analyzes the development of the four children. He notes that the text regarding the question and answer with the wicked child is repeated elsewhere in Mehilta without the other children. Further, he argues that the conversation with the wicked child is unlike the other three, because the other three vary in intelligence, whereas the evil child differs in attitude/belief. Based on this and other evidence, some argue that the origin of the wicked son is separate from the development of the story of the three other children, or that the simple child and the wicked child were together. Goldschmidt argues that an ancient Midrash, found in Mehilta Dearabbi Shimon ben Yochai has only a wise child and one who does not know how to ask. He notes that this would flow well with the Mishnah "*and here the child asks his father. And if there is insufficient understanding in the child, the father instructs him.*" He argues that it is the simple and wicked children that were added. There are other theses as to how the children went from two or three to four, discussed both in Goldschmidt and in JPS Commentary on the Haggadah by Joseph Tabory, pages 39-44

### *How The Biblical Verses Were Used to Create the Four Children*

The story of the four children is derived from several verses in the Bible which instruct a parent to explain certain practices to a child. The different versions of the four children make different uses of these verses. We will look at each verse that was used to see how these verses were used in the construction of the story of the four children.

#### **Exodus 12:26-27**

שמות פרק יב:כו-כז

(כו) וְהִזְיָה כִּי יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מָה הָעִבְדָּה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם:

(כז) וְאָמַרְתֶּם זָבַח פֶּסַח הוּא לַה' אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנֹגְפוֹ אֶת מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת בְּתֵינֵנוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ:

(26) *And it shall be when your children say to you: 'What is this worship to you?'*

(27) *And you shall say: 'It is the paschal offering to the LORD who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt in his smiting of Egypt, and our houses [God] saved,' and the people bowed and prostrated.*

The context of this text is Moses' relaying a commandment to keep the Passover rituals throughout the generations. The question presented in verse 26 is universally used as the question of the wicked child, owing principally to the use of the word לָכֶם, *to you*, but perhaps also to the fact that here the child (well, children) are introduced with the word root אמר, meaning to "say," rather than שאל, meaning "to ask."<sup>1</sup>

The explanation (verse 27) does not figure into any of the responses to the children, though it does figure prominently in Rabban Gamliel's explanation of the Passover offering in the discussion of the three items that must be mentioned at the seder (discussed below, p. 22). Similarly, as we will note later, page 19, text accompanying footnote 3, the answer to the wise child in the Torah (Deut. 6:21, עבדי היינו, *we were slaves*) is not used in the story of the four

---

<sup>1</sup> JPS Haggadah p. 41.

children, but does figure prominently in the haggadah as the beginning of the maggid section. Joseph Tabory suggests that perhaps the story of the four children was designed with an already extant haggadah in mind, and therefore deliberately chose not to use verses that were used elsewhere in the haggadah.<sup>2</sup>

### Exodus 13:7-8

שמות פרק יג:ז-ח

(ז) מצות יאכל את שבועת הימים ולא יראה לה חמץ ולא יראה לה שאר בכל גבלה:

(ח) והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים:

(7) *Matzot shall be eaten those seven days; no leavened bread shall be found with you, nor shall leaven shall be found in your midst.*

(8) *You shall tell your child on that day saying, 'because of this the LORD did for me when I went out of Egypt.'*

The context of this text is the commandment to eat matzot. The parent is told to explain the reason for this to the. Since there is no question asked by the child that prompts this explanation, this explanation becomes the explanation to the child that does not know to ask (except in the Jerusalem Talmud, which has no proof text for the child that does not know to ask). Additionally, since the parent's response uses the term *לי*, *for me*, it becomes the basis for the retort to the evil child.

### Exodus 13:13-15

שמות פרק יג:יג-טו

(יג) וכל פטר חמר תפדה בשה ואם לא תפדה וערפתו וכל בכור אדם בבניו תפדה:

(יד) והיה כי ישאלך בנה מחר לאמר מה זאת ואמרת אליו בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים:

(טו) והיה כי הקשה פרעה לשלחנו ויהרג ה' כל בכור בארץ מצרים מבכר אדם ועד בכור בהמה על פני אנו זבח לה' כל פטר רחם הזכרים וכל בכור בני אפדה:

(13) *Each firstborn ass you shall redeem with a sheep, and if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck, and each first born male of your children you shall redeem.*

(14) *And it shall be, when your child asks you later saying, 'What is this?', you shall say to him, 'With a strong hand the LORD took us out of Egypt from the house of bondage.*

(15) *And it was, when Pharaoh was resolute to [not] let us go, that the LORD killed each firstborn in Egypt, from firstborn son to firstborn animal, therefore I sacrifice to the LORD each male that opens a womb, and each first born son of my sons I redeem.'*

The context of this text is a discussion of the laws of redeeming the first born, which is only tangentially related to the seder rituals (in that it is said to reflect God's sparing the first born). The child's question, however, is a question about the redemption of the first born. The story of the four children makes the child's question into a question about the seder. The question in 13:14 is used as the question of the simple child. The answer is also used for the simple child, except in the Jerusalem Talmud, where this is the response to the wise son, and the simple son is told about the laws of the Afikoman. Significantly, the Yerushalmi's story changes the answer of the parent to a warning not to leave the seder (see discussion of "seder hopping" above p. 15), rather than an explanation of the philosophical significance of the rituals, as is the case in our text in Exodus.

<sup>2</sup> The JPS Commentary on the Haggadah, p. 43. Tabory also notes that this fits well with the fact that the story of the four children appears only in those haggadot which include Deut. 6:21 as the beginning of the *maggid* section.

## Deuteronomy 6:20-21

דברים פרק ו:כ-כא

(כ) כי ישאלך בנך ביום מאוחר לאמר מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' א-להינו אתכם:

(כא) ואמרת לבנך עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים ויוציאנו ה' ממצרים ביד חזקה:

*(20) When your child asks you later, saying, 'What are the testimonies, laws, and rules which the LORD our God commanded you?'*

*(21) Then you shall say to your child, 'We were slaved to Pharaoh in Egypt and the LORD took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'*

These verses are a separate paragraph in the Torah, and are not concerning any particular ritual (the immediately preceding text in the Bible concerns instructions to follow God's commandments). The response given in this verse is not used as part of the story of the four children.<sup>3</sup> Also, where the answer to the wise child is an exposition on the laws of Passover (as in Mehilta and our hagaddah, as opposed to the Jerusalem Talmud which substitutes Ex. 13:14), the answer to the wise child becomes a lesson regarding the laws of the seder, rather than an explanation of the philosophical significance of the rituals, as is the case in our text in Deuteronomy.

