
מגיד

Some recite the following declaration of intent before Maggid:

הַנְּיָי מוֹכֵן וּמְזוּמֵן לְקַיֵּם הַמִּצְוָה לְסַפֵּר בִּיְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קִדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׂכִינְתֵיהּ, עַל יְדֵי הַהוּא טְמִיר וְנֶעְלָם, בְּשֵׁם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וַיְהִי גַעַם אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עֲלֵינוּ, וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עֲלֵינוּ, וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָהוּ:

The broken matzah is lifted for all to see as the head of the household begins with the following brief explanation of the proceedings.

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֹתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכַפִּין יִיתִי וַיִּכּוֹל, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וַיִּפְסַח. הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְׁתָּא עַבְדִּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוּרִין.

four. To earn the distinction of the holy *shevet* that bears the responsibility of Hashem's Torah and *avodah*, we must first break away from the materialistic ways of the rest of the world. When we break the middle matzah, the Levi, in half, we show that with hard work and strength we, too, can reach this high level of holiness.

מגיד / Maggid

□ **הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיא – This is the poor bread**

As an opening statement to *Maggid*, we recite the words "*Ha lachma anya*," which seem to express two separate points. First, we point out that the matzah before us resembles the matzah that our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim. Then, we extend an invitation, "All who would like to join in the Seder ritual are free to come and participate!"

What is the connection between these two statements and why do we end off by saying, "*Now, we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel*"?

The **Tur** cites a teaching of his brother, Harav Yehudah, that each one of the three festivals corresponds to each one of our three *Avos*.

Being the first holiday in the Jewish calendar, Pesach corresponds to our first forefather, Avraham Avinu. Avraham personified the *middah* of *chesed*, and it was through *chesed* that the Jews were ultimately redeemed.

MAGGID

Some recite the following declaration of intent before Maggid:

Behold, I am prepared and ready to fulfill the mitzvah of telling of the Exodus from Egypt. For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed is He, and His Presence, through Him Who is hidden and inscrutable — [I pray] in the name of all Israel. May the pleasantness of the Lord, our God, be upon us, and may He establish our handiwork for us; our handiwork may He establish.

The broken matzah is lifted for all to see as the head of the household begins with the following brief explanation of the proceedings.

This is the poor bread that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat! Whoever is needy — let him come and celebrate Passover! Now, we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel! Now, we are slaves; next year may we be free men!

Indeed, in **Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu**, *Perek 23*, it is written that when the Jews were suffering in *Mitzrayim*, they struck a deal with one another. Each person promised to do *chesed* for the other. Despite their hardship and pain, they were determined to cling to the *middos* of the *Avos*.

What possible *chesed* can a slave, who himself is suffering, do for a friend who is suffering exactly the same way? The answer is that even though everyone in *Mitzrayim* lacked food, both for their bodies and for their souls, and had so little on which to survive, they still got together to see what they could do for one another. What was on their minds was how they could share a morsel of bread or give words of encouragement and hope. This is precisely the *zechus* that they needed to leave *Mitzrayim*. Their heroic acts of *chesed* during the most trying of times made waves in *Shamayim* and earned them the greatest reward — redemption!

We can now understand the connection between the two points stated in "*Ha lachma anya*." We proudly declare that it was these simple pieces of bread, shared by our forefathers, which gave them the merit to be redeemed. We, too, invite our brothers who are hungry both physically (*yeichal*) and spiritually (*yifsach*) to come join us because just as our ancestors were redeemed through *chesed*, *b'siyata d'Shmaya*, so will we — "*Hashata hacha l'shanah habaah b'ara d'Yisrael!*" (**Yerach L'Moadim**).

Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, Chief Rabbi of Ukraine, relayed the following story to me: Upon landing in Budapest for a conference of lay leaders from different religious backgrounds, he was picked up at the airport by a person who didn't look Jewish. However, after a short conversation, it was evident that the fellow was indeed a Jew.

