

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FATHER

Reb Leib ben Reb Tzvi ע"ה Rothman

Passed away on 12 Nissan, 5775

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Chag HaPesach, 5782
(Vol. 29)



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VAAD L'HAFOTZAS SICHOS
788 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213
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 Printed in the U.S.A.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOT

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

•
Volume VIII: *Vayikra*

•
In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

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והובא למנוחות בו ביום אחרי חצות

ת' נ' צ' ב' ה'

(מנוסח המצבה)

*

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אבוקסיס, ציפל, דרואין, ליבליך ולולין

שיחיו

PESACH

**“THIS IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION....
NEXT YEAR, MAY WE BE FREE MEN.”**

Hay Lachma Anya, “This is the bread of affliction” is the opening passage of the *Haggadah*.¹ We do not, however, recite this passage before *Kiddush* at the beginning of the *Seder*, but shortly afterwards, for it marks the beginning of the story of the exodus from Egypt.²

This is why a) This passage is recited directly after the heading *Maggid* (the recitation), and b) During the recitation of this passage, we lift up the *Seder* plate,³ or according to Lubavitch custom, we uncover the *matzos*, since the story must be told in the presence of the *matzos*.⁴

From this, it is clear that our intention in reciting this passage at the beginning of the *Seder* is not only to invite guests to our table. Indeed, were this the only purpose, the declaration should be made directly after coming home from

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1. Note the *Rambam*, who in his *Mishneh Torah*, in *Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah* 8:1-2 states that “The order of the performance of these *mitzvos* is... *Kiddush*...,” while in his text of the *Haggadah* which comes at the conclusion of those *halachos*, he begins with “This is the bread of affliction.”
 2. The name *Haggadah* is taken from the phrase (*Shmos* 13:14): “And you shall tell your son...” Alternatively, just as the *Jerusalem Talmud* interprets the phrase (*Devarim* 26:3): *Higaditi HaYom*, as “I gave praise today,” so too the name *Haggadah* is also an expression of praise and thanksgiving to G-d who took us out of Egypt. Rav Saadia *Gaon* also translates the term in this manner in Arabic (Rav David Avudraham).
 3. *Rosh*, the conclusion of tractate *Pesachim*; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 473:36.
 4. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *loc. cit.*, and law 20.

are presently standing ready to greet our righteous Redeemer [Moshiach]. This is particularly true now that we have reached the milestone of forty years⁸ concerning which the Torah says, "G-d gave you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁹ Additionally, we are now situated in the fifty first year [5751], which in Hebrew forms the acrostic (It shall be a year of) wonders which I will show him [נפלאות אראנני - Niflaos Avenu].

The Jewish people should, therefore, be encouraged and their spirits uplifted by declaring that G-d says daily, and literally, anew, that, "**I have indeed remembered you,**" and that your righteous Moshiach "stands behind the wall"¹⁰ and that "this one is coming."¹¹ Accordingly we should prepare ourselves to greet him by increasing our observance of Torah and Mitzvos, **in consonance with the ruling of the Rambam**¹² (whose anniversary of passing is the 20th of Teves, the night after this Sabbath), that through "one Mitzvah, one can favorably alter the balance for oneself and for the entire world, causing oneself and them salvation and deliverance."

(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Shemos, 19 Teves 5751)

8. [I.e., forty years since the passing of the Previous Rebbe, a milestone which enables us to fully realize the intention and depth of the teachings that were said forty years earlier. - Translator's note.]

9. *Tavo* 29:3 [Moses said this to the Jewish people who were about to enter into the Promised Land, explaining that they were now capable of realizing that which they were taught by G-d forty years earlier. Translator's note.]

10. *Shir HaShirim* 2:9.

11. *Ibid* 8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (ch. 2:8(b)).

12. *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

12

All of the signs mentioned by our sages indicate that we are currently situated **at the very end of the period of exile**. We have "passed all the deadlines."¹ We have also performed Teshuvah [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption]. Indeed, my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, declared (several decades ago) that we have already concluded all the service [necessary for Redemption], including the "polishing of the buttons,"² and we now stand ready ("All of you stand ready") to greet our righteous Moshiach.³

* * *

Despite the difficult and protracted final exile, which has lasted more than 1,900 years (in stark contrast to the duration of the Egyptian bondage which lasted 210 years), the nature of "the Children of **Israel**" has essentially **transcended exile**. Thus, every additional moment we remain in exile is a form "having **now come** into Egypt,"⁴ "as if they had that very day entered into Egypt."⁵

The Jewish people, therefore, stand with firm faith and conviction that G-d will immediately fulfill his promise that "I have indeed remembered you"⁶ by bringing the genuine and complete Redemption, especially when hearing from the Moses of our generation,⁷ my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that we have already concluded all matters of Divine service and

shul, or even while in *shul*, where it is possible for people to hear the invitation. Instead, this passage serves as the beginning of the story of the exodus.⁵ Therefore it would be inappropriate to recite it before the section of the *Haggadah* entitled *Maggid*.