---

<sup>3</sup> See above, page 18, footnote 2 and accompanying text.

How Biblical Texts Were Integrated Into the Story of the Four Children		
Answer	Question	Text
ואמרתם זבח פסח ...	מה העבדה הזאת לכם	<b>Exodus 12:26-27</b>
Not used (Used by Raban Gamliel)	Evil child	Yerushalmi
		Mehilta
		Haggadah
והגדת לבנך ... בעבור זה עשה ה' לי	<i>No question</i>	<b>Exodus 13:8</b>
Wicked child	Child that doesn't know to ask	Yerushalmi
Wicked child & Child that doesn't know to ask		Mehilta
Wicked child & Child that doesn't know to ask		Haggadah
בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים ...	מה זאת	<b>Exodus 13:14</b>
Wise child	Simple child <sup>4</sup>	Yerushalmi
Simple child		Mehilta
Simple child		Haggadah
עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים	מה העדת והתקנים ...	<b>Deut. 6:20-21</b>
Not used (introduced <i>maggid</i> )	Wise child	Yerushalmi
		Mehilta
		Haggadah

<sup>4</sup> Called טיפס, *unintelligent*, in the Jerusalem Talmud. The significance of this difference is debated.

The Sources for The Questions and Answers By Rabbinic text		
Child/Text	Question	Answer
<b>Wise Child</b>		
Yerushalmi	Deut. 6:20-21 מה העדת והחקים . . .	Exodus 13:14 בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם . . .
Mehilta		Laws (through Afikoman)
Haggadah		Laws (through Afikoman)
<b>Wicked Child</b>		
Yerushalmi	Exodus 12:26 מָה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם	Exodus 13:8 בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי
Mehilta		
Haggadah		
<b>Simple Child<sup>5</sup></b>		
Yerushalmi	Exodus 13:14 מָה זֹאת	Laws (through Afikoman)
Mehilta		Exodus 13:14 בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם . . .
Haggadah		Exodus 13:14 בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם . . .
<b>Child That Doesn't Know To Ask</b>		
Yerushalmi	Exodus 13:8 <i>No question</i>	No prooftext
Mehilta		Exodus 13:8 וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ . . .
Haggadah		Exodus 13:8 וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ . . .

## THE FOUR VERSES

**Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116a (Mishnah 10:4)** (משנה י:ד) תלמוד בבלי פסחים דף קטז ע"א (משנה י:ד) . . . ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה:

*And he explicates from an Aramean enslaved my father until he finishes the entire section.*

**Explanation:** The Haggadah refracts the story of the Israelites descent to Egypt and departure through Egypt through the four verses (Deut 26:5-8). These verses were said by an Israelite when first fruits were brought to the Temple, and thus would be familiar to all. They provide a concise history of the Israelites going into Egypt through their entry into the land of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> Called טיפס, *unintelligent*, in the Jerusalem Talmud. The significance of this difference is debated.

## RABBAN GAMLIEL - THE THREE THINGS ONE MUST MENTION

**B.T. Pesachim 116a-b (Mishna 10:5)**

**תלמוד בבלי פסחים קטז עמוד א - ב (משנה י:ה)**

רבן גמליאל היה אומר: כל שלא אמר (עמוד ב) שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו. ואלו הן: פסח, מצה, ומרור. פסח - על שום שפסח המקום על בתי אבותינו במצרים, [שנאמר + שמות יב+ ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה' אשר פסח וגו'], מצה - על שום שנגאלו אבותינו ממצרים, [שנאמר + שמות יב+ ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים וגו'], מרור - על שום שמררו המצריים את חיי אבותינו במצרים, שנאמר [+ שמות א+ וימררו את חייהם וגו'].

*Rabban Gamliel would say: anyone who did not say (116b) these three things on Passover did not fulfill their duty, and these are: [the] Passover [offering], Matsah, and Marmor. [the] Passover [offering] because God passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, [as it is said: "And you shall say this is the Passover offering for G-d who passed over etc. (Ex. 12:27)]. Matsah, because our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt, [as it is said: And they baked the dough which they had taken out of Egypt (Ex. 12:39)], Marmor because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors, as it is said ["and they embittered their lives" (Ex. 1:14)]*

### Notes and questions:

- The verse quotations, which are in brackets in our Gemara, does not appear in the Mishnah, nor in the Mishnah as it appears in the Jerusalem Talmud. These proof-texts are also entirely missing from some, but not all of the Talmud manuscripts and early printings (see דקדוקי סופרים ואת ג *Dikdukei Soferim note 3*). It is possible that these explanations were at some time incorporated into the Mishnah's text from a haggadah or another source.

- The reasoning for Matsah is different from what appears in our haggadah, where we are told the Matsah is " על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש " *because there was not enough time for their dough to leaven before the King of Kings, the holy one blessed is he was revealed to them and redeemed them.*" Was this the meaning of Rabban Gamliel's statement "*because our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt*"? Is the answer to this question affected by whether or not Rabban Gamliel cited Ex. 12:39 (as in the Mishnah in our Talmud, but not in our regular printings of the Mishna)? Note that the entire verse reads as follows:

וַיֹּאפֹּוּ אֶת הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֲגֹת מִצּוֹת כִּי לֹא הָמִיץ כִּי גִרְשׁוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְהִתְמַהֵמֵה וְגַם צִדָּה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם:

*And they baked the dough which they had taken out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, because they did not ferment, because they were chased out of Egypt and could not delay; and they also couldn't make provisions.*

### Note:

- There is hardly another law in Judaism which requires saying particular things. In fact, the "four verses" discussed above, which were said when one brought first fruits is one of the other rare exceptions. The reason for the exception here is the requirement of teaching children ("וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ" *and you shall tell your children Ex. 13:8*) (This idea was taught by Rabbi/Professor David Weiss-Halivni).