"Tell me, Rabbi," the man asked, after a couple of minutes. "I hear you are from the Ukraine, and I understand that the town of Munkatch is a part of it. Do you happen to know someone named Farkas from there?"

Holding back a chuckle, Rabbi Bleich politely explained that it's like asking a man from Boro Park if he knows a fellow named Friedman. Despite the man's not understanding how many Farkases there were and how unlikely it was for the rabbi to know this particular fellow, Rabbi Bleich's curiosity was piqued and he asked his driver who this Mr. Farkas was and why his whereabouts were important to him.

The driver's gaze shifted and his eyes had that faraway look as he began to recount the following tale:

"In Auschwitz, though the German beasts didn't differentiate between one type of Jew and another, we were really two groups trying to survive under one roof. The religious group would risk their lives to perform mitzvos despite the danger and cost. They would put on tefillin in secret and would steal any moment they could to pray. There were even those who dared to keep Shabbos and kashrus as best they could. Then, there were my friends and me. Even before the war, we weren't believers and we certainly weren't going to put our lives in any more danger than we were already in. The two groups lived together in the barracks as one people, yet we were so far apart from each other.

"Of all the days of the year, it was Yom Kippur, the holiest day, that made our differences stand out; yet, at the same time it was a day that brought us very close together. You see, we had a deal. On Yom Kippur morning, those who fasted would hand over their small portion of hard bread and black soup to someone in our group. In return, we would give half of our portion to our 'fasting' partners on the following day.

"It was the eve of the last Yom Kippur in the camp when a fellow named Farkas approached me and said, 'Do we have a deal? Can I give you my portion of bread tomorrow?'

"I told him yes and added, 'And the day after I will give you half of my portion.' "

For a moment, my driver paused and stared at me long and hard before he finished his story.

"Farkas took my hands in his, looked me straight in the eye and said, 'I don't want your portion tomorrow. I want something else completely. One day, G-d willing, we'll leave this horrible place and live our normal lives again. What I want from you is a promise that no matter where you find yourself, you will always fast on Yom Kippur.'

"I was amazed. A piece of bread in Auschwitz was worth more than all the gold money could buy. It was life itself and here a Jew was willing to give it up on the chance that maybe one day, another Jew, a complete stranger, will fast on Yom Kippur!"

Sitting in the driver's seat next to a Rabbi he had just met some fifty years after surviving the hellish flames of Auschwitz, this totally assimilated Jew said, "Rabbi, if you ever come across Farkas, please let him know that I kept my promise. I have been through many tests in my life but I have never put a morsel of food in my mouth on Yom Kippur. I never forgot my end of the deal."

The power to care for one another whether in body or soul is what carries us through this long, bitter exile and is what will ultimately take us out of it.

□ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם — *In the land of Egypt*

Why are we discussing the matzah we ate **in** Mitzrayim? Doesn't the matzah we have at the Seder remind us of the dough that didn't rise due to the quick exit our forefathers made from Egypt?

Ramban in *Parashas Re'eh* explains that there are in fact two types of matzah we are obligated to remember: the matzah we ate in Mitzrayim as slaves (matzah was the food of choice for slaves because it sustains a person for a long time), and the matzah we ate on the way out, which was actually dough that didn't have enough time to be baked into bread.

In "*Ha lachma anya*," we refer to the matzah we ate in Mitzrayim, whereas later on in the Haggadah, we refer to the matzah that was eaten at the time of the Exodus.

The **Vilna Gaon** expounds on this further. True, the matzah we went out with was an important part of our leaving Egypt. However, to call it "poor man's bread" totally contradicts the joy and celebration we felt when we were finally free and eating it. That's why when describing the matzah we ate on the way out we refer back to the matzah we ate when we were slaves, when it actually was "poor man's bread." It is simply not appropriate to label the bread of our redemption in a negative way.

We see from here that though the Jews ate the same type of bread both in *galus* and on their way out of *galus*, it was eaten from two very different standpoints. We can learn from this that it's not **what** one eats but **how** one eats it that truly counts.

