

הגדה ברורה

For a *Seder* that makes sense

שנת ע"א לתקומת ישראל

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הַקְדָּמָה

For most people with any connection to Judaism, *Seder* night is one of the most meaningful and memorable parts of their Jewish life. The evocative parts of the *Seder* vary from person to person. For many it is the eating of special foods; for others it is their child reciting *mah nishtanah*; for some it is the mere fact of being together with relatives they rarely see or simply staying up till two in the morning feeling exhausted and slightly drunk. It is safe to say, however, that, for the great majority of Jews, the recitation of the *Maggid* is not one of them.

This is an odd state of affairs. According to most authorities, the recitation of the *yetziat mitzrayim* is a *mitzvah d'oraitah* and all agree that it is a central focus of the *Seder*. Nevertheless, every year, hundreds of thousands of Jews simply tune out when they reach the words *arami oved avi*, unable to understand what is going on and becoming increasingly impatient for the food to arrive. The more learned try their best to enrich proceedings by citing different explanations, *hiddushim*, and even *gematriot*, on the *Haggadah* text. However, this only succeeds in drawing the attention of those assembled to what is written in the book in front of them rather than the exodus story itself. It is safe to say – odd though it is on reflection – that far more time is spent discussing the ‘deeper meaning’ of the famous four sons midrash than the events of three and a half thousand years ago when our forefathers left Egypt.

The reason for this is quite simple: the text of the *Maggid* that is in front of us is simply not a good rendition of *yetziat mitzrayim*. It is full of incomprehensible ‘explanations’ and apparently random interjections. It appears to emphasize minor parts of the exodus story while completely ignoring central themes and characters. Many parts seem to be out of their proper order and, taken as a whole, it is disjointed and incoherent. Few Jews are willing to say this out loud, but most seem to accept it as just one of the odder parts of our odd tradition.

From the year I started leading *Sedarim*, I struggled to use the *Maggid* in such a way as to provide a meaningful experience to the others at the table. I studied and thought about the *Maggid* until I could explain with some degree of confidence the logic of the different *d'rashot*, but by focussing on understanding the text of *Maggid* itself, I felt I was only getting further away from the real goal of telling the exodus story. After half a decade, I gave up and switched to following as best I could the directions of the Mishnah itself. I took the *pesukim* from *arami oved avi* onwards and did my best to expound (לדרוש) them, explaining as I went the significance and implications of each word.

This method, however, proved less satisfactory than I originally hoped. *Devarim* 26:5-9 is a wonderfully concise and evocative account of the Jewish people's story from our humble origins as 'wandering Arameans' to the triumphant arrival in the Land of Israel, but it is surprisingly hard to expound upon. '...with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terror, and with signs, and with wonders' is without doubt a powerful text, but when you try to pin down precisely what it means, you find, as with all great poetic language, that it means many things, and yet not quite anything precisely. Turning to the great commentators doesn't help much; they seem to have arrived at much the same conclusion and largely ignore the passage.

Disappointed with the results of my experiment, I acceded to the wishes of more traditionally minded relatives and, in 5777, I went back to using the traditional *Maggid* text. I struggled through until I reached the words זו החרב. Bereft of any explanation myself for what sword was being referred to, I asked the those assembled if they had one, not, I should add, looking for a profound *hiddush*, but for a basic idea of what the phrase 'this is the sword' was supposed to convey. The sum total of *Sedarim* that those present had experienced was well in excess of five hundred, but it was clear, not only that no one had an answer, but that this was the first time any of them had thought to ask the question, which didn't seem to them terribly pertinent.

I resolved to find an answer to the question and, after the finishing the evening meal on *shevi'i shel Pesah*, I quite by accident hit on the answer. The two *d'rashot* זו הדבר and זו החרב are meant to be read as a couplet and they refer to Moshe's plea in his first meeting with Pharaoh:

אֱלֹהֵי הַעֲבָרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ נִלְכָּה נָא דְרֹד שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְנִזְבַּחַהּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּכֹל יִפְגַּעֲנוּ
בַּדָּבָר אוֹ בַחֲרֹב:

Contemplating the simplicity of my answer, I gradually realized that it entailed a complete re-evaluation of what kind of text the *Maggid* was. Not for the first time, I learned that if something in Judaism seems to make no sense at all, it's because you are looking at it from the wrong angle.