## *Raising the Items*

### **Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 116b**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד ב  
אמר רבא: מצה צריך להגביה, ומרור צריך להגביה. בשר אין צריך להגביה, ולא עוד אלא שנראה כאוכל קדשים בחוץ.  
*Rava said: The matsah, he needs to raise it. And bitter herbs, he needs to raise it. Meat he does not need to raise it, and moreover it would appear as if he eats sacrifices outside [the Temple].*

### **(Selections from) Rash"i Pesachim 116b**

רש"י מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד ב  
צריך להגביה - כשהוא אומר מצה זו שאנו אוכלין.  
בשר אין מגביה - כשהוא אומר פסח שהיו אבותינו (במצרים) אוכלים לא יגביה הבשר שהוא זכר לפסח.  
אין צריך להגביה - דהא לא מצי למימר פסח זה.

*He must raise it - When he says "this matsah which we eat."*

*The meat isn't raised: When he says "[The] Passover [offering] which our ancestors would eat in Egypt" - he shouldn't raise the meat which is a reminder of the Passover [offering]*

*Does not need to be lifted: (note the opening words here are based on an emendation of the text proposed by Rashi): Since it is not proper to say "this Passover." (whereas we say "this matsah" and "this bitter herb.")*

### **Notes:**

- The Talmud instructs here that when speaking of the *Matsah* and *Marror*, per Rabban Gamliel's instructions, these items should be lifted up. However, the meat which we have (usually a shankbone in our days) should not be raised, as this might make people think that we are eating sacrificial meat outside of the Temple.

- Note that Rashi says that we say "*this matsah which we eat*" and "*[The] Passover [offering] which our ancestors would eat in Egypt.*" This is exactly as these texts appear in our haggadah.

## **AS IF WE LEFT EGYPT . . .**

### **B.T. Pesachim 116b (Mishnah 10:5)**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים קטז עמוד ב (משנה י:ה)  
בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים, שנאמר +שמות יג+ והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.

*In every generation one is obligated to view himself as if s/he came out of Egypt. As it is said: And you shall tell your child on that day saying, 'because of this God did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (Ex. 13:8)*

**Note:** This text appears in our haggadah verbatim.

**Questions for thought:** How do we make the feeling of liberation "real" to us? What are the modern day bondages from which we would like to liberate ourselves? Why do the rabbis want us to view ourselves as having come out of Egypt? Why isn't it enough that we remember what G-d did for our ancestors? Does this say something about how we should relate personally to G-d? To our surroundings?

## הלל HALLEL

**B.T. Pesachim 116b (Mishnah 10:5)** (משנה י:ה) תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים קטז עמוד ב  
לפיכך אנחנו חייבים להודות להלל לשבח לפאר לרומם להדר לברך לעלה ולקלס למי שעשה לאבותינו ולנו את כל הנסים האלו, הוציאנו מעבדות לחרות מיגון לשמחה ומאבל ליום טוב ומאפלה לאור גדול, ומשעבוד לגאולה, ונאמר לפניו הללויה.

*Therefore are we bound to give thanks, to praise, to glorify, to honour, to exalt, to extol, and to bless him who wrought all these wonders for our fathers and us. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a Festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption; so let us say before him the Hallelujah.*

Trans. Marcus Danby, The Mishnah.

### Notes:

- The Mishnah presents the Hallel as being causally related to our personal redemption. We praise God not for what happened to others, but for what we view as what God has done for us.
- There is significant variation in manuscript texts as well as the Mishnah as in the Jerusalem Talmud. The text as we have it in our Talmud is exactly as we have it in our haggadah. The only difference is in our haggadah is "let us say before him a new song Halleluyah." The Munich manuscript has these words in its text. Tosafot (Tosafot) clearly has this text as well, as they discuss the significance of the word שירה, song being in feminine form rather than masculine.

### *How Much of Hallel Is Said Before The Meal?*

**B.T. Pesachim 116b (Mishnah 10:6)** (משנה י:ו) תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים קטז עמוד ב  
עד היכן הוא אומר? בית שמאי אומרים: עד אם הבנים שמחה. ובית הלל אומרים: עד חלמיש למעינו מים.  
*Until where does he say? The school of Shammai says until "the joyous mother of the children" (i.e. only the first paragraph) while the school of Hillel says until "A flintstone into a spring of water" (i.e. the first two paragraphs).*

**Note:** As is usual, we follow the ruling of Bet Hillel.

## THE CLOSING OF מגיד (MAGID)

**B.T. Pesachim 116b (Mishnah 10:6)** (משנה י:ו) תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים קטז עמוד ב  
וחותם בגאולה. רבי טרפון אומר: אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים, ולא היה חותם. רבי עקיבא אומר: כן ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו יגיענו למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, שמחים בבנין עירך וששים בעבודתך ונאכל שם (מן הפסחים ומן הזבחים) + מסורת הש"ס: [מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים] + כו', עד ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל.  
*And the person seals with redemption. Rabbi Tarfon says [the person closes with]: Who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, but the person doesn't seal (i.e. close with a blessing). Rabbi Akiva says: "Thus, Lord our God and God of our ancestors bring us to other seasons and holidays that come to us in peace; happy in the building of your Temple, and joyous in your service, and we shall eat there from the sacrifices and Passover [offerings] etc. until "Blessed are you God who redeemed Israel."*



### Notes:

- Though our Haggadah adds a couple of phrases (which appear in some of the manuscripts of Mishnah and Talmud, see דקדוקי סופרי (*Dikdukei Soferim*)) to this blessing, it essentially begins with what Rabbi Tarfon prescribes, and then continues with everything Rabbi Akiva says. Rabbi Akiva's text begins with "thus." It is logical to surmise that he intended for this text to be added to what Rabbi Tarfon suggests.

- The statement "and he seals with redemption" seems to be a bit of a nonsequitor. Perhaps before the Mishnah was redacted, there might have been a teaching which said something like: " וחותם בגאולה *he begins with disgrace, ends with praise, and seals with redemption*" and in the Mishnah these teachings were split into Mishnah 10:4 and 10:6 with a lot of other information stuck in between.

### "Redeemer of Israel" versus "Who redeemed Israel."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיז עמוד ב

וחותם בגאולה. אמר רבא: קריאת שמע והלל - גאל ישראל, דצלותא - גואל ישראל. מאי טעמא - דרחמי נינהו.  
*And he seals with redemption. Rava said: [The blessing after] reading shema and a the end of Hallel [on Passover] is "who redeemed Israel" [but the blessing] of prayer (i.e. the blessing in the עמידה (Amidah)) is "who redeemer of Israel." Why? Because it is a prayer.*

**Explanation:** The blessing after *shema* and the blessing in the Haggadah is meant to praise God for redeeming Israel in the past. The blessing in the *amidah* is prayer - i.e. a hope for God to redeem us in the future.