A question arises: Why is the passage *Hay Lachma Anya* placed in the section of *Maggid*? How is it part of the recitation of the story of Pesach? Moreover, why is it placed at the very beginning of that section, indicating that it summarizes the story, when it doesn't appear to say anything about the exodus?⁶

Also, the content of the passage itself is problematic. It contains three bars which seem to have no connection to each other. The first bar states that the *matzos* on the table are "the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt." The second serves as an invitation to others to join in our Pesach celebration, and the third is a wish that although "this year we are here" and "slaves," "next year" we will be "in Jerusalem" and "free men."

SEQUENCE WITHIN THE PASSAGE

There are commentators who explain the connection between the first two bars of the passage as follows: The *Talmud*⁷ states that when a person hires Jewish workers, he must provide food while they work. Since all Jews are "descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov," they should be regarded as "the sons of kings,"⁸ or as "kings"⁹

1. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

2. Talk of Simchas Torah, 5689.

3. Cf. *Hayom Yom*, among others, 15 Teves.

4. *Shemos* 1:1.

5. *Shemos Rabbah*, beginning of our Parsha (8:14), *Tanchuma*, loc. cit. 3.

6. *Shemos* 3:16.

7. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7: "There is no generation in which there is none like Moses." See also *Zohar* 3:273a. *Tikkunei Zohar* 69 (112, beginning of side a. 114, beginning of side a). *Tanya* chapter 44. Ibid. *Iggeres HaKodesh*, elucidation of sec. 27, end.

5. For this reason, the Rebbeim would begin explaining the *Haggadah* at the *Seder*, an expression of the *mitzvah* of telling the story of the exodus, from the passage *Hay Lachma Anya* (*Sichos Leil Beis D'Chag HaPesach*, 5718).

6. The *Rambam*, by contrast, prefaces this passage with the words "With haste, we left Egypt," capsulizing the story of the exodus.

7. *Bava Metzia* 83a.

8. *Shabbos* 67a; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 27b.

themselves. Therefore even if an employer provides a feast fit for Shlomo at the height of his reign, he would not fulfill his responsibility. Accordingly, the employer's only option is to make an agreement with his employees at the outset that he is giving them ordinary fare.

Similar concepts apply with regard to inviting guests to the *Seder*. Since the invited guests are like the sons of kings, or kings themselves, the most sumptuous feast would not be sufficient for them. Therefore, before issuing his invitation, the host clarifies that what he is serving is "the bread of affliction."

But this explanation is insufficient, for it does not explain why the *matzah* is referred to as "the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt." Why the latter phrase?

An explanation is also offered for the connection between the invitation to the guests and the bar that follows: "This year... next year..." Our Sages state:¹⁰ "Tzedakah is great because it brings the Redemption near." Therefore we express our hope that the merit of inviting guests to the Pesach *seder* will hasten the Redemption, and then, "next year," we will celebrate the *seder* in *Eretz Yisrael* as free men.

This explanation, however, is also inadequate, for it does not account for the fact that the two elements found in the third bar are mentioned in separate sentences: "This year, we are here, next year may we be in the land of Israel. This year, we are slaves, next year may we be free men." According to the above explanation, both points could have been mentioned in the same sentence, thus: "This year we are here

9. *Berachos* 9b; the introduction to the *Tikkunei Zohar* (p. 1a); see also *Shabbos* 59b, which refers to "the belt of kings."

10. *Bava Basra* 10a.

king"¹¹ has acquired an exclusively **positive** connotation, one that is **visibly and manifestly good, even to eyes of flesh**. In the words of our sages:¹² The Holy One Blessed be He says to Israel, "My children have no fear. All that I have done¹³ I have done exclusively for you... the time of your Redemption has arrived."