The Seder plate is removed and the second of the four cups of wine is poured. The youngest present asks the reasons for the unusual proceedings of the evening.

מַה נְשִׁתְנֶה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

Once, a noted mechanech wryly commented, "Some people think that one who eats pizza is considered to be indulgent and pleasure-seeking whereas someone who eats a piece of chicken is more in control of his desires. It isn't so at all. If a person is hungry, then eating pizza is just fine. But, if he isn't hungry and he eats just for the sake of satisfying another pleasure, the piece of chicken is just as indulgent as the most delicious pizza!"

□ כָּל דֹּכָפִין — *Whoever is hungry*

Why do we extend an invitation to guests now, when we're already seated around the Seder table? If our invitation is sincere, shouldn't we have extended it days, if not weeks, ago? What's the point of waiting until now?

Perhaps the answer is that this invitation isn't directed to outsiders. As much as a person must make sure to have guests at his table for Yom Tov (*Rambam*), tonight, before the Seder begins, we offer a heartfelt invitation to **our children**. We invite them to listen and take part in everything we do this evening. We want our children to feel and understand that their presence at the Seder will fill their *neshamos* with the beauty and meaning that Yiddishkeit truly has to offer.

Rav Avraham Schorr offers the following explanation as to why the father leads the Seder in his white kittel. When a person is niftar, he is buried in his kittel. When given the opportunity, a father will use his last precious moments in this world to impart to his children the message he holds most dear to his heart.

On Pesach night, wearing a sparkling white kittel, every father must take the opportunity to express his own heartfelt message to his children. On this night, his words will undeniably leave an impression on their hearts.

The policy, "**No child left behind,**" is never more applicable than tonight. And so we say, "*Kol dichfin ...*"

□ הַשְּׁתָּא הֵכָּא ... הַשְּׁתָּא עַבְדֵּי — *Now, we are here ... Now, we are slaves*

Why do we mention our freedom twice: "Now we are here, next

The Seder plate is removed and the second of the four cups of wine is poured. The youngest present asks the reasons for the unusual proceedings of the evening.

Why is this night different from all other nights?

year we will be in Eretz Yisrael," and immediately after, "Now we are slaves, next year we will be free"?

Erech Shai explains the double statement as follows. Although the tribe of Levi lived in Mitzrayim under Pharaoh's control, they were not forced into slavery because of the treaty Yosef had made years earlier. For this reason, their freedom from Mitzrayim was on a different level than that of their brothers. Additionally, the Gemara tells us that *talmidei chachamim* are not obligated to pay taxes because they support their cities with their learning.

So, the Haggadah actually refers to two stages of exit: "**Hashata hacha ... l'shanah habaah b'ara d'Yisrael**" refers to the tribe of Levi (and *talmidei chachamim*) whose redemption only meant relocating to a holier environment; "**Hashata avdei ... l'shanah habaah bnei chorin**" refers to the rest of the Jews whose redemption meant freedom from slavery as well.

Another explanation can be as follows:

Imagine a soldier imprisoned by his enemy for a long time. Finally, after years of terrible torture, he is miraculously rescued by his comrades. They bring him to safety, to their makeshift tent outside enemy lines, where his strength is restored and his mind and body are healed.

Though his happiness is unlimited, his feeling of freedom isn't complete until he returns home to the safety and warmth of familiar surroundings. Only when he is greeted by the open arms of his relatives and only when he can sleep in his own bed and eat dinner at his own table, will he genuinely feel like a free man.

The same can be said for Klal Yisrael. Until we all stand in Eretz Yisrael, our home and the home of our forefathers, we will never be truly free. First, we need to be "home," in familiar surroundings with the endless ability to perform all of the Torah's commandments freely. Then, and only then, can we proclaim, "We are *bnei chorin*!"