## THE BROKEN MATSAH AND THE NUMBER OF MATSAS

### Babylonian Talmud 115b-116a

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א

לחם עני - עני כתיב, מה עני שדרכו בפרוסה - (קטז.) אף כאן בפרוסה. דבר אחר  
*"Lechem Oni" - is written "lechem ani" (bread of the poor), just as a poor person normally [eats bread] in a piece, (116a) so too here with a broken one.*

In (B.T. Berachot 39b), the Talmud engages in a debate over the following question: If one has a broken piece of bread and a loaf bread, but the broken piece of bread is a "better" piece of bread, should the person make his *hamotsi* (המוציא) on the broken piece, as it is more special, or on the whole loaf because it is whole. After some discussion, the Talmud states:

### Babylonian Talmud Berachot 39b

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לט עמוד ב

איתמר, הביאו לפנייהם פתיתין ושלמין; אמר רב הונא: מברך על הפתיתין ופוטר את השלמין, ורבי יוחנן אמר: שלמה מצוה מן המובחר . . .

*It was stated: If they brought before him pieces [of bread] and full loaves, Rav Huna says: He blesses on the pieces, and [through this blessing] exempts the full loaves [i.e. the person need not make another blessing when eating the loaves], and Rabbi Yochanan says: [blessing on the] full loaf is a Mitzvah of preferred status. . . .*

**Explanation:** As understood by Rashi, this means that the person for some reason wants to eat the small pieces, and the question is whether he is better off blessing and eating the full loaves, as they are of a preferred status.

... אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: וירא שמים יוצא ידי שניהן, ומנו? מר בריה דרבינא. דמר בריה דרבינא מניה פרוסה בתוך השלמה ובוצע. תני תנא קמיה דרב נחמן בר יצחק: מניה הפרוסה בתוך השלמה ובוצע ומברך. אמר ליה: מה שמך? אמר ליה: שלמן. אמר ליה: שלום אתה ושלמה משנתך, ששמת שלום בין התלמידים.

... *Said Rav Nachman bar Yitschak: One who fears heaven will fulfill the requirements of both of them. And who is this? This is Mar the son of Ravina, [who would] place the broken in middle of the full one and break [bread]. A Tanna (i.e. one who in times after the Mishnah memorized and reported older teachings that the person memorized) repeated before Rav Nachman bar Yitschak: He places the broken [piece] in the middle of the full [loaf] and breaks [bread] and blesses. He (Rav Nachman bar Yitschak) said to him (the tanna): What is your name? He (the tanna) said to him (Rav Nachman bar Yitschak): Shalman. He: (Rav Nachman bar Yitschak) said to him (the tanna): You are complete (Shalom) and your teaching is complete (shalmah). For you have placed peace (shalom) between the students.*

**Explanation:** A compromise position is sited with approval. The broken piece of bread is placed in middle of the full piece of bread so that the blessing can be said on both.

Note: This bread is probably something like a pita or a fajita - i.e. a more flexible and flat bread, so that one piece of bread can be wrapped around the other.

אמר רב פפא: הכל מודים בפסח שמניה פרוסה בתוך שלמה ובוצע. מאי טעמא - דדברים ט"ז + לחם עני כתיב. אמר רבי אבא: ובשבת חייב אדם לבצוע על שתי ככרות. מאי טעמא - שמות ט"ז + לחם משנה כתיב.

*Said Rabbi Abba: On Passover all agree that on places a broken piece in middle of a full piece and breaks. What is the reason? "Poor bread" is written. Said Rabbi Abba: And on Shabbat one is obligated to break on two loaves. What is the reason? "Double bread" is written (Ex. 16: 22, regarding the collection of manna on Friday)*

#### Notes:

- Whereas on Sabbath there is a requirement of two loaves (and most rabbis accept that there should also be two loaves on holidays), Rav Pappa says that everyone agrees that on Passover one has a broken piece of matsah in middle of a full matsah. Note that this indicates that their matsah was not a hard cardboard like substance, but a more flexible bread such as the Yemenites eat on Passover.

- There leads to classical debate as to whether there should be two or three matsot for *hamotsi*. רמב"ם (Maimonides) prescribes as follows:

#### Mishneh Torah Laws of Chamets and Matsah 8:6

רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה פרק ה הלכה ו  
... ולוקח שני ריקין חולק אחד מהן ומניח פרוס לתוך שלם ומברך המוציא לחם מן הארץ, ומפני מה אינו מברך על שתי ככרות כשאר ימים טובים משום שנאמר +דברים ט"ז+ לחם עוני מה דרכו של עני בפרוסה אף כאן בפרוסה...

... *And he takes his two wafers, breaks one of them, and places the piece into the complete one, and blesses "who brings bread from the earth." And why doesn't he bless on two loaves as on all other holidays? Since it is said: "Poor bread," just as it is the way of the poor [to break bread] on a broken piece, so to here on a broken piece. ...*

**Note:** Maimonides also requires saying the blessing "אל אכילת מצה" [who commanded us regarding] *eating Matsah*." See 8:8.

Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch* (שלחן ערוך) disagrees with this ruling:

### Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 475:1

### שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן תעה סעיף א

. . . ויקח המצות כסדר שהניחם, הפרוסה בין שתי השלימות, ויאחזם בידו ויברך המוציא ועל אכילת מצה, ואחר כך יבצע מהשלימה העליונה ומהפרוסה, משתיהן ביחד, . . .

*And he should take the matsas as he set them, the broken piece between the two whole pieces, and he should hold hold them in his hands and bless "who brings [bread from the earth] and "[who commanded us] regarding eating matsah" and afterwards he breaks from the full top one and from the broken one together . . .*

Practices vary between Maimonides view and Karo's view. The Vilna Gaon sides with Maimonides (see gloss to Shulchan Aruch 473:4), arguing that having two and a half matzahs present is in no way symbolic of poverty.

## MATSAH, BITTER HERBS, AND THE SANDWICH

### *The Nature of the Obligation*

#### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 120a

#### תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קכ עמוד א

אמר רבא: מצה בזמן הזה דאורייתא ומרור דרבנן. - ומאי שנא מרור דכתיב +במדבר ט+ על מצות ומררים בזמן דאיכא פסח - יש מרור, ובזמן דליכא פסח - ליכא מרור. מצה נמי הא כתיב על מצות ומררים! - מצה מיהדר הדר ביה קרא +שמות יב+ בערב תאכלו מצת.