The emphasis of this generation - particularly this year, the year designated as "It shall be a year of wonders I will show him" - should be placed on the concept of G-d's support of those who have fallen,¹⁴ to strengthen and encourage the Jewish people, emphasizing particularly the support and encouragement acquired through faith in the coming of Moshiach and the implicit trust that "behold he (our righteous Moshiach) is coming."¹⁵ This should be accompanied with enhanced preparation for his arrival by way of teshuvah [repentance, return] and observance of Torah and mitzvos. In the words of the pronouncement of my sainted father-in-law - the leader of our generation: "immediate Teshuvah, immediate Redemption."¹⁶ "Return, O, Israel, unto G-d your G-d; prepare yourselves and your family to greet our righteous Moshiach, who shall arrive soon, in the most literal sense."¹⁷

*(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vayechi
(and Asara b'Teves, may it be transformed into joy) 5751)*

11. *Yechezkal* 24:2.

12. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu* 499.

13. This includes the efforts of the Babylonian King, who is merely an ax in the hands of the one who chops with it. [i.e. He is G-d's instrument.]

14. [The phrase *סומך נופלים* - "supports the falling" - is similar to the expression mentioned before - *סמך מלך בבל* - the Babylonian King besieged," which the Rebbe interpreted in a positive vein to mean that "he supported." Translator's note.]

15. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on this verse (2:8(b)).

16. In his *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, end of p. 361 ff., 377 ff., 408 ff. and in other places.

17. *Hayom Yom* - 15 Teves.

were previously a perfectly wicked person, she is betrothed, for perhaps he had a thought of teshuvah."

Considering the above, it is with utmost certainty that our righteous Moshiach must arrive **here and now, immediately, [mamosh] in the most literal sense.**

Now, this exercise of finding merit⁷ in and of itself should suffice to bring about the Redemption. Moreover, in addition to the finding of merit, the imminence of Moshiach's arrival constitutes a **definitive ruling issued by many rabbis and halachic authorities.** Further, since Torah "is not in heaven,"⁸ this ruling issued by the earthly courts "obligates," so to speak, and affords a unique privilege to, the heavenly courts. **And so it will be confirmed!**

* * *

In our day and age, after G-d has vented His rage with the destruction of the Holy Temple, and after all of "our deeds and actions throughout the duration of exile,"⁹ and after all the decrees of oppression and persecution - may Hashem, indeed, shield us and protect us from them - the Jewish people have endured throughout the protracted and arduous final exile, particularly the Holocaust of the very last generation, the process of refinement and purification has, without any doubt, been achieved in full, "enough and even too much." Consequently, the [current¹⁰] "siege of the Babylonian

7. [i.e., that we have already passed all the deadlines as well as satisfying the condition of Teshuvah. Translator's note.]

8. *Netzavim*, 30:12. See *Bava Metzia* 59b.

9. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

10. [The Hebrew term *Samach*, which means "besieged," can also be rendered "supported." This talk was delivered on the fast day *Asara b'Teves* (the Tenth of the month of Teves), the anniversary of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king. The Rebbe here is alluding to the threats of the modern day Babylonian dictator, which are actually the events which serve as preludes to the Redemption. Translator's note.]

and slaves; next year may we be free men in the land of Israel."

AT G-D'S SEDER TABLE

The above difficulties can be resolved based on our Sages' interpretation of the verse:¹¹ "He tells *His words* to Yaakov, *His statutes and judgments* to Yisrael." Our Sages explain¹² that this implies that "what G-d Himself performs, He tells the Jews to perform," and what He commands the Jewish people to do, He Himself does.

This implies that on Pesach night, G-d also recites the passage "This is the bread of affliction," for when the Jews are in exile, G-d is also in exile, as it says:¹³ "In their affliction, He is also afflicted." And when the Jews will be redeemed, G-d will also be redeemed, and thus the prophet quotes G-d as proclaiming: "My salvation will come soon."¹⁴

11. *Tehillim* 147:19.

12. *Shmos Rabbah* 30:9, the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Rosh HaShanah* 1:3.

In particular, there are two phases in this pattern: a) first, an arousal from above that precedes the arousal from below, as intimated by the wording of the blessing, which praises G-d for "sanctifying us with *His commandments* and commanding us"; and b) an arousal from above that is motivated by the arousal from below, as our Sages (*Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, beginning ch. 18) comment: "Whenever someone reads Torah law, the Holy One, blessed be He, reads opposite him," and similarly, wearing *tzitzis* on this earthly plane arouses *tzitzis* in the spiritual realms, i.e., additional G-dly light.

Both these phases are hinted at in the wording used above. See also *Torah Or*, *Biur l'maamar Ki Imcha Mekor Chayim*.

13. *Yeshayahu* 63:9.

14. *Yeshayahu* 56:1

Our Sages (*Megillah* 29a) state: "The Divine Presence was exiled with them..., and will return with them." The verses cited are, however, more comprehensive, implying that not only did the Divine Presence accompany the Jews into exile, but it is in exile itself, and in need of "salvation," as it were.