At the back of this volume, I have included a lengthy essay explaining in full my theory of how the *Maggid* works, but I will here quickly recapitulate the main points:

- The reason the *Maggid* does not seem to be an adequate retelling of the exodus story is because it is not supposed to be a retelling of the exodus story.
- The reason the *Maggid's d'rashot* upon the fragments of the *arami oved avi* passage do not seem to be adequate as explanations is because they are not intended to function as explanations.

- The purpose of the *Maggid* is to map the verses in the *arami oved avi* passage onto the much lengthier primary account of the exodus in *Sefer Shemot*.
- The story of the exodus is divided by the *Maggid* into sections in the order they appear in *Shemot*, with one exception for ease of narration.
- The purpose of the *d'rashot* in the *Maggid* is to provide a semantic or linguistic link between each fragment of the *arami oved* passage and the section of *Shemot* that it is linked to. Sometimes this can be done directly, sometimes it can only be done in a roundabout fashion.
- The *Maggid* thus functions as a guide helping each father or leader of the Seder to orally retell the exodus story as it appears in *Shemot*, using the *arami oved passage* as a set of cliffsnotes or prompts.
- I believe that the *Maggid's* method, as well as constituting a virtuoso piece of technical midrashic mastery, is intended to demonstrate that the whole exodus story as it appears in *Shemot* is contained virtually within the *arami oved avi* passage. This is analogous to *Rav Sa'adya Gaon's* well known belief that all 613 *mitzvot* are contained within the ten commandments.

This *Haggadah* is my first attempt to convert my theory of the *Maggid* into something you can use at your own Seder. What you will find within is the same traditional text you that appears in any household *Haggadah* (minus one Lurianic addition). However, when you reach the *Maggid* you will see, in addition, three supplements designed to help you use it as a tool to tell the story of *yetziat mitzrayim*:

- **Text:** Beneath each of the *Maggid's d'rashot*, I have included all or part of the passage of the *Humash* which the *Maggid* is directing you to.
- **Story:** A brief English rendition of the main points of this part of the story, divided into bullet points.
- **Comment:** In this section, I have included various points of discussion about the passage in question, drawing on the classic commentators, not on the *Haggadah*, but on the *Humash*.

My recommendation is to review thoroughly the **Text** section of this *Haggadah* in the run up to the Seder to make sure that you are properly familiar with the story you are about to retell. The **Story** section is there to function as a crutch on the night, helping you to keep up the pace and ensuring you don't miss out anything important. I suggest that you dip into the **Comment** section on an *ad hoc* basis depending on how the night unfolds.

How you use this *Haggadah*, though, is up to you and not just for the obvious reason that I won't be there to watch you using it. *Haggadah B'rura* is an experiment. How it plays out and what it will look like in ten years' time is not

known to me. My sincere hope is that it will contribute to a more meaningful Seder experience for Jews in this period of our national ingathering.

This first edition of *Haggadah B'rura* is the result of hundreds of hours slipped in here and there between work, childcare and washing up. As my various teachers and employers will attest, attention to detail is not one of my strong points and I shudder to think of the list of infelicities and errors I will find on Seder night when I read this through without the aid of a pen. I wish to thank all those who have cast an eye on my work, as well as the creators of *Sefaria* for saving me untold hours and even more mistakes through the magic of cut and paste. All remaining errors are, as the phrase goes, my own.

Gavriel Naḥlieli

Yerushalayim, 5778.