□ **מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה – Why is [this night] different**

The mishnah in *Pesachim* says that one must recount the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* to his child(ren). This is a Biblical commandment

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלֵּילֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמִצָּה, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מִצָּה.

derived from the *pasuk, v'higadeta l'vincha*. The mishnah further explains that even if one is *chas v'shalom* not blessed with children, he must nevertheless discuss the story of redemption with his wife (or others who may be sitting with him). Even if one is all alone on Pesach night, he must ask the *Mah Nishtanah* and respond with the story of the redemption.

In the *Aseres HaDibros* it says, "I am Hashem, your God, Who took you out of Mitzrayim." Although the creation of the world preceded *Yetzias Mitzrayim* by over 2,000 years and Hashem's presence in the universe preceded creation, Hashem did not declare at Sinai, "I am Hashem Who created the world."

The reason for this is that a world without Jews, without people keeping mitzvos and living according to Hashem's Torah, is missing its *raison d'être* (reason to exist). The birth of Klal Yisrael as a nation upon leaving Mitzrayim was, and remains, the most pivotal moment in world history, because we are the reason for the world's existence. That is precisely why our Torah obligates everyone, no matter where he finds himself on Pesach night, to commemorate and renew his connection to our great heritage and legacy.

In a cold and dreary corner of a concentration camp barrack in Europe, an eight-year-old boy sat with his father on Pesach night. With nothing but a small candle and each other, they began to "make" the Seder. They reached the Mah Nishtanah and the sweet, young boy began asking the four questions. After he finished, he turned to his father and innocently asked if tonight he could add two more questions.

"Tatty, do you think we'll be able to do this next year again? Will I still be in this world to ask the four questions and will you be here to answer me?"

The father looked his son in the eye and said, "My dearest child. I can't possibly know what will be tomorrow, let alone next year, but there is one thing I can guarantee. Until Mashiach comes, there will always be pure, innocent Yiddishe children asking their fathers questions on Pesach night and there will always be proud Yiddishe fathers answering them. Because no matter what our enemies have taken from us throughout this long, bitter galus, our emunah will always remain."

As we talk to our children on this holy night and aim to instill in them

1. **On all other nights** we may eat *chametz* and matzah, but on this night — only matzah.

emunah and *bitachon*, appreciate and cherish the moment. Understand and realize the *zechus* we have to build and create the next link in the chain of our *mesorah*. This is an opportunity like no other to ingrain a message that is as clear as the sky is blue: ***Wherever we find ourselves in life, we are part of something that is eternal and forever.***



Many describe Pesach night as a night of questions. Indeed, **Rav Chaim Brisker** derives from the Rambam three points regarding the differences between the mitzvah of recounting *Yetzias Mitzrayim* on Pesach night and remembering it every other day:

- On Pesach, **the recounting is structured in a question-and-answer format** to encourage discussion as well as to relay the story of the redemption more comprehensively and precisely.
- We retell the story in the format of “*maschil b’genus u’mesayem b’shevach.*” This means that we begin the story with the derogatory part, i.e., the hardships and pain the Jews endured, and end with song and praise when describing the redemption. We tell the narrative this way so that it should be in story form and not just an account of facts.
- **The matzah and maror must be in front of the person reciting the story.** This allows those present at the Seder to “see” and “taste” what the Jews in Mitzrayim experienced, making it more real.
- All three points above are clearly reflected in the questions of the *Mah Nishtanah*.
- The questions themselves indicate the need to ask and open up the pathway for discussion.
- The first two questions pertain to the affliction (why do we eat poor man’s bread and only *maror* tonight) while the last two questions obviously refer to the redemption (why do we dip our food and lean as do noble people tonight).
- The matzah and *maror* are visible to all, tempting the child to ask questions on what he sees before him.

□ **הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מַצָּה** — ***On this night only matzah***

Eating *chametz* on Pesach is not a simple transgression. One who purposely eats *chametz* on Pesach is *chayav kares* and is considered cut off from Klal Yisrael; any “bread” one eats on Pesach can only be unleavened bread that has not become *chametz*. Interestingly, the

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שָׂאֵר יִרְקוֹת,
הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה מְרוּר.
שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלֵּילוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבֵּילִין אֶפִּילוּ פְּעַם
אַחַת, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים.

