

Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



376

HAGGADAH SHEL
PESACH

תשפ"א

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Jew Precedes the Question With an Answer

"הא לחמא עניא ד' אכלו אבהתנא בארעא למצרים"

In just moments, the young child will stand up and ask: "Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat *chametz* and *matzah* and tonight we eat only *matzah*." Why already now are we preceding the question with the answer, by saying we are eating *matzah* because it is *lechem oni* that our forbears ate in Egypt?

Harav Yosef Chaim Moskowitz of Shotz-Williamsburg, explained: Indeed, this is exactly the right order. A Jew does not ask a question on the subject of accepting the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos* before he knows the answer to it. We find a similar format in the *tefillah* of *Ein K'Elokeinu*, as first we say "Ein K'Elokeinu!", and only after this knowledge is firmly entrenched in our hearts do we ask: "Mi K'Elokeinu?"

On this night as well, before we begin with the questions of *Mah Nishtanah*, it behooves us to declare first "*Ha lachma anya*", and thus to announce that we are accepting upon ourselves the *mitzvos* of the Torah without any questions, and we are eating *matzah* on this night, as we were commanded, in memory of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Only after we establish this recognition in our hearts can we then discuss this subject at length.

Haggadah Shel Pesach,
Hiskadesh Hachag, p. 82

Allusions to Amen in Shir Hashirim

There is a widespread custom among *chassidim* to read *Megillas Shir Hashirim* on Pesach night after the Seder. (*Shela*"h *Pesachim* 407, and others.) Following are a number of beautiful allusions from the *pesukim* of *Shir Hashirim*, about the great virtue of answering amen.

Birchos Hashachar Bring One Closer to Hashem.

"משכני אחריו נרוצה הביאני המלך חדריו" (שה"ש ד)

"משכני אחריו" is an acronym for "amen" to allude that answering amen draws a person closer to Hashem and to run after Him, and to the extent that "the King brought me to His chambers" – to serve Hashem from deep in the chambers of his heart. That is what *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 53b): "the one who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*," because one who answers rises to a higher level than the *mevarech*.

Divrei Torah [Minchas Elazar of Munkatch], Ninth Edition 18

We can add that the fact that the second letters of the words "משכני אחריו נרוצה" comprise שחר, alludes to the special virtue of answering amen at the beginning of the day after *Birchos Hashachar*, as the sages did many years ago.

See *Einei Ha'Eidah*, *Shir Hashirim* 1:4

Beshuvcha Letzion Berachamim. Amen.

"אתי מלבנון כלה אתי מלבנון תבואי תשורי מראש אמנה מראש שניר וחרמון ממענות אריות מהררי נמרים" (שה"ש ד ח)

The end of the *passuk* relates to the Geulah, with the words אריות מהררי נמרים – which is an acronym for "amen." This teaches us that the Shechinah will return to dwell among Am Yisrael speedily in our day in the merit of answering amen in *batei knesses* and *batei medrash*.

Nachal Eshkol (Chida) *Shir Hashirim* 4:8

We can further explain on this *passuk* that it is not for naught that amen is alluded to in the words "*mimonos arayos me'iharerei nemerim*" because there are those who are embarrassed to make the *brachah* aloud or to answer amen out loud. From this *passuk* we can learn that a person should be strong like a lion and courageous like a leopard to answer amen, and to give another one the merit of answering amen.

Chairman of Bnei Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein

The Shechinah Rests on "Kol Ditzrich"

"השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא ד' ישראל, השתא עבדי לשנה הבאה בני חורין"

Chazal say (*Shabbos* 12b) that "when one asks for his needs in Aramaic, the Ministering Angels are not needed for him [to bring his *tefillah* before Hashem] because the Ministering Angels do not know Aramaic." Why, if so, is the first request in the *Haggadah* said in Aramaic?

Harav Yissachar Dov of Belz explained:

Chazal say (*ibid*) that in a place where the Shechinah dwells, like "above the head of a sick person" a person can daven in Aramaic as well, because when the Shechinah is in a place, the Shechinah does not need the angels to bring that person's *tefillah* to Him. Therefore, here, as well, after we invite the guests to join us at our table, declaring "*kol ditzrich yesei veyifsach*", we can daven in Aramaic, because from now the Shechinah is dwelling in our home. As *Chazal* say (*Vayikra Rabbah* 34 9): "This poor man stands at your door, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu stands at his side, as it says (*Tehillim* 109:31): 'Ki ya'amod l'yemin evyon, because He stands at the right of the poor man.'"