*Rava said: Matsah nowadays is a biblical requirement, while bitter herbs is a rabbinic requirement. How is bitter herbs different? Because it is written "with matsah and bitter herbs" (Numbers 9:11, the verse continues "you shall eat it (i.e. the Passover [offering])") - [meaning] at the time where there is a Passover [offering], there is [a biblical obligation to eat] bitter herbs. At a time where there isn't a Passover [offering] there is not [a biblical obligation to eat] bitter herbs. [But regarding] matsah also it says "with matsah and bitter herbs" (applying the same logic, matsah should not be required biblically when there is no Passover offering)!? Matsah the scripture repeats, "in the evening you shall eat matsot." (Ex. 12:18).*

**Explanation:** Rava claims that eating bitter herbs is not biblically (but only rabbinically) required in the absence of a Temple and Passover sacrifices, since the verse only mentions bitter herbs in context of the Passover offering ("with matsah and bitter herbs you shall eat it"). The Talmud asks why this same logic doesn't apply to matsot, which would indicate that matsot is also not a biblical requirement in absence of the Passover sacrifice. The response is that there is a separate verse requiring eating matsot.

ורב אחא בר יעקב אמר: אחד זה ואחד זה דרבנן. - אלא הכתיב בערב תאכלו מצת! - ההיא מיבעי ליה לטמא ושהיה בדרך רחוקה. דסלקא דעתך אמינא: כיון דפסח לא אכלי - מצה ומרור נמי לא ניכול, קא משמע לן. . . .

*And Rav Acha son of Jakob said: Each one (matsah and bitter herbs) are rabbinic requirements [nowadays]. But it says "in the evening you shall eat matsot." (Ex. 12:18)!? This is necessary [to teach an obligation] for an impure person (who by law may not participate in the Passover offering) and one who was on a distant journey (and thus could not participate) . It might cross your mind to say: since he doesn't eat the Passover [offering], matsah and bitter herbs he also shouldn't eat. This comes to teach us (that as long as the Temple exists and the Passover offering is being brought, even a person who can not participate in this rite is obligated to eat matsot and bitter herbs). . . .*

**Explanation:** Rav Acha bar Ya'akov opines that matsah also is not biblically required when the Passover offering isn't brought. The Talmud asks why Rav Acha does not understand the extra verse pertaining only to matsot as indicating that eating matsah is a biblical requirement independent of the Passover offering. The response is that Rav Acha understands this extra verse as indicating that when the Temple is in existence, a person is required to eat matsot and bitter herbs even if they are not able to eat the Passover offering.

תניא כוותיה דרבא: +דברים טז+ ששת ימים תאכל מצות וביום השביעי עצרת לה' א'היך, מה שביעי רשות - אף ששת ימים רשות. מאי טעמא - הוי דבר שהיה בכלל ויצא מן הכלל ללמד, לא ללמד על עצמו יצא, אלא ללמד על הכלל כולו יצא. יכול אף לילה הראשון רשות - תלמוד לומר על מצת ומררים יאכלהו. אין לי אלא בזמן שבית המקדש קיים, בזמן שאין בית המקדש קיים - מנין? תלמוד לומר בערב תאכלו מצת - הכתוב קבעו חובה.

*A teaching is in accordance with Rava[’s statement]: "Six days shall you eat matsot and on the seventh day it is a holiday to the Lord your God." (Deut 16:8) just as the seventh day [eating matsah] is optional, so to the six days [eating matsah] is optional. What is the reason? It would be an item that was included in a general rule (i.e. that matsot are eaten for seven days), and then was removed from the general rule (by saying that matsot are eaten on six days and the seventh "is a holiday," the seventh day has been removed from the rule). It was not in order to teach about itself that it excused itself from the general rule, rather to teach about the rule in general (i.e. to teach that the eating of matsah during the seven days is generally optional).\** You might think that even the [on] first day [eating matsah] is optional, therefore it (the Bible) teaches: "upon matsot and bitter herbs you shall eat it." [From this verse] I only know [that the eating matsah is required] at the time that the temple exists. [That there is an obligation to eat matsah] when the Temple is not in existence, from where [do we know such an obligation]? Therefore it teaches, "in the evening you shall eat matsot." The scripture made it a permanent obligation.

\* *An item that is within a general rule and was excepted from the general rule, did not except itself from the rule to teach about itself, rather it did so to teach that the entire general rule is excepted.* This is one of Rabbi Yishmael's principles of biblical exegesis. Essentially, it says that if something is in a general rule, and then that thing is excepted from the rule for any given reason, this exception sheds light on the entire rule. Here, the Bible indicates that one is required to eat matsah for seven days ("שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת תֹּאכְלוּ" - seven days you shall eat matsot" Ex. 12:15). Then, by saying that one should eat matsah for six days, it apparently excepts the seventh day from the requirement. This exception is applied to all days, which indicates that there is no requirement to eat matsah on any of the seven days (*chamets* would of course still be prohibited). Subsequently, the teaching uses another verse to demonstrate that matsah must be eaten on the first day of Passover (see Rashba"m for this explanation).

**Explanation:** The Talmud indicates that Rava's understanding is supported by an earlier teaching. That earlier teaching says that although one verse says to eat matsot for seven days, another verse teaches "Six days shall you eat matsot and on the seventh day it is a holiday." The fact that this verse indicates that there is no requirement to eat matsot on the seventh day, is understood as indicating that there is no obligation to eat matsot on the other days of Passover. After explaining this, the earlier teaching adds that there is an obligation to eat matsah on the first day of Passover, because of the verse "upon matsas and bitter herbs you shall eat it." The

teaching continues by saying that this verse would only teach an obligation to eat matsot when there is a Passover offering. The teaching finishes by saying that you know that there is a Biblical obligation to eat matsot from the additional verse which speaks of matsah independently from the Passover offering. This teaching follows the same logic as Rava in order to establish a biblical obligation to eat matsot even if the Temple does not exist.