This is also implied by *Hosha'ana* prayers recited on Sukkos (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 328): "As You delivered a nation and its G-d." See also *Il Shmuel* 7:23 which states: "You redeemed from Egypt a people and its G-d."

What is exile? The state in which an entity is constrained and its qualities hidden. Its existence remains intact, but it is denied expression.

These concepts apply with regard to G-d's "exile." Even in exile, created beings are brought into existence and maintained by a G-dly life-force. And yet this G-dly life-force is not perceived. It is constrained and hidden.

Why is G-d in exile, as it were? Because of the exile of the Jewish people.

This is the intent of the first bar of the passage *Hay Lachma Anya*. *Anya* literally means "poverty," and in an ultimate sense, poverty involves a lack of knowledge, as our Sages comment:¹⁵ "a poor man [is lacking] solely in knowledge." The term "our ancestors" refers to the supernal intellectual faculties. They are described as "ancestors" for they generate the supernal emotions.¹⁶ Thus the phrase "This is the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate" can be rendered: "Our lack of knowledge dissipated the supernal intellectual faculties,"¹⁷ causing a diminished awareness of G-dliness in this material realm.

This pattern was seen in the Egyptian exile (the archetype for all subsequent exiles; indeed, all subsequent exiles are called by the name Egypt).¹⁸ Pharaoh, king of Egypt, stated:¹⁹ "I do not know G-d," i.e., he did not want to know about G-dliness. And he was supported by his countrymen; all the people around him agreed with this approach.

15. *Nedarim* 41a.

16. See *Tanya*, ch. 3.

17. Note similar interpretation from the Previous Rebbe, *Sefer HaSichos* 5703, p. 66.

18. *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:5.

19. *Shmos* 5:2.

BESURAS HAGEULO The Announcement Of The Redemption

11

With respect to Gideon, we find that: "In his days¹ the Jewish people were in distress. The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought a person who would find merit in them. When He found Gideon to be meritorious, because he found merit in them, an angel immediately appeared to him, as it says: "And the angel of G-d appeared to him and said to him, 'Go with this power, with **the power of the merit you have found in my children.**" "Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, it is within your capacity to find a defense for Israel. **In your merit they shall be redeemed.**"²

...The merit which will hasten the Redemption is the following:

Even in the Talmudic era it has been said that "all the deadlines have passed."³ Certainly now that we have endured a lengthy and arduous exile, the duration of which has exceeded 1,900 years, **and he has still not arrived...** And in regard to Teshuvah ("It depends only on Teshuvah³) [repentance, return, a prerequisite for Redemption], they have already done Teshuvah. Indeed, there is no Jewish person who has not entertained a thought of Teshuvah, (not just once, but) several times in the course of his lifetime. This [thought of Teshuvah] can transform "instantaneously"⁴ a perfectly wicked person into a perfectly righteous individual, in accordance with the Talmudic ruling⁵ that one who would betroth a woman "stipulating that I am a (perfectly⁶) righteous individual, even if he

1. *Tanchuma*, *Shoftim* 4.

2. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Shoftim* 62.

3. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

4. *Zohar* I, 129, end side a.

5. *Kiddushin* 49b. Rambam, *Hilchos Ishus*, 8:5. *Tur*, *Shulchan Aruch*, *Even HoEzer*, 38:31.

6. Based on the version cited on *Or Zarua* 112.

comprehended by mortal intellect. For our transcendent bond with G-d must be drawn even into the realm of intellect, providing pleasure and satisfaction.

For this reason, one of the fundamental services associated with the Paschal sacrifice is eating,⁵⁸ i.e., internalizing the spiritual leap achieved through the Paschal sacrifice. Moreover, it must provide one with satisfaction, and its flavor should linger.

The eating of the Paschal sacrifice, which involves a spiritual service transcending comprehension, must bring pleasure and satisfaction. Similarly, in the present age, the *afikoman* which takes the place of the Paschal sacrifice is *matzah*, “the bread of faith,”³⁴ a transcendent potential. It must be eaten and thus internalized.

(Adapted from *Sichos 2nd Night of Pesach*, 5721)



58. *Mishnah, Pesachim 76b.*

The redemption of the Divine Presence comes about through the redemption of the Jewish people. This is indicated by the second bar: G-d invites the Jewish people: “Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat.” Despite the darkness of exile, G-d promises that whoever hungers for the knowledge of G-d²⁰ will be satisfied.