Haggadah Shel Pesach, Sdei Tzofim p. 43

"Bais HaLevi Barchu es Hashem"

Seder night is the *yahrtzeit* of the *posek hador*, the Shevet Halevi, zy"u, who closely guided Bnei Emunim's activities until his final days.

This is an excerpt from one of his speeches at a Bnei Emunim conference that took place on 13 Elul, 5770: There was an ancient *minhag Yisrael* that they would say all the *Birchos Hashachar betzibbur*, including the *brachos* before "*Hanosein Lasechvi Binah*"... The entire congregation would make the *brachos*, as one would recite the *brachah* while his friend answered amen, and then they would switch, this one made the *brachah* and the other one answered amen. This *minhag* was forgotten in recent times, and our *chashuve* friend, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, merited to revive this custom of *zikui harabbim* with his efforts to strengthen the answering of amen, and his desire to reestablish this ancient *minhag*, in the essence of (*Shabbos* 104a): "they were forgotten and reestablished."

"Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa - an ancient minhag Yisrael."



The Piyut of Chad Gadya

The Source of Chad Gadya

At the conclusion of the Seder, after a long night of praise and gratitude, Am Yisrael has a custom of singing various ancient *piyutim*. Saying them in a special tune, each one in keeping with the customs of his family, evoke yearning and poignancy in every heart.

Among these lofty *piyutim* is *Chad Gadya*. This ancient song, some say, was found on a note that was hidden in the *bais medrash* of the giants of Ashkenaz in the city of Worms (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Marbeh Lesaper*). It is written like a riddle that includes many significant esoteric messages, which can be studied to infinite depth. The Rashbatz explains that this *piyut* was intentionally written in a concealed way in order to cause people to delve into it, and while doing so, they will engage even further in the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (*Haggadah Shel Pesach* 238, *Peirushim*, p. 63). This *piyut* was composed in Aramaic, and thus, we conclude the *Haggadah Shel Pesach* as it began – with *Ha Lachma Anya*, which is also in Aramaic (*Haggadah shel Pesach Vayaged Avraham* p. 163).

As noted, *Chad Gadya* has a very ancient source, although there is no clear *mesorah* as to who composed it and from when its recital at the Seder began. The first *Haggadah* in which it is printed is the *Haggadah Shel Pesach* of the Prague print in the year 5350.

Regarding this, we can cite the words of the Chida in his sharp response to someone who questioned the originality of the *piyut* (*Shu"t Chaim Sha'al*, Vol. I, 28):

"One who mocks something practiced by tens of thousands of Am Yisrael in the cities of Poland and Ashkenaz, and even earlier in Am Yisrael, *gedolei olam* and holy personalities, each generation and its sages, and to this day ...there are many *roshei yeshivah* and *gaonim* of the time...and they all said and say this *piyut*, and then one *rasha* comes along and mocks the tens of thousands of Am Yisrael and their *gedolim*...his blow should be severe and he is deserving of excommunication...And so that you should know, my dear friend, I will say...that there are several commentaries on this *piyut*, some of which are printed and others in manuscript form. And I have heard from speakers of truth that a wondrous *gaon* in his generation wrote more than ten commentaries on this *piyut*... And the one who attacks the greatness of the *piyutim* of Ashkenaz established on the true wisdom is already known, when he spoke against the holy Arizal. And they wrote in the name of Harav A. of Worms, author of the *Rokeach*, zt"l, that all the *piyutim* and their details have been passed down from person to person..."

The Essence of the Piyut and Its Connection to Seder Night

There are hundreds of commentaries on this *piyut*, said and written by the leading commentators of the *Haggadah*. Each one expounds at length on its connection to Seder night, and explains what each line alludes to – who is the goat and who is the cat, who is the dog and what is the stick, and so forth, until the passage about HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

In this short segment, we will bring the main meanings of the *piyut* and its connection to Seder night, according to a number of the commentaries:

Harav Yehonasan Eibeshitz wrote a special compilation on this *piyut* entitled *Ma'amar Yehonasan*, in which he explains that the *piyut* alludes to the exiles that Am Yisrael has endured. Bnei Yisrael are called a '*gedi*', a goat, and their first exile was in Mitzrayim, under Pharaoh, who is referred to as '*shunra*' – as Chazal say (*Horiyos* 13a): "*Chatul eino*

makir es Kono, a cat does not recognize his Creator." Likewise, Pharaoh said, (*Shemos* 5:2): "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" The *piyut* then goes on to refer to the exiles and tribulations that those in Am Yisrael endure until the final Redemption, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu will slaughter the angel of death.