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קִדְשׁ

בְּשַׁבַּת מִתְחִילִין

וַיְהִי עָרֵב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי. וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבַּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אוֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שַׁבַּת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

בְּחֹל מִתְחִילִין

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מְכַל עָם וְרוּמָנוּ מְכַל לְשׁוֹן וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (לשבת: שַׁבָּתוֹת לְמִנוּחָהּ ו) מוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׁשׁוֹן, (לשבת: אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה ו) אֶת יוֹם חַג הַמִּצְוֹת הַזֶּה זְמַן חֲרוּתָנוּ, (לשבת: בְּאַהֲבָה) מְקַרֵּא קִדְּשׁ זְכוֹר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחִרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מְכַל הָעַמִּים, (לשבת: וְשַׁבָּת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קִדְּשָׁךְ (לשבת: בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרַצוֹן) בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׁשׁוֹן הַנִּחְלָתָנוּ.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְקַדְּשׁ (לשבת: הַשַּׁבָּת ו) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְּמַנִּים.

בְּמוֹצָאֵי שַׁבַּת מוֹסִיפִים

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמְּבַדִּיל בֵּין קִדְּשׁ לְחַל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים, בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשַׁשֶּׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֵׂה. בֵּין קִדְּשַׁת שַׁבָּת לְקִדְּשַׁת יוֹם טוֹב הַבְּדִלְתָּ, וְאֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִשַּׁשֶּׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֵׂה קִדְּשָׁתָּ. הַבְּדִלְתָּ וְקִדְּשָׁתָּ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִדְּשָׁתְךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַמְּבַדִּיל בֵּין קִדְּשׁ לְקִדְּשׁ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחִיָּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה.

וּרְחֵץ

נוטלים את הידים, לפי שולחן ערוך אין מברכים "על נטילת ידים" ולפי הרמב"ם ולכל הגאונים מברכים

כֶּרֶפֶס

לפי שולחן ערוך לוקח מן הכרפס פחות מכזית - כדי שלא יתחייב בברכה אחרונה - טובל במי מלח, מברך "בורא פרי האדמה", ומכווין לפטור בברכה גם את המרור. לפי הרמב"ם לוקח לפחות כזית ואין צורך לשום כוונה אחרת.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

לפי הרמב"ם מברכים "בורא נפשות..."

יַחֵץ

חותך את המצה האמצעית לשתיים, ומצפין את הנתח הגדול לאפיקומן

מִגִּיד

מגלה את המצות, מגביה את הקערה ואומר בקול רם:

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֵתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכִפִּין
יִיתִי וְיִיכַל, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָא הַכָּא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה
בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָא עַבְדִּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוּרִין.

מסיר את הקערה מעל השולחן. מוזגין כוס שני. הבן שואל, ולפי הרמב"ם אלו לא שאלות אלא האב אומר

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות? שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה, הלילה הזה - כלו מצה. שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות - הלילה הזה (כלו) מרור. שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת - הלילה הזה שתי פעמים. שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין ובין מסבין - הלילה הזה כלנו מסבין.

מחזיר את הקערה אל השולחן. המצות תהיינה מגלות בשעת אמירת ההגדה.

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים, ויוציאנו ה' אלהינו משם ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה. ואלו לא הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אבותינו ממצרים, הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו משעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים. ואפילו כלנו חכמים כלנו נבונים כלנו זקנים כלנו יודעים את התורה מצוה עלינו לספור ביציאת מצרים. וכל המרבה לספור ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משבח.

מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי עקיבא ורבי טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני ברק והיו מספרים ביציאת מצרים כל אותו הלילה, עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית.

אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה ולא זכיתי שתאמר יציאת מצרים בלילות עד שדַרְשָׁה בן זומא, שנאמר, למען תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך. ימי חייך הימים. כל ימי חייך הלילות. וחקמים אומרים ימי חייך העולם הזה. כל ימי חייך להביא לימות המשיח:

ברוך המקום, ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל, ברוך הוא.

כַּנְגֵד אַרְבַּעַה בָּנִים דִּבְרָה תוֹרָה :

אָחַד חָכָם, וְאָחַד רָשָׁע, וְאָחַד תָּם, וְאָחַד שְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׂאֵל.