Moreover, G-d will not give only what the person lacks.²¹ As soon as their immediate needs are met, the Jews will reach a higher level of understanding, and will desire spiritual wealth. The satisfaction of this desire is alluded to in the statement: “Whoever is needy, come and partake of the *Pesach* offering.” The *Pesach* offering is to be eaten after one’s hunger has been sated²² This is the approach of the wealthy: to receive in a stately and impressive manner, not merely to meet one’s needs.

The third bar focuses on the goal and outcome of the *Pesach* feast: the wealth of knowledge which will accrue to the Jews. Although “this year we are here, next year we [will] be in *Eretz Yisrael*.”

(When we say “next year we [will] be in *Eretz Yisrael*,” we are not resigning ourselves to wait a year for the Redemption. Instead, the intent is that the Redemption should take place immediately, and so the next *Seder* will naturally be conducted in *Eretz Yisrael*.)

Eretz Yisrael has a figurative as well as a literal meaning. The word *eretz* (ארץ), meaning “land,” shares a connection with the word *ratzon* (רצון), meaning “will.” Thus our Sages say:²³ “Why was [*Eretz Yisrael*] called *eretz*? Because it desired to fulfill the will of its Creator?” *Yisrael* is an acronym for the

20. Cf. *Amos 8:11*.

21. Cf. *Devarim 15:8*; see *Kesubos 67b*.

22. *Pesachim 70a*; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav 477:1*.

23. *Bereishis Rabbah 5:8*.

Hebrew words meaning: “There are 600,000 letters in the Torah.”²⁴ Thus *Eretz Yisrael* refers to a desire for Torah.

This will be the outcome of the Jews’ participation in the *Seder* and their acquisition of the knowledge it brings. Moreover, this wealth of knowledge will lead to material wealth, for all material entities are echoes of their spiritual counterparts. As a result, the Jews will attain *Eretz Yisrael*, and their desire will be for the Torah.

Our Sages say:²⁵ “The daughters of Israel are becoming; it is poverty which makes them unattractive.” The genuine desire of every Jew is for good.²⁶ It is merely poverty — poverty in a material sense and a dearth of knowledge in a higher sense — that obscures this desire.²⁷ When poverty is removed, the Jews’ inherent beauty will be revealed, as it is written:²⁸ “You are entirely beautiful, my beloved; there is no blemish in you.”

“A blemish” refers to a lack in the observance of the 248 positive commandments which parallel the 248 limbs of the body²⁹ or in observance of the 365 negative commandments which parallel the body’s 365 sinews.³⁰

24. *Megaleh Amukos*, *ofen* 186; cited also in *Yalkut Reuveini*, the beginning of *Parshas Bereishis*; *Yalkut Chadash*, *erech Torah*, sec. 178, *et al.* Others have also cited the *Zohar Chodash* commenting on *Rus* 4:7: “This is the established practice in Israel.”

Although there are more than 600,000 Jews, this is the number of “root souls,” and every one of these roots subdivides. See *Tanya*, ch. 37.

25. *Nedarim* 66a.

26. See *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Gerushin*, the conclusion of ch. 2.

27. Note *Eruvin* 41b, which mentions “oppressive poverty” as one of the factors which causes a person to go against the will of His Creator. See the *Chiddushei Aggados Maharsha* to this passage.

28. *Shir HaShirim* 4:7. See the reference to this verse in *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 45c.

29. *Makkos* 23b; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 170b.

30. *Zohar*, *op. cit.*

even when one’s Divine service is motivated by the essence of the soul, which transcends all division. For G-d’s intent is that this essential level be expressed in a pattern of service that recognizes the distinctions between *eidus*, *chukim*, and *mishpatim*.

SO THAT THE TASTE WILL LINGER

And why may one not eat any dessert after the Paschal sacrifice?

We are told that the Paschal sacrifice must be eaten at the conclusion of the meal, in an important and pleasing manner.⁵⁷ Also, after eating the sacrifice, no other food should be eaten so that its taste lingers in our mouths.

This combines two seemingly contradictory factors. On one hand, one should not partake of the Paschal sacrifice to satisfy one’s hunger. Nevertheless, one must derive satisfaction from partaking of it.

The explanation is that the Paschal sacrifice is not eaten to fulfill a lack, but to provide one with an experience of wealth, an affluence that transcends what is required by one’s existence, and which is above one’s power. And from this, one should derive pleasure and satisfaction, i.e., one’s pleasure and satisfaction should come from an entity which transcends one’s existence entirely.