Harav Tevele Bondi of Frankfurt explained that this commentary is like a negotiation taking place between Am Yisrael and Mitzrayim. The people of Egypt considered the goat to be their deity, and Am Yisrael claims in contrast that according to their way of thinking, they should have served the cat, because he is more powerful than the goat, and can eat it. Ultimately, Egypt agrees, but then Am Yisrael counters that if so, they should be serving the dog, which eats the cat. And so forth, through the *piyut* that describes the argument, until the inevitable conclusion that no living creature should be served, only HaKadosh Baruch Hu alone. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach*, Rav Tevele Bondi)

The Chasam Sofer explains that this *piyut* is referring to the *Korban Pesach* and the *Korban Chagigah* of the 14th of Nissan, which is brought with it, so that it should be eaten to satiation (*Pesachim* 69b). Therefore, there is repetitive language in the *piyut*: "*Chad gadya, chad gadya*." Later, the poet refers to the laws of the *korban*: *chutra* and *nura* are parables for the wood and the fire of the *Mizbeach*. The *piyut* continues until its conclusion with the hope that *l'Asid Lavo*, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will slaughter the Satan, whose *kitrug* is preventing the Geulah, and then we will merit that the Bais Hamikdash will be built and we will be able to partake of the *zevachim* and of the *pesachim*, may it be speedily in our day, amen. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach*, Chasam Sofer)

Who Acted Improperly?

A central question that many of the commentaries grapple with, and through which they reached an understanding in the meaning of the *piyut*, is the question of who is guilty:

If we look at the story of *Chad Gadya*, we discover that the dog did the right thing when it bit the cat and avenged the goat, and if so, the stick was not correct in hitting the dog, and therefore, the fire was right for burning it. The water was not acting properly by putting out the fire, but the ox did act properly by drinking the water. The *shochet* should not have slaughtered the ox, and the angel of death was right for taking his soul. Why then, did HaKadosh Baruch Hu slay the angel of death?

In order to reconcile all this, we have to first ask another question: Why were the Egyptians punished for enslaving Am Yisrael? By doing so, did they not fulfill the *gezeirah* of Hashem (*Bereishis* 15:13): "*V'avadam v'inu osam*"?

The answer to this is included in the answer to the reason that the participants in *Chad Gadya* were punished: Even though it was justified to punish the cat for eating the goat, who asked the dog to get involved a fight that had nothing to do with him, and to eat the cat? Certainly, he did so only because of his hatred for the cat. Therefore, his punishment was justified. Similarly, we can answer the same question throughout the *piyut* until the end. And that's how we also explain the reason why the Egyptians were punished: The decree of '*va'avadam v'inu osam*' did not determine which nation would carry out that decree, and the Egyptians who chose to do it did so because of their hatred of Am Yisrael. So we find that they were justifiably punished for doing so. (*Orach Chaim* [Ben Ish Chai] on *Haggadah Shel Pesach*)

A Mother's Wish for a Brachah Fulfilled

The *gaon* of Brisk, Harav Moshe Yehoshua Leib Diskin, was revered among the Yidden of Yerushalayim more than one hundred years ago. His every move was Torah to them, and from his measured words, they were able to extrapolate myriad *halachos*.

Above all, they sought out his *brachos*. The Maharil's life was comprised solely of Torah and *avodas Hashem*, and he seldom accepted people for *brachos*. When someone did merit to receive a *brachah* from him, everyone knew that this was a most fortunate person, as the *Gemara* says "a *tzaddik* decrees and HaKadosh Baruch Hu fulfills," which was fulfilled with the Maharil.

Harav Dovid Baharan was therefore not surprised when his righteous wife, the daughter of Harav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, author of *Lev Ha'ivri*, began to urge him to take their young, precocious son, Zalmen'ke, to his *rebbe* the Maharil. The boy had just turned nine, and she wanted to receive a *brachah* from the *tzaddik* that he should merit *yiras Shamayim*. But Rav Dovid did not even consider complying with her request: "I cannot do this," he said. "Even *gedolim* avoid entering the Rav's home, not to mention a young *avreich* such as myself."