חָכָם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֵדוּת וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמְשַׁפְּטִים אֲשֶׁר צָוָה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם. וְאַף אֶתָּה אָמַר לוֹ כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אֵין מִפְּטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוּמָן:

רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֵבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם - וְלֹא לוֹ. וְלִפִּי שְׂהוּצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכָּל כָּפַר בְּעֶקֶר. וְאַף אֶתָּה הִקְהָה אֶת שְׁנֵי וְאָמַר לוֹ: "בְּעִבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם". לִי וְלֹא לוֹ. אֵלֹהֵי הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה נִגָּאֵל:

תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה זֹאת? וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו "בְּחוּזֵק יָד הוּצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרָיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים".

וְשְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׂאֵל - אֶת פֶּתַח לוֹ, שְׁנֵאָמַר, וְהַגִּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעִבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם.

יָכוֹל מֵרֵאשׁ חֲדָשׁ? תִּלְמוּד לוֹמֵר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא. אֵי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יָכוֹל מִבְּעוֹד יוֹם? תִּלְמוּד לוֹמֵר בְּעִבוֹר זֶה - בְּעִבוֹר זֶה לֹא אָמַרְתִּי, אֵלֹא בְּשָׂעָה שֵׁשׁ מִצָּה וּמְרוֹר מִנְחִים לְפָנָיִךְ.

מִתְחִלָּה עוֹבְדֵי עֲבֹדָה זָרָה הָיוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְעַכְשָׁיו קָרְבָנוּ הַמָּקוֹם לְעִבְדוֹתוֹ, שְׁנֵאָמַר: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל כָּל הָעָם, כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: בְּעֶבֶר הַנְּהָר יָשְׁבוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעוֹלָם, תָּרַח אָבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאָבִי נָחוֹר, וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים. וְאַקַּח אֶת אָבִיכֶם אֶת אַבְרָהָם מֵעֶבֶר הַנְּהָר וְאוֹלַךְ אוֹתוֹ בְּכָל אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, וְאַרְבָּה אֶת זֶרְעוֹ וְאֶתָּן לוֹ אֶת יִצְחָק, וְאֶתָּן לְיִצְחָק אֶת יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת עֵשָׂו. וְאֶתָּן לְעֵשָׂו אֶת הַר שְׁעִיר לְרֵשֶׁת אֹתוֹ, וַיַּעֲקֹב וּבָנָיו יָרְדוּ מִצְרָיִם.

בְּרוּךְ שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּטָחָתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּרוּךְ הוּא. שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
 חָשַׁב אֶת הַקֶּץ, לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ בְּבְרִית בֵּין
 הַבְּתָרִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם, יָדַע תֵּדַע כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ
 בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם, וַעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה. וְגַם אֶת
 הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אָנֹכִי וְאַחֲרָי כֵּן יֵצְאוּ בְּרַכָּשׁ גָּדוֹל.

מכסה המצה ומגביה את הכוס בידו, ואומר:

וְהִיא שֶׁעֲמָדָה לְאַבֹּתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ. שְׁלֹא אֶחָד
 בְּלִבָּד עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ, אֶלָּא שְׁבִכָּל
 דוֹר וָדוֹר עֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ, וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא מַצִּילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם.

יניח הכוס מידו ויגלה את המצות

צא ולמד מה בקש לָבֵן הָאֲרָמִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לְיַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ: שֶׁפָּרַעָה
 לֹא גָזַר אֶלָּא עַל הַזְּכָרִים, וְלָבֵן בִּקֵּשׁ לַעֲקֹר אֶת הַכֹּל. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:

אַרְמֵי אַבְד אָבִי

וְלֹא־יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנְּצָבִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל־אִישׁ מֵעָלָי וְלֹא־עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהַתּוֹדֵעַ יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו: וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־קִלּוֹ בְּבִכִי וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצָּרִים וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פְּרָעָה:
 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ אָחָיו לַעֲנוֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפְּנָיו:
 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו גִּשׁוּ־נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגָּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֲחִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִם: וְעַתָּה אֶל־תַּעֲצְבוּ וְאֶל־יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִּי לְמַחִיָּה שָׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם: כִּי־זֶה שְׁנָתַיִם הָרַעַב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ וְעוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין־חֲרִישׁ וְקָצִיר: וַיִּשְׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם לְשׁוּם לָכֶם שְׂאֲרֵית בְּאֶרֶץ וְלִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לִפְלִיטָה גְדֹלָה:
 וְעַתָּה לֹא־אַתֶּם שָׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִּי הֵאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁמְעֵנִי לָאֵב לִפְרָעָה וְלֶאֱדוֹן לְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּמְשַׁל בְּכָל־אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: מִהָרֹו וְעָלוּ אֶל־אָבִי וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר בְּנֵךְ יוֹסֵף שְׁמַעֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לֶאֱדוֹן לְכָל־מִצְרַיִם רְדֵה אֵלַי אֶל־תַּעֲמַד: וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בְּאֶרֶץ־גִּשְׁוֹן וְהָיִיתָ קְרוֹב אֵלַי אֶתְּהַ וּבְנֵיךָ וּבְנֵי בְנֵיךָ וְצִאֲנֵךָ וּבְקָרְךָ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ: וְכִלְכַּלְתִּי אֶתְּךָ שֵׁם כִּי־עוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים רָעַב פְּנֹת־וּרְשׁ אֶתְּךָ וּבֵיתְךָ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ: וְהִנֵּה עֵינֵיכֶם רְאוֹת וְעֵינֵי אָחִי בְנִימִין כִּי־פִי הִמְדַּבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם: וְהִגַּדְתֶּם לְאָבִי אֶת־כָּל־כְּבוֹדִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתֶם וּמַהֲרֶתֶם וְהוֹרִדְתֶּם אֶת־אָבִי הִנֵּה: (בראשית מה: א-יג)

- Ya'aqov returns to the land of Canaan with his four wives, twelve sons and daughter, after twenty-one years working for his uncle Lavan in Aram.
- Lavan pursues him, claiming that Ya'aqov had stolen his property. However, God warns Lavan not to harm Ya'aqov in any way and the pair reconcile and make a covenant.
- Yosef, the first son of Ya'aqov's favourite wife Rahel, is sold by his brothers into slavery.
- Yosef becomes a slave in Egypt, but eventually rises to become the second in command of the country.
- Yosef's brothers go down to Egypt to buy food because of a famine in the land of Canaan.
- After verifying that his brothers regret what they had done, Yosef reveals himself and sends his brothers to bring their father, Ya'aqov.

Who sold Yosef?

Everyone knows that Yosef was sold into slavery by his brothers and this understanding seems to be confirmed in numerous statements by *Hazal*. However, the verse in which Yosef is sold seems to say something rather different.

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי מִדְיָנִים סְחָרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִן-הַבּוֹר וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף לַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים
בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִצְרָיִם:

And Midianite men, traders, passed and they drew and lifted up Yosef from the pit and they sold Yosef to the Ishmaelites for 20 of silver and they brought Yosef to Egypt.

The simplest way of reading this verse in isolation is that, though the brothers had resolved to sell Yosef, unbeknownst to them, some Midianites arrived and did the job before they had the chance. There are three approaches to explaining this verse among the *Pashtanim*.

- *Sa'adya Gaon, Ibn Ezra, Redak and Rabbag* argue that 'Midianite' and 'Ishmaelite' are, in fact, synonyms, based on the verse in *Shof'tim* (8:24), which states that the Midianites wore gold earrings 'because they were Ishmaelites'. Reading these words as synonymous would render the sentence thus (both words being translated as 'Arabs'):

And Arab men, traders, passed and they drew and lifted up Yosef from the pit and they sold Yosef to the Arabs for 20 of silver and they brought Yosef to Egypt.