Gemara in *Pesachim* teaches us that the matzah we eat must be made from ingredients that have the **ability** to become leaven. If one eats matzah made of a grain that itself cannot become *chametz*, he has not fulfilled his obligation to eat *matzah*.

The **Chasam Sofer** asks: If eating *chametz* on Pesach is such a terrible offense, shouldn't the commandment of matzah obligate us to keep as far away as possible from the transgression of *chametz*? Shouldn't matzah be allowed to be made *only* from ingredients that can never become *chametz*?!

The legendary Yerushalmi Maggid, Rav Shalom Schwadron, was once trying to convince a young, irreligious boy to join a group of boys at an after-school Torah class.

"Rabbi, after school I have no time because that's when I play soccer," the young man responded each time the Rav approached him. "I can't give up that time for anything. Maybe when I have more time, I'll come."

Rav Shalom wouldn't give up. He kept asking, but the boy was adamant about his soccer practice. Finally, one day, Rav Shalom decided to use a totally different approach.

"Tell me," said Rav Shalom to the boy. "What is this game, soccer, all about?"

Happy that the old-fashioned Rabbi was finally willing to hear about the "important" stuff in life, the boy gave the Rav a thorough description, diagrams and all, on the ins-and-outs of the game: two teams, a ball, a set time and, of course, the coveted goal when a team succeeds in kicking the ball into the opponent's net. The boy continued to explain how each team's net is protected by a goaltender who guards the space like a hawk circling his territory. As the boy enthusiastically talked, the Yerushalayimer Yid nodded along with genuine interest.

When the boy finished, Rav Shalom asked, "Young man, I hear and understand everything you say, but I'm still not clear on one thing. If the whole point is to get the ball into the other team's net, why not just wait until the goaltender leaves his position after the game and then kick the ball into the net for a goal?"

2. **On all other nights** we eat many vegetables, but on this night [we eat] *maror*.
3. **On all other nights** we do not dip even once, but on this night, twice.

"Rabbi!" the boy laughed, "I think you missed the whole point of the game. It's only when the goalie stands guard that the score counts. Once he leaves, there's no game!"

Now it was Rav Shalom's turn to laugh.

"Oy, mein kindt," he exclaimed. "That's exactly what I've been trying to tell you these last few months. Telling me that later in life you may find time to learn is no big deal. It's now, when the yetzer hara stands in front of your goal and blocks you from learning and growing, that you need to score and win!"

It is with a similar thought that the **Chasam Sofer** explains why *Chazal* insisted that matzah be made only with dough that **can** become *chametz*. If we were to make it from ingredients that can't become *chametz*, what is our *avodah*? It would be like scoring the goal without the goalie. The *chametz* ingredient in the matzah symbolizes the challenges and hurdles we face in our *avodas Hashem*. We aren't *malachim* who don't have a *yetzer hara*. We have a *yetzer hara* to overcome and we have within ourselves the ability to challenge it and ultimately score!

□ הלילה הזה שתי פעמים – *On this night twice*

Just recently, one of the hidden *tzaddikim* in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn, Reb Mendel Weiss, passed away. Although he dressed in layers of old rags and musty coats, those who merited to know him testified that Reb Mendel was a lofty, holy Jew who disguised himself as a simple, hapless Jew. Someone who once gave Reb Mendel a ride was rewarded with this gem of a *vort* from this gem of a man.

"Why is it only on Pesach night that we ask why we dip twice, but on Rosh Hashanah we don't ask? On Rosh Hashanah as well we dip twice, first the challah in honey and then the apple?"

With a twinkle in his eye, Reb Mendel answered, "Because we tend to ask questions only when we dip into bitter things. When something is dipped into honey, we don't have any questions!"