But she was not willing to accept Rav Dovid's explanations. On the contrary, the firmer his refusal became, the more she pleaded with her husband to take the child to the Rav's house for a *brachah*. But Rav Dovid, who was in deepest awe of his *rebbe*, could not answer her pleas.

Pesach arrived. Despite the many things to do in order to prepare for the Yom Tov, Reb Dovid's rebbetzin did not desist from pleading tearfully with her husband to accede to her request to take their son to the Rav for a *brachah*. But Reb Dovid was truly unable to do so, and he had to turn her down.

When the devoted mother saw that her tears and pleas were not being effective, she decided to employ a clever tactic: she spoke to young Zalmen'ke, and advised him to steal his father's *afikoman* on the night of the Seder, and not to give it back until his father promised to take him to the Rav of Brisk for a *brachah*.

Zalmen'ke complied with his mother's instructions. While his father was deeply engrossed in the mitzvah of recounting the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, Zalmen'ke stealthily took the *afikoman*, in keeping with the custom. When it came time to eat the *afikoman*, Rav Dovid realized that it had been taken. He didn't think for a moment that his son would demand such a steep price for its return. Reb Dovid tried to distract his son with various and sundry promises, but the boy obeyed his mother and insisted.

It was nearing *chatzos*, the final time to eat the *afikoman*, and having no choice, Reb Dovid capitulated to the boy's demand. Before giving his approval, he apologized that he could not promise to bring him to the Rav, but he promised to try his absolute best.

On the first day of Chol Hamoed, after *Mussaf*, the boy approached his father and reminded him that today was the day to make good on his promise. Reb Dovid agreed, and the boy was

so excited he did not know what to do. When they arrived home, the boy began to dance excitedly, and the home became filled with joy.

At the right time, Reb Dovid grasped his son's hand and they walked out of the house. The boy's mother remained at the door, her lips murmuring in *tefillah* that this should be a merciful moment, and that the *brachah* should indeed be obtained without issue.

The fearful father and overexcited son walked down the street leading to the Rav's house; when the house came into view, the boy's face shone, while the father's legs began to tremble. When they arrived at the door to the Rav's room, the father peeked through a crack in the door. He saw the Rav of Brisk, wearing his Yom Tov finery, deeply immersed in his holy thoughts and emitting a glow of purity. Seated at the table were his leading disciples, Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Harav Hershel Michel Shapiro, and other *gedolim* of Yerushalayim. They all sat with awe, their eyes transfixed on their *rebbe*, who was enveloped in lofty thoughts whose comprehension was beyond them.

When Rav Dovid saw this scene, he recoiled. He could not open the door and disturb at this holy time. He tried again, and again, he stepped back; he finally resolved to turn back without the *brachah*. He took the boy and turned to leave, but the child, who could not stand the disappointment, burst into bitter tears.

Upon hearing the cry, the Rebbetzin emerged from her room. She tried to soothe the crying boy with Pesach treats from her kitchen, but he did not want to be calmed. The Rebbetzin tried to understand the reason for his crying, but the boy could not answer.

Finally, she turned to his father and asked why the boy was crying. Reb Dovid replied that he wanted a *brachah* from the Rav. "Nu, nu," the Rebbetzin replied, "if he has spilled so many tears over this, he is surely worthy of a *brachah*. I will take him to the Rav."

A moment later, the holy hands of the Maharil Diskin were resting on the excited child's head. The *gadol* warmly blessed him, "*Yehi ratzon* that you should be a G-d fearing, faithful Yid." The boy, as well as all the Rabbanim in the room, fervently answered amen; Rav Dovid's eyes filled with tears.

Rav Dovid's rebbetzin sat waiting at the window for Zalmen'ke and his father. Finally, she saw them on the corner of the street, and when she noticed their shining faces, she realized immediately that her wish had been realized. She gave thanks and praise to Hashem for accepting her *tefillah* and fulfilling her wish.

Needless to say, the Maharil's *brachah* was fulfilled, and the boy grew up to become an erudite Torah scholar, with *yiras Shamayim* and *prishus*, and in time, he became known as Harav Zalman, the son of Rav Dovid, Baharan, one of the greatest *talmidei chachamim* of Yerushalayim shel Ma'alah.

Haggadah Shel Pesach, Mishulchanam shel Gedolei Yerushalayim, p. 153