To explain: The connection between the essence of the soul and the essence of G-d which transcends the soul’s conscious powers must be drawn down within those powers as well, beginning with the power of intellect. For this reason, the *mitzvos* which one observes must include, not only *eidus* and *chukim*, but also *mishpatim* — *mitzvos* which can be

57. *Rashi*, *Pesachim* 70a.

exists at a level much lower than the realm of *Atzilus*, the wise son's level. Indeed, it is lower than *Asiyah*, the wicked son's level. The wicked son is Jewish, and even an utterly wicked Jew possesses a soul which rests upon him, at least in an encompassing manner,⁵² and his body stems from *kelipas nogah*. In contrast, the Egyptians stem from the three utterly impure *kelipos*.⁵³ More specifically, we are speaking about idol worship, a sin equivalent to the entire Torah.⁵⁴ Obviously, drawing down G-d's essence into a place "full of idols" is a leap which bypasses any orderly sequence.

One might think that since a leap is necessary, there is no need for any order at all. For that reason, the *Haggadah* mentions "the laws of Pesach," indicating that even the Paschal sacrifice which is associated with a leap that exceeds all ordered progression, has its laws, i.e., its pattern of progress. In this context we can apply our Sages' statement:⁵⁵ "Do not read *halichos*, 'paths,' but rather *halachos*, 'laws.' For laws reflect patterns of progress from above downward, and from below upward. And thus there are many laws regarding the Paschal sacrifice: that it be set aside on the tenth of Nissan,⁵⁶ that it must be slaughtered a certain way, and how it must be offered and eaten. For G-d desires that even those qualities which transcend limitation be expressed in an orderly manner.

This constitutes the answer to the wise son. He is taught that it is necessary for *eidus*, *chukim*, and *mishpatim* to exist

51. *Rashi*, *Shmos* 9:29; see *Shmos Rabbah* 12:7.

52. See *Tanya*, ch. 11.

53. [*Tanya*, ch. 6.]

54. *Kiddushin* 40a.

55. *Megillah* 28b, *Niddah* 73a. It is known that when our Sages state "Do not read... but..." their intent is not to nullify the simple meaning of the verse, but rather to expand upon it. (See the *maamar* entitled *Mi Ha'ir*, 5703, and the sources mentioned there.)

56. This refers to the Paschal sacrifice offered in Egypt.

Attaining *Eretz Yisrael* in this manner means that "next year, we [will] be free men." When every Jew's desire is focused on the Torah and its *mitzvos*, we will become free, redeemed from exile by *Mashiach* (for he will come in "a generation which is entirely worthy"³¹).

This will mark the beginning of the Redemption. As the *Rambam* writes:³²

A king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and... observes its *mitzvos*... [He will] build the [*Beis Ha*]Mikdash and gather in the dispersed remnant of Israel.

At that time, we will all proceed to *Eretz Yisrael*, led by *Mashiach*. May this take place soon.

FROM REDEMPTION PAST TO REDEMPTION PRESENT

Based on the above, we can appreciate why this passage is placed at the beginning of the narrative; it embraces the entire story of the exodus.

As mentioned previously, Egypt is the archetype for all subsequent exiles, and the exodus from Egypt is the archetype for all subsequent redemptions, including the ultimate Redemption. Indeed, the exodus and the ultimate Redemption display certain similarities, as indicated by the prophecy:³³ "As in the days of your exodus from Egypt, I will show [the people] wonders." And the purpose of telling the story of the exodus is to stir the faith of the Jewish people, and in particular their faith in the coming of *Mashiach*. (Therefore the *Haggadah* is recited in the presence of *matzah*,

31. *Sanhedrin* 98a.

32. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Melachim* 11:4. Note *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rashab [Vol. 1, p. 309ff.] (*Kovetz Michtavim*, Vol. 1, Epistle 9), which emphasizes the precision in the *Rambam's* description of the stages of the Redemption.

33. *Michah* 7:15.

“the bread of faith.”³⁴ This faith will bring about the coming of the actual redemption, following the paradigm of the exodus, when: “In the merit of [their] faith, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt.”³⁵

This is particularly true in light of our present situation, when the darkness of exile grows deeper from day to day, echoing the prophecies of the *Talmud*.³⁶ In such circumstances, it is possible for a person to despair. Therefore we announce at the beginning of the *Haggadah* that despite the darkness of the exile, G-d invites every Jew, including the hungry and needy, to place requests before Him, and promises the supplicants that they will both “eat” (i.e. satisfy their needs) and “celebrate the Pesach” (be granted a wealth of knowledge). This will lead to the time when we will all come to *Eretz Yisrael* as free men. May this take place soon.