On this reading, the subject of the verb ('they') must mean Yosef's brothers. The problem with this interpretation is that it cannot explain why 'Midianite' and 'Ishmaelite' should be used interchangeably, since this is confusing and the verse in *Shof'tim* does not prove they are totally synonymous.

- *Ramban, Sforno and Rav Avraham son of Rambam*, argue that while the terms 'Midianite' and 'Ishmaelite' describe separate groups of people, they were nevertheless closely related and worked together. The Ishmaelites ran the camel train delivering goods back and forth from Egypt, while the Midianites owned property that the Ishmaelites transported. Yosef's brothers knew the Midianites were passing, but performed the actual sale with their agents, the Ishmaelites. This approach requires making a number of assumptions and an intricate reading of the key verse to explain all the data.
- *Rashbam, Hizkuni and Rabeinu Bahya* read the verse in the simplest way and explain that, though Yosef's brothers *intended* to sell him to the Ishmaelites, the actual act was performed by passing Midianites. This also explains why Reuven was surprised to find the pit empty. The problem is that when Yosef confronts his brothers, he states, 'I am Yosef your brother whom you sold to Egypt'. *Rabeinu Bahya* and *Rashbam* explain that they are considered responsible as they initiated proceedings. *Rashbam* and *Hizkuni* also offer the possibility that the brothers were aware of the Midianites drawing Yosef from the pit and selling him, perhaps following an arrangement not mentioned in the text. *Shadal*, a 19th century commentator from Italy, suggests that Yosef was in a confused state, or even unconscious, and believed that he had been sold by his brothers, though in fact this was not the case.

וַיֵּרֵד מִצְרַיִם

אָנוּס עַל פִּי הַדְּבָר

וַיֵּעֲלוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶל-יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם: וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי וְכַיִּי-
 הוּא מִשְׁלַל בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּפֶּגַע לְבָבוֹ כִּי לֹא-הָאֵמִין לָהֶם: וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו אֶת כָּל-דְּבָרֵי
 יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הָעֵגְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ וַתַּחֲי רוּחַ
 יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב עוֹד-יוֹסֵף בְּנֵי חַי אֵלֶיךָ וְאַרְאֶנּוּ בְּטָרִם אָמוֹת:
 וַיִּסַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וַיָּבֹא בְּאֶרֶץ שֹׁבַע וַיִּזְבַּח זִבְחִים לְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַרְאֵת הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי
 הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֲלֹתֵיךָ מִרְדָּה מִצְרַיִם כִּי-לָגוּי גְדוֹל אֲשִׁימָךְ שָׁם: אָנֹכִי אֶרְדָּ
 עִמָּךְ מִצְרַיִם וְאָנֹכִי אֶעֱלֶךָ גַּם-עֲלֶה וַיֹּסֵף יִשִׁית יָדוֹ עַל-עֵינָיו: וַיִּקָּם יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר
 שֹׁבַע וַיֵּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם וְאֶת-טָפְסָם וְאֶת-נְשֵׂיהֶם בְּעֵגְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר-
 שָׁלַח פְּרָעָה לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ: וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-מִקְנֵיהֶם וְאֶת-רִכּוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
 וַיָּבֹאוּ מִצְרַיִם יַעֲקֹב וְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ אֹתוֹ: בָּנָיו וּבְנֵי בָנָיו אֹתוֹ וּבָנוֹת בָּנָיו וְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ
 הָבִיא אֹתוֹ מִצְרַיִם: (בראשית מה:כה – מו:ז)

- Upon hearing the news that Yosef is safe, Ya'aqov gathers his family to go down to Egypt.
- Ya'aqov stops in Be'er Sheva and offers sacrifices 'to the God of his father Yitzhaq'.
- God appears to Ya'aqov in a dream. He tells him not to be afraid to go to Egypt, that He will go down with Ya'aqov and bring him up from there.

What was Ya'aqov afraid of?