### *Dueling Mitzvot and the Sandwich Solution*

#### **Numbers 9:11**

במדבר פרק ט פסוק יא

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עַל מִצּוֹת וּמִרְרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ:

*In the second month, on the fourteenth day, at twilight they shall make it - they shall eat it with matsah and bitter herbs.*

**Note:** The reference to the second month is because this passage discusses the so called "Second Passover" which was instituted for those who were impure and thus could not bring the Passover sacrifice at its proper time

#### **Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 115a**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטו עמוד א

אמר רבינא: אמר לי רב משרשיא בריה דרב נתן, הכי אמר הלל משמיה דגמרא: לא ניכרוך איניש מצה ומרור בהדי הדדי וניכול, משום דסבירא לן: מצה בזמן הזה דאורייתא, ומרור דרבנן, ואתי מרור דרבנן ומבטיל ליה למצה דאורייתא - ואפילו למאן דאמר מצות אין מבטלות זו את זו - הני מילי דאורייתא בדאורייתא, או דרבנן בדרבנן, אבל דאורייתא ודרבנן - אתי דרבנן ומבטיל ליה לדאורייתא.

*Ravina said: Rav Mesharshiya son of Rav Nattan told me, that Hillel (Note: not the Hillel, a later Rabbi Hillel) said thus in the name of tradition: One should not sandwich the matsah and the bitter herbs together and eat them, since we understand that matsah today is a biblical requirement, while bitter herbs is a rabbinic requirement, and the rabbinic precept of bitter herb will come and nullify the biblical requirement of matsah. And even according to the opinion that commandments do not cancel each other out, this applies only when both requirements are Biblical or both requirements are rabbinic, but [in the case of] a biblical requirement with a rabbinic requirement, the rabbinic requirement will come and nullify the biblical requirement.*

**Explanation:** Eating matsah at the first seder is considered today to be a biblical requirement. Eating bitter herbs, on the other hand is only a rabbinic requirement, since its requirement is mentioned in the Bible only in connection with the Passover offering, which we do not do due to the destruction of the Temple (see section above titled "The Nature of the Obligation"). Rabbi Hillel, we are told, taught that it is required to eat the matsah and bitter herbs separately because of their differing status.

מאן תנא דשמעת ליה מצות אין מבטלות זו את זו - הלל היא. דתניא: אמרו עליו על הלל שהיה כורכן בבת אחת ואוכלן, שנאמר +במדבר ט+ על מצות ומררים יאכלהו. אמר רבי יוחנן: חולקין עליו חביריו על הלל. דתניא: יכול יהא כורכן בבת אחת ואוכלן כדרך שהלל אוכלן - תלמוד לומר על מצות ומררים יאכלהו - אפילו זה בפני עצמו וזה בפני עצמו. מתקיף לה רב אשי: אי הכי, מאי אפילו? אלא אמר רב אשי: האי תנא הכי קתני: יכול לא יצא בהו ידי חובתו אלא אם כן כורכן בבת אחת ואוכלן, כדרך שהלל אוכלן - תלמוד לומר על מצות ומררים יאכלהו - אפילו זה בפני עצמו וזה בפני עצמו. השתא דלא איתמר הלכתא לא כהלל ולא כרבנן - מברך על אכילת מצה ואכיל, והדר מברך על אכילת מרור ואכיל, והדר אכיל מצה וחסא בהדי הדדי בלא ברכה, זכר למקדש כהלל.

*Which Tanna (i.e. Rabbi contemporary or prior to the Mishnah) taught that mitzvot do not nullify each other? It is Hillel. For it is taught that "they said about Hillel that he would sandwich them (Rashi: The Passover offering, the matsah, and the bitter herb) together and eat them, as it states (Num. 9:11) 'you shall eat it with matsah and bitter herbs.'" Rabbi Yochanan stated: Hillel's contemporaries disagree with Hillel. As it is taught: "One might think that one should sandwich them together and eat them as Hillel ate them, therefore it teaches: 'Eat it with matsah and bitter herbs.' - [meaning] even each on its own." Rav Ashi demurred (with Rabbi Yochanan's understanding): If so, what does the word "even" mean. Rather, Rav Ashi said: The tanna teaches thus: "One might think that one does not fulfill ones obligation unless one sandwiches them together, as Hillel ate them, therefore the verse states, 'Eat it with matsah and bitter herbs' [meaning] even this one alone and this one alone.*

**Explanation:** Rabbi Yochanan understands a previous teaching as indicating that according to the majority opinion the matsah and bitter herbs must be eaten separately, whereas Hillel believes they may/must be eaten together. However, Rav Ashi disagrees with this read of the text, and instead opines that the teaching indicates that the majority agreed that the matsah and bitter herbs could be eaten together (at least during the time that the Passover offering was given, so that the bitter herbs would be a biblical requirement), but disagreed with Hillel as to whether or not they had to be eaten together.

השתא דלא איתמר הלכתא לא כהלל ולא כרבנן - מברך על אכילת מצה ואכיל, והדר מברך על אכילת מרור ואכיל, והדר אכיל מצה וחסא בהדי הדדי בלא ברכה, זכר למקדש כהלל.

*Now, since it isn't stated that the law follows Hillel or that the law follows Hillel's contemporaries, one should make blessing "[who commanded us] regarding eating matsah" and eat [the matsah], and then bless "[who commanded us] regarding eating bitter herbs" and eat [the lettuce], and go back and eat Matsah and lettuce together without a blessing, in memory of the Temple, as Hillel did.*

**Note:** There seems to be a presumption on the part of this last statement that there is a difference of opinions as to whether one may, must, or may not eat matsah and bitter herbs together for the purpose of fulfilling both commandments. This is not immediately apparent from the passage above.

## THE MEAL MUST FINISH BY MIDNIGHT (OR MUST IT?)

**Exodus 12:8**

שמות פרק יב פסוק ח

וְאָכְלוּ אֶת הַבֶּשֶׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה צְלִי אֵשׁ וּמִצּוֹת עַל מְרִירִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ:

*And they shall eat the meat roasted on that night, with matsot and bitter herbs.*

**Note:** The term "that night" is understood by the Rabbis to indicate that the Passover offering is to be eaten only on that night, and not left over.

**B.T. Pesachim 120b (Mishnah 10:9)**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קכ עמוד ב (משנה י:ט)

הפסח אחר חצות מטמא את הידים

*The Passover [offering] after midnight impurifies the hands.*

**Babylonian Talmud 120b**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קכ עמוד ב

אמר רבא: אכל מצה בזמן הזה אחר חצות, לרבי אלעזר בן עזריה - לא יצא ידי חובתו. - פשיטא, דכיון דאיתקש לפסח - כפסח דמי! - מהו דתימא: הא אפקיה קרא מהיקי שא, קמשמע לן, דכי אהדריה קרא - למילתא קמייתא אהדריה.