(Adapted from *Sichos* 2nd Night of *Pesach*, 5720)

**THE WISE [SON]: WHAT DOES HE SAY?...
YOU SHOULD REPLY TO HIM, [TEACHING HIM]
THE LAWS OF PESACH: ONE MAY NOT EAT
ANY DESSERT AFTER THE PASCHAL SACRIFICE.**

The question asked by the wise son, and the answer given him have been discussed by commentaries on the *Haggadah*. Among the questions asked are: Why of all the laws of Pesach does the *Haggadah* mention: “One may not eat any dessert after the Paschal sacrifice”? The wise son wants to know all the laws relevant to Pesach — “the testimonies, statutes, and laws.” It seems fitting that the answer should involve many laws of the *Seder*, not only one, and the last law at that.

34. *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 183b; see also *Zohar*, Vol. II, 41a; *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra* 13d, and the *maamar* entitled *Kimei Tzeisecho*, 5708, sec. 12.

35. *Mechilta*, *Shmos* 14:31.

36. See *Sotah* 48a.

(On a deeper level, even the word *mah*, “What is” can be understood to be part of the wise son’s question. *Mah* is identified with the all-encompassing *bittul* which characterizes *Atzilus*. And yet *Atzilus* seeks to rise above its own level, and on the planes above *Atzilus* even this level of self-nullification is inappropriate. For self-nullification implies the existence of a self which must be nullified, and above *Atzilus* — the level to which the wise son aspires — there is no conception of individual existence. Therefore even the level of *mah* is part of the wise son’s question, for he wishes to rise above that as well.)

WHERE LIMITATION AND TRANSCENDENCE MEET

The wise son’s striving is satisfied by the reply: “One may not eat any dessert after the Paschal sacrifice.” Pesach, the Hebrew term for the Paschal sacrifice, means “leap,”⁴⁷ jumping from one level to another rather than proceeding in an orderly sequence.

This pattern was reflected in the revelation of G-dliness at the time of the exodus: “the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed to them”⁴⁸ “in His glory, by Himself.”⁴⁹ This is a level above all four spiritual realms.

(These four realms are alluded to in the expressions:⁵⁰ “I and not an angel,... I and not a *saraph*,... I and not an agent,... I and no other.”)

Moreover, this revelation was expressed in Egypt, “the nakedness of the land”⁵⁰ — a land “full of idols.”⁵¹ Egypt

47. *Rashi*, *Shmos* 12:13, 23.

48. The text of the *Haggadah*.

49. “In His glory” refers to the level of *Malchus d’Ein Sof*, and “by Himself” to *Atzmus d’Ein Sof* as they exist before the *tzimtzum* (the writings of the Rebbe Rashab, quoted in *Haggadah im Likkutei Minhagim VeTaanim*, p. 25).

50. *Bereishis* 42:9, *Koheles Rabbah* 1:4.

no permission to question [their observance].” This implies that the person addressed experiences a certain amount of self-concern. Although he is forsworn not to question, and to persevere with *kabbalas ol*, the very fact that he must be given such a directive indicates that his identity has not been entirely sublimated.

When, by contrast, a person is characterized by an all-encompassing sense of *bittul*, and nothing besides his Master concerns him, he need not be given such a warning. Just as it is unnecessary to warn a commander not to question his command, so too, such a person will not question. His approach is above that of *chukim*; *kabbalas ol* is beneath him. For *kabbalas ol* implies that one is subjugating one’s nature out of a higher commitment. In this instance, the person’s commitment *reflects* his nature, for he is totally given over to his Master.

On this basis, we can understand the passage beginning: “The wise [son]: What does he say...” The soul of every Jew is essentially pure, on the level of *Atzilus*.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it has descended through the spiritual realms of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* until it has become encloded in a physical body.

It is the level of the soul which is “pure” [its attribute of *chochmah*,] that asks: “What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws...?”

And the question continues “which G-d our L-rd commanded you,” i.e., the question is directed towards the created beings of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, which are characterized by division and diversity. At its source, the soul appreciates the observance of the *mitzvos* on a higher plane; they are all expressions of complete *bittul*.

46. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 28c, *Shir HaShirim* 8c.

Also, the wise son’s question: “What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws?” is problematic. Since he is “the wise son,” he should know the laws. So what’s the intent of his question?

The above comments must be considered in light of the principle that the exposition of the *Haggadah* follows a pattern of question and answer.³⁷ Thus when a man does not have any children, his wife must ask him the four questions, and if he is unmarried, he must ask the questions himself.³⁸

In this light, we can understand the questions asked by the wise son. He knows the answers and yet he must ask, because that is the pattern of the *Seder*.