How true were your words. How many times throughout our lives, when things aren't going well, are we quick to question the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, "Why me?" or "Is this really fair?" Yet, when things are going well and we are blessed with an abundance of sweetness, we somehow don't rush to ask, "Why me?"

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵין וּבֵין מְסַבִּין, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסַבִּין.

The Seder plate is returned. The matzos are kept uncovered as the Haggadah is recited in unison. The Haggadah should be translated, if necessary, and the story of the Exodus should be amplified upon.

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיּוֹצֵיאֵנוּ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזִרְוֹעַ
נְטוּיָה. וְאֵלּוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הֵרִי אָנוּ וּבָנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בָנֵינוּ

□ הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסַבִּין — *On this night we all recline*

The simple meaning behind the obligation to lean is its demonstration of royalty. We are kings and this is how a king sits at his table.

Rav Mattisyahu Salomon cites a *Midrash Rabbah* in *Shemos* that offers another explanation for our leaning. If a king sends his army into a desert to fight, he surely sends along enough food and ammunition to sustain the soldiers throughout their mission. Yet, would he send along items of comfort or pleasure? Not quite. Even the highest-ranking soldiers wouldn't expect that. After all, how would comfort items help them in the middle of a desert?

This is not the case when it comes to the King of all kings — Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He took His nation out of Mitzrayim and led them into the desert. There, He “wined and dined” them with the tastiest food and drink, which they enjoyed in a sparkling, clean environment with the best protection possible. The *pasuk* says, “*Vayasev Elokim es ha'am,*” which literally means, “Hashem led the nation.” The Midrash tells us that the word *vayasev* alludes to the word *yasev*, to *lean*. For the forty years that they were in the *midbar*, the Jews sat as one would sit on a luxury cruise ship, relaxed and worry free, knowing that their every need was meticulously cared for.

We lean on Pesach night to relive and savor the experience of ultimate *cheirus*, the freedom that our forefathers merited under the watchful and doting eye of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. True freedom is felt when one recognizes that his every need is in Hashem's hands. We can all live worry-free lives when we know and recognize that He is taking care of our every requirement.

□ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ — *We were slaves*

By explaining both the suffering and the redemption, the four

4. **On all other nights** we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we all recline.

The Seder plate is returned. The matzos are kept uncovered as the Haggadah is recited in unison. The Haggadah should be translated, if necessary, and the story of the Exodus should be amplified upon.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but HASHEM, our God, took us out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Had not the Holy One, Blessed is He, taken our fathers out from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children

questions of the *Mah Nishtanah* are answered. We eat matzah and *maror* (questions one and two) to remember the hardships and we dip our food twice and lean while eating (questions three and four) to remember the redemption.

In the first line of *Avadim Hayinu* we explain three details of our exile:

- (a) *Avadim hayinu* — We were slaves
- (b) *I'Pharaoh* — to a wicked king
- (c) *b'Mitzrayim* — in an evil country.

We counter these with three details of our freedom:

- (a) *Vayotzi'einu* — We were taken out and freed from slavery
- (b) *Hashem Elokeinu* — by Hashem, the ultimate King
- (c) *Misham* — from that evil place.

We then continue with the traits Hashem demonstrated when He took us out:

B'yad chazakah — with a strong hand, referring to the ten plagues He brought upon the Egyptians,

U'vizro'a netuyah — and with an outstretched arm, referring to the fact that the redemption happened in broad daylight, ensuring that the entire world saw the downfall of Egypt, the nation that started up with His children (**Vilna Gaon**).

□ **אֱלֹהֵינוּ לֹא הוֹצִיאָנוּ — Had not ... taken out**

How can we say that had Hashem not taken us out when He did, we would still be slaves to Pharaoh today? Might there not eventually have been a Jewish uprising to fight back? Might no other nation have stepped forward to free the slaves?