*Rava said: One who eats matsah nowadays after midnight, according to Rabbi Elazar son of Azarya has not fulfilled his obligation. (note: above the Talmud demonstrates that the opinion that midnight is the stopping point is attribute to Rabbi Elazar) This is obvious!? Since it is compared to the Passover offering (presumably by both Exodus 12:8 and Numbers 9:11 "you shall eat it with matsah and bitter herbs"), it is like the Passover offering! What might you say? Since the Torah removed matsah from comparison (with the Passover offering - in that it was determined that eating matsah is obligatory even when the Passover offering isn't done - see above section "The Nature of the Obligation"). [Rava's statement] comes to teach [that dispute the fact that matsah is in some way disassociated with the Passover offering, it still remains like the Passover offering in that it may not be eaten after midnight].*

**Explanation:** (Note: this explanation is per my understanding of רש"י (*Rashi*)) Rava states that eating matsah after midnight does not fulfill the commandment of eating matsah. As Talmud does quite often, it complains that this statement is obvious. Since the Passover offering may not be eaten after midnight, and or verses (Exodus 12:8 and Numbers 9:11) speak of eating matsah with the Passover offering, it should be obvious that matsah too must be eaten by midnight. The Talmud then explains why one might not draw this conclusion. As we saw above (section on "The Nature of the Obligation"), the commandment of matsah is disassociated with the Passover offering, in that matsah is still a biblical requirement even without the Passover offering. One might have thought that this disassociation means that matsah may also be eaten after midnight, unlike the Passover offering. The Talmud states that Rava states a requirement to eat the matsah before midnight in order to indicate that even though the requirement to eat matsah is disassociated from the requirement of the Passover offering, the eating of matsah still retains the similar characteristic that this eating must be done by midnight.

**Note:**

- The term חצות, translated as "*midnight*" is more of a technical term. Please consult your Rabbi as to when this is.
- Though the issue is beyond the scope of this compilation, it is worth noting that the rule that one may not eat after midnight is understood to be the opinion of רבי אלעזר בן עזריה (*Rabbi*

*Elazar ben Azaria*), as opposed to the opinion of רבי עקיבא (*Rabbi Akiba*), who allowed eating the whole night. Though *Shulchan Aruch* (שלחן ערוך) accepts Rabbi Elazar's (see אורח חיים Orach Chayim 477:1 and *Bet Yosef* on Tur there) opinion, Maimonides accepts the opinion of Rabbi Akiba (see Mishneh Torah Laws of Chamets and Matsah 6:1 and *Magid Mishneh* thereon).

## WHAT DOES THE WORD AFIKOMAN MEAN?

Please note: This section is based on a class by Rabbi/Professor David Novak, based on the teachings of Rabbi Saul Lieberman (of blessed memory). Some discussion by Rabbi Lieberman can be found at (דף 655) 31:30 שורה י פרק י תוספתא כפשותא פרק י שורה 31:30 (דף 655). I have added some information here from Rabbi Lieberman's writings.

### B.T. Pesachim 119b (Mishnah 10:8)

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיט עמוד ב (משנה י:ח)  
אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן.

We do not add Afikoman after the Passover [offering]

There are several potential understandings of the etymology of the word Afikoman. The word comes from Greek. One might understand the word as *epi komos*, meaning desert. If this is the proper understanding, why do we call what we eat an "afikoman?" According to the Mishnah, we are particularly enjoined from eating an afikoman. Instead, the likely etymology is *epi komatsain*, which means to jump up. As we have discussed above (section titled "The Four Children"), jumping from one group to another group during the seder is prohibited. The Afikoman, as it were, is the antidote to this misdeed. This understanding is indicated in the response to the simple child in the Jerusalem Talmud:

טיפש מהו אומר מה זאת אף את למדו הילכות הפסח שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן שלא יהא עומד מחבורה זו ונכנס לחבורה אחרת

*The unintelligent [son] what does he say? "What is this." You should teach him the laws of Passover, that we don't add an Afikoman after the Passover [offering is eaten]. So that he won't get up from one group and enter into another group.*

For further discussion on this response to the simple child, please see "The Four Children" section above.

In the Babylonian Talmud, this understanding is also presented, although the definition of desert is also considered and supported:



### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119b

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיט עמוד ב

מאי אפיקומן? אמר רב: שלא יעקרו מחבורה לחבורה. ושמואל אמר: כגון אורדילאי לי וגוזלייא לאבא. ורב חנינא בר שילא ורבי יוחנן (אמר) +מסורת הש"ס: [אמרן] + כגון תמרים קליות ואגוזים. תניא כוותיה דרבי יוחנן: אין מפטירין אחר הפסח, כגון תמרים קליות ואגוזים.

*What is "afikoman?" Rav said: That he won't get up from one group to another. And Samuel said: For example mushrooms for me and pigeons for Abba (Rashi says this means Rav, but see Jerusalem Talmud below). Rav Chananya son of Shila and Rabbi Yochanan said: For example dates, parched ears and nuts. A teaching which is in accord with Rabbi Yochanan: "We do not add Afikoman after the Passover, for instance dates, parched ears and nuts." (Tosefta Pesachim 10:11).*

The Jerusalem Talmud further expresses a divergence of ideas on the meaning of the word Afikoman:

### Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 39d

### תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת פסחים פרק י דף לז טור ד ה"ו

רבי סימון בשם רבי אינייני בר רבי סיסיי מיני זמר רבי יוחנן אמר מיני מתיקה שמואל אמר כגון ערדילי וגוזליא דחנניא בר שילת

*Rabbi Simon [said] in the name of Rabi Inyanay son of Rabbi Sisay: Various types of fruits (see Jastrow Dictionary); Rabbi Yochanan said: Types of sweets. Samuel said: For instance mushrooms for me and pigeons for Chnanyah son of Shilat.*

In the end, it seems to me far from certain what the word Afikoman means. It could quite possibly be designed to have this dual meaning. What does seem clear is that speaking of the matsah we eat at the end of the meal as an "afikoman" is somewhat of a misnomer, as it is particularly the afikoman that we are not supposed to eat. This becomes more clear in the next piece.