God says to Ya'aqov, 'do not be afraid of going down to Egypt'. We can infer that Ya'aqov was afraid of something, but we are not told what. The source of Ya'aqov's fear has to be worked out from the words of God's answer in which he tells him not to be afraid 'for I will make you there a great nation'. Various explanations have been offered:

- Ya'aqov was worried that by leaving Eretz Yisrael for Egypt he would transgress the command given to 'his father Yitzchak'. God tells him that he is permitted to do so. (*Redak*)
- Ya'aqov was afraid that his children would be assimilated into Egyptian culture. In response, God told him that he would make them a 'great nation' that is to say distinct from the Egyptians. (*Sforno, Netziv*)
- Ya'aqov was afraid that the promise made to Avraham that his descendants would be slaves would now come to pass. God comforts him by telling him that the prophecy of them becoming a great nation would also come to pass (*Hizkuni*)

Who are Ya'aqov's 'daughters'?

The Torah tells us that Ya'aqov went to Egypt along with his 'daughters' and the 'daughters of his sons'. However, in the subsequent list of the 70 who went to Egypt the only daughter is Dinah and the only granddaughter is Serah the daughter of Asher. Possible answers to this problem include:

- There were other daughters and granddaughters who were not mentioned in the list, since it is unlikely that only 2 out of 66 births would be female. However, it remains to be explained why Dinah and Serah are included in the list of 70. This consideration is probably the basis for the midrashic tradition that each brother was born with a female twin that he married.
- The words 'daughters' and 'daughters of his sons' include Ya'aqov's daughters-in-law and those of his sons who are not listed by name. (*Redak*)
- *Ramban* and *Hizkuni* argue that this is just a quirk of biblical Hebrew which sometimes uses a plural noun to refer to an individual, for example, 'The sons of Dan, Hushim' (*Bereishit* 46:23) or 'the sons of Palu, Eliav' (*Bemidbar*: 26:8)

ויגר שם

מִלְמַד שְׁלֹא יָרֵד יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ לְהַשְׁתַּקֵּעַ בְּמִצְרַיִם אֲלָא לְגוּר שָׁם, שְׁנַאֲמַר:
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרֹעָה, לְגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ בְּאֵנוּ, כִּי אֵין מְרַעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעַבְדֶיךָ, כִּי-
כָבֵד הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן. וְעַתָּה יֵשְׁבוּ-נָא עַבְדֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אָחִיו וְאֶל-בֵּית אָבִיו אֲעֹלָה וְאֶגִּידָה לְפְרֹעָה וְאִמְרָה אֵלָיו אַחֵי וּבֵית-
אָבִי אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן בָּאוּ אֵלַי: וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רַעִי צֹאן כִּי-אֲנָשִׁי מְקַנָּה הָיוּ וְצֹאֲנָם
וּבְקָרָם וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם הֵבִיאוּ: וְהָיָה כִּי-יִקְרָא לָכֶם פְּרֹעָה וְאָמַר מַה-מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם:
וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲנָשִׁי מְקַנָּה הָיוּ עַבְדֶיךָ מִנְעוּרֵינוּ וְעַד-עַתָּה גָם-אֲנַחְנוּ גָם-אֲבֹתֵינוּ בְּעִבּוּר
תֵּשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן כִּי-תֹועֵבֶת מִצְרַיִם כָּל-רַעָה צֹאן: וַיָּבֹא יוֹסֵף וַיְגִיד לְפְרֹעָה וַיֹּאמֶר
אָבִי וְאָחִי וְצֹאֲנָם וּבְקָרָם וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם בָּאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהֵנִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן: וּמְקַצָּה
אָחִיו לָקַח חֲמִשָּׁה אֲנָשִׁים וַיִּצְגָם לִפְנֵי פְרֹעָה: וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶל-אָחִיו מַה-מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרֹעָה רַעָה צֹאן עַבְדֶיךָ גָם-אֲנַחְנוּ גָם-אֲבֹתֵינוּ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרֹעָה לְגוּר
בְּאֶרֶץ בְּאֵנו כִּי-אֵין מְרַעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעַבְדֶיךָ כִּי-כָבֵד הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְעַתָּה
יֵשְׁבוּ-נָא עַבְדֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן: וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶל-יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אָבִיךָ וְאָחִיךָ בָּאוּ אֵלַיךָ:
אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא בְּמִיטֵב הָאֶרֶץ הוֹשֵׁב אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אָחִיךָ יֵשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן
וְאִם-יִדְעֶת וְיִשְׁבֶּם אֲנָשִׁי-חֵיל וְשִׁמְתֶם שָׂרֵי מְקַנָּה עַל-אֲשֶׁר-לִי: וַיָּבֹא יוֹסֵף אֶת-יַעֲקֹב
אָבִיו וַיַּעֲמִדְהוּ לִפְנֵי פְרֹעָה וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת-פְּרֹעָה: וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב כְּמָה יָמֵי
שָׁנֵי חַיֶיךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-פְּרֹעָה יָמֵי שָׁנֵי מְגוּרֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה מָעַט וְרַעִים
הָיוּ יָמֵי שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי וְלֹא הִשִּׁיגוּ אֶת-יָמֵי שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי אֲבֹתֵי בְיָמֵי מְגוּרֵיהֶם: וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת-
פְּרֹעָה וַיֵּצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי פְרֹעָה: וַיּוֹשֶׁב יוֹסֵף אֶת-אָבִיו וְאֶת-אָחִיו וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַחְזָה בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם בְּמִיטֵב הָאֶרֶץ בְּאֶרֶץ רַעֲמֶסֶס כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה פְּרֹעָה: וַיִּכְלָל יוֹסֵף אֶת-אָבִיו
וְאֶת-אָחִיו וְאֶת כָּל-בֵּית אָבִיו לָחֶם לְפִי הַטָּף: (בראשית מו:לא-מז:יב)