The Torah has assigned the questions and answers to four categories of sons, and it is apparent that the highest is the wise son. Thus his question “What are the statutes...?” must represent the most elevated form of inquiry.

This is particularly true in light of the interpretation of the *AriZal*³⁹ that the four sons parallel the realms of *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*.⁴⁰ The wise son thus parallels the realm of *Atzilus*, and his question must be the most elevated possible. This surely reinforces the queries mentioned above, and indeed raises others: Where is the wisdom and the depth in the wise son’s words? Why couldn’t the same question have been asked by someone with far less Torah knowledge?

37. See *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Mitzvah* 21, the commentary of the *Minchas Chinuch*, and *Haggadas Shevach Pesach*. See also the Responsa of the *Rosh*, *Responsum* 24, sec. 2, and the *maamar* entitled *Matzah Zu*, 5704.

38. *Shulchan Aruch Harav*. 473:40.

39. *Pri Eitz Chayim*, *Shaar Chag HaMatzos*, ch. 7; *Siddur HaArizal*.

40. More particularly, the order is the wise son (*Atzilus*) the wicked son (*Asiyah*), the simple son (*Beriah*), and the son who does not how to ask (*Yetzirah*). See the discussion of this subject in the *sichah* for *Chag HaPesach*, *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. I.

And how does the answer — “One may not eat any dessert...” — embody the depth of understanding necessary to satisfy the wise son? Indeed, this answer is explicitly mentioned in the *mishnah*⁴¹ — and it is stated that “at ten, one begins study of the *Mishnah*.”⁴² So anyone who has studied the *Mishnah* knows this law.

A COMMITMENT THAT TRANSCENDS ALL DISTINCTIONS

As mentioned previously, the wise son parallels the realm of *Atzilus*, which is characterized by an all-encompassing sense of *bittul*, utter selflessness. This is the influence of *Chochmah*, *koach mah*, which is revealed in the realm of *Atzilus*. Thus a person who is characterized by *bittul* is called a *chacham*, “wise.”

When a person is concerned with himself, there is a difference between his approach to the various *mitzvos*. When he understands the reasons behind a *mitzvah*, he will observe it with more satisfaction than those which must be observed simply because of *kabbalas ol*, the acceptance of G-d’s yoke. Such a person can appreciate the division of *mitzvos* into three categories:

a) *chukim*, “statutes which I have ordained, decrees which I have issued,”⁴³ which we keep even though we do not understand the motivation;

41. *Pesachim* 119b. Note the comment of *Sanhedrin* 6b: “When one errs regarding an explicit *mishnah*, the ruling is nullified,” for a law explicitly stated in the *Mishnah* is expected to be known by all.

42. *Avos*, the conclusion of ch. 5. See also the discussion of this matter in *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:1,6.

43. *Bamidbar Rabbah*, *Chukas*, 19:8; *Rambam*, *Mishnah Torah*, the conclusion of *Hilchos Mikvaos*. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, where this subject is discussed.

b) *eidus*, *mitzvos* which possess a rationale that we can appreciate, although we would not have instituted these *mitzvos* on our own initiative; and

c) *mishpatim*, *mitzvos* which our understanding mandates, as our Sages said:⁴⁴ “If — Heaven forbid — the Torah had not been given, we would have learned modesty from a cat, and [the prohibition against] theft from an ant.”

But when a person’s approach is characterized by the all-encompassing *bittul* which stems from *Chochmah* — the level of *Atzilus* — the distinctions between the *mitzvos* make no difference to him. He fulfills all of them simply because G-d commanded him to do so. Moreover, he derives satisfaction from the observance of all the *mitzvos*, even from those which he does not understand. Indeed, it is those *mitzvos* which offer him the most complete satisfaction, for he knows that this is G-d’s will, as the well-known adage goes:⁴⁵ “Even if we were commanded to hew wood...” For were we to have been commanded to do so, we would experience the same pleasure chopping wood as in fulfilling a *mitzvah* like *tefillin*.

This is the core of the wise son’s question: “What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws...?” Why must the *mitzvos* be divided into categories? The utter *bittul* of *chochmah* does not appreciate such distinctions.

Moreover, the wise son can be interpreted as asking not only why the *eidus* and *mishpatim* are different from *chukim*, but questioning the *chukim* themselves. For the all-encompassing *bittul* of *chochmah* goes beyond even the scope of *chukim*.

With regard to the *chukim*, it is said:⁴³ “They are statutes which I have ordained, decrees which I have issued; you have

44. *Eruvin* 100b. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Yisro* in this series.

45. *Likkutei Torah*, *Bamidbar* 40a.