## NO AFIKOMAN AFTER MATSAH

### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 119b

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיט עמוד ב

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: אין מפטירין אחר מצה אפיקומן. תנן: אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן, אחר הפסח - הוא דלא, אבל לאחר מצה - מפטירין! - לא מיבעיא קאמר; לא מיבעיא אחר מצה - דלא נפיש טעמייהו, אבל לאחר הפסח דנפיש טעמיה, ולא מצוי עבודה - לית לן בה, קמשמע לן.

*Rabbi Judah said in the name of Samuel: We don't add an Afikoman after Matsah. [But] it was taught - We do not add Afikoman after the Passover [offering]! [Implying] - after the Passover [offering] is that which is forbidden [to eat afikoman], but after matsah - you may eat! It says "it doesn't matter" - It doesn't matter [whether it is] after matsah, whose taste is not strong, but after the Passover [offering] whose taste is strong, it is not found to be wiped out - therefore it teaches us.*

### Rashi Pesachim 119b

רש"י מסכת פסחים דף קיט עמוד ב

אין מפטירין אחר מצה אפיקומן - שצריך לאכול מצה בגמר הסעודה זכר למצה הנאכלת עם הפסח, וזו היא מצה הבצועה שאנו אוכלין באחרונה לשם חובת מצה אותה שלאחר אכילה,

*We do not add after the matsah an Afikoman - That we must eat matsah at the end of the meal as a memory of the matsah which was eaten with the Passover [offering], and this is the matsah which we break that we eat last for the mitsvah of [eating] matsah after eating.*

**Explanation:** Rabbi Judah says in the name of Samuel that one may not eat after eating matsah. A challenge is brought from the fact that the Mishnah says that one may only not eat after eating the Passover offering. The mishnah says nothing about not eating after matsah. The Talmud defends Rabbi Judah's position by saying that the Mishnah demonstrates a more difficult proposition. It is clear that one shouldn't eat anything after matsah, since its taste would not remain. However the Mishnah says that one should not even eat after the meat, whose taste would not be so easily replaced by other foods.

**Note:** The ruling of Rabbi Judah in the name of Samuel is our current practice, in that we eat matsah as what we ironically call the "afikoman." See רמב"ם משנה תורה הלכות חמץ ומצה ח ט: ושלחן ערוך אורח חיים תעח: א: *Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Laws of Chamets and Matsah 8:9 and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 478:1.*

## הלל (HALLEL) AND ברכת המזון (BIRKAT HAMAZON)

### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 117b

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיז עמוד ב

מזגו לו כוס שלישי - מברך על מזונו. רביעי - גומר עליו את הלל, ואומר עליו ברכת השיר.

*They poured him a third cup, he blesses on his food. [They poured him a] fourth [cup], he finishes on it the Hallel. And he says on it the blessing of the song.*

### Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 118a

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיח עמוד א

מאי ברכת השיר? רב יהודה אמר: יהללך ה' א'הינו, ורבי יוחנן אמר: נשמת כל חי.

*What is the blessing of the song? Rabbi Judah says: "They shall praise you Lord our God." Rabbi Yochanan says: "The soul of all living."*

תנו רבנן: רביעי גומר עליו את ההלל, ואומר הלל הגדול, דברי רבי טרפון, ויש אומרים: +תהלים כג+ ה' רעי לא אחסר.

*The Rabbis taught: [They poured him a] fourth [cup], he finishes upon it the Hallel, and he says the great Hallel. These are the words of Rabbi Tarfon. Some say "The Lord is my Sheppard I shall not want" (i.e. psalm 23).*

מהיכן הלל הגדול? רבי יהודה אומר: +תהלים קלו+ הודו עד +תהלים קלז+ נהרות בבל, ורבי יוחנן אומר: משיר המעלות עד נהרות בבל, רב אחא בר יעקב אמר +תהלים קלה+ מכי יעקב בחר לו יי' עד נהרות בבל.

*From where does the Great Hallel proceed? "Praise" (i.e. Psalm 136) until "The rivers of Babylon" (i.e. Psalms 137). And Rabbi Yochanan says: From "A song of assents" (this could refer to anything between Psalm 120 to 134, but probably refers to psalm 134 - Soncino Talmud) until "The rivers of Babylon". Rabbi Acha son of Jacob says: from "Because God chose Jacob for Godself" (Psalms 134:4) through "the rivers of Babylon."*

ולמה נקרא שמו הלל הגדול? אמר רבי יוחנן: מפני שהקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ברומו של עולם, ומחלק מזונות לכל בריה.

*And why is it called "the great Hallel? Said Rabbi Yochanan: Because the Holy One Blessed is He sits in the heights of the world, and distributes food to every creation.*

**Note:** Per the opening of this piece, we do say *"They shall praise you Lord our God," as well as "the soul of all living."* We also say Psalm 118 ("הודו לי כי טוב" - *Praise G-d for G-d is good*) between those two.

### **Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 118a**

### **תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קיה עמוד א**

וכי מאחר דאיכא הלל הגדול, אנן מאי טעמא אמרינן האי? משום שיש בו חמשה דברים הללו: יציאת מצרים, וקריעת ים סוף, ומתן תורה, ותחיית המתים, וחבלו של משיח. יציאת מצרים - דכתיב +תהלים קיד+ בצאת ישראל ממצרים, וקריעת ים סוף - דכתיב +תהלים קיד+ הים ראה וינס, מתן תורה - דכתיב +תהלים קיד+ ההרים רקדו כאילים, תחיית המתים - דכתיב +תהלים קטז+ אתהלך לפני ה', חבלו של משיח - דכתיב +תהלים קטו+ לא לנו ה' לא לנו.

*And since there is Great Hallel, why do we say this one (i.e. the regular Hallel)? Because it has in it five things: The departure from Egypt, and the splitting of the Red Sea, and the giving of Torah, and the resuscitation of the dead, and the birth-pangs of Messiah. The departure of Egypt since it says "upon the exit of Israel from Egypt" (Psalms 114:1) and the splitting of the red sea as is written "The sea saw and drew back" (Psalms 114:3) and the giving of the Torah as is written "The mountains danced as rams" (114:4) and the resuscitation of the dead as is written "I shall walk before G-d" (Psalms 116:9, note that the verse continues "בארצות החיים" - in the land of the living) and the birth-pangs of Messiah as is written, "Not for us God, not for us."*