Two young inmates, Reuven and Dani, found themselves sharing the same cold, lifeless barrack in Auschwitz. Reuven, a naturally

מְשַׁעֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לַפְּרָעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם. וְאִפִּילוּ כִּלְנוּ
חֻכְמַיִם, כִּלְנוּ נְבוֹנִים, כִּלְנוּ זְקֵנִים, כִּלְנוּ יוֹדְעִים
אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם.
וְכָל הַמְרָבָה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, הֲרִי זֶה
מִשְׁבַּח.

upbeat and positive person, tried hard to stay cheerful despite the hellish conditions. It wasn't easy but he faithfully clung to the lessons of his youth, the lessons his beloved parents and rebbeim had taught him. He believed that at any given moment, regardless of how hopeless the situation seemed, his Father in heaven could save him.

Dani, on the other hand, beaten and broken, did not share the same outlook. For good reason, he couldn't see past his misery. He wasn't blessed with the strong background or the stamina that Reuven had. Night after night, Reuven desperately tried to instill some breath of belief into Dani but it always ended with Dani bitterly asking, "Do you really believe that if Hashem wants, He can take us out? From here?!"

Unfortunately, Reuven's, "Yes!" wouldn't penetrate and Dani would turn a deaf ear before falling into a fitful sleep.

Months went by and then, the dreaded announcement came. On the eve of Simchas Torah, which should have been a happy, joyous time, Reuven and Dani, along with hundreds of others, were summoned to a selektzia. They knew their end was near as the Nazi beasts lined them up along the wall outside the gas chambers.

Standing on line together, Reuven and Dani knew they had only moments to live. They were ordered to undress and enter the gas chambers. The murderous slam of the door echoed behind them. This was it. Their lives were coming to an end. Dani turned to face his friend one last time and asked him, "Do you still believe that Hashem can save us?"

With shining eyes and his head held high, Reuven responded with more conviction than ever before, "Yes, Dani. Yes, I do!"

Suddenly and inexplicably, the gas chamber door opened and in walked a commanding officer, announcing that certain prisoners should exit the chamber.

"The Reich still needs you to work!" he shouted.

As the Nazi shouted out the numbers, Reuven realized that he

would have remained subservient to Pharaoh in Egypt. Even if we were all men of wisdom, understanding, experience, and knowledge of the Torah — it would still be an obligation upon us to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. The more one tells about the discussion of the Exodus, the more he is praiseworthy.

was being called. His Father had saved him. He turned to his dear friend Dani to say farewell and as their eyes locked one last time, Dani let out a piercing cry that remains with Reuven until today.

"I believe! Ani Maamin!"

"Every Simchas Torah from that day on, I have said Kaddish for my beloved friend, Dani, Hy"d," Reuven explained as he told this story. "At the end, he truly believed, but sadly, as far as his time in this world was concerned, it was too late."

Surely, we would have gotten out of our exile somehow after so many years but by then it would have been too late. The level of impurity that the Jews reached in Mitzrayim would have been impossible to fix. *We would have come out as a people but not as a nation of Hashem.* Only with Hakadosh Baruch Hu's infinite *chesed* were we pulled out of Mitzrayim in the nick of time. Like *Chazal* tell us, had we remained in the impure surroundings of Mitzrayim for even one second longer, it would have been too late.

□ **וְאִפִּילוּ כָּלנוּ חֲכָמִים** — *Even if we were all men of wisdom*

We continue by stating that the intellectual status of a person makes no difference when it comes to our obligation to relate the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. This statement seems puzzling. Why would one think otherwise? Where else do we find a mitzvah that would apply only to simple-minded people and not to learned individuals?

Rav Elyah Lopian explains that if one follows how the Rambam explains the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, he'll notice how literal the Rambam's statement is: "Anyone who recounts at length the things *that happened and were* [in Mitzrayim] is praiseworthy." Clearly, on this holy night we emphasize the story and expound on the miracles that took place in Mitzrayim.

The assumption may follow that great scholars and elderly people who already "know the story" are exempt from the mitzvah. This is why the *baalei Haggadah* clearly state that despite one's knowledge or wisdom, *everyone* is obligated to partake in the mitzvah of retelling the story.