- Yosef instructs his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they are herders, in order that Pharaoh should settle them in Goshen.
- Yosef presents five of his brothers to Pharaoh and Pharaoh tells him to settle them in Goshen and to make them officers over his livestock.
- Yosef settles the brothers in Goshen and provides them with food.

Why was there more pasture in Egypt?

Yosef's brothers tell Pharaoh that they cannot remain in the land of Canaan because 'there is no pasture for your servant's flock, for heavy is the famine in the land of Canaan'. However, there was also a famine in Egypt. Why should there be more grass in one than the other? *Ramban* suggests that because there was no leftover food stored up in the land of Canaan, the people had resorted to eating the grass, leaving none leftover for the animals.

Why were shepherds an abomination to Egypt?

As part of his plan to have them settled separately in Goshen, Yosef tells his brothers to inform Pharaoh that they are shepherds. Since the Egyptians consider shepherds to be an abomination, they would want Ya'akov's sons to live separately. What did the Egyptians consider to be abominable about shepherds?

- *Rashi* says that the Egyptians worshipped sheep (and therefore, perhaps, considered it distasteful for them to be raised for slaughter or milking).
- *Ibn Ezra* claims that the ancient Egyptians were vegetarians and wouldn't allow meat consumption in their midst. *Rashbam* and *Redak* claim that specifically *Tzon* (i.e. sheep and goats) were considered forbidden for consumption. Hence shepherds who raised animals for slaughter were considered an abomination.
- *Hizkuni* follows *Rashi* and claims that the Egyptians worshipped the constellation Aries (the Lamb). He argues that the term 'abomination' is being used here, as it is frequently in the Tanach, as pseudonym for deity. This is a bit difficult here because it would apparently mean that the shepherds themselves were considered a deity by the Egyptians.
- *Bekhor Shor* argues, contrary to *Ibn Ezra* et al., that shepherds were given great honour in Egypt on account of their being responsible for raising sheep who were worshipped as deities. This is why Pharaoh told Yosef to settle his brothers in the 'the best of the land'. Because the profession of shepherding was closely associated with idol worship, shepherds were therefore 'an abomination of Egypt' from the perspective of Yosef, or that of the Torah itself.

Why did Yosef want to settle his brothers in Goshen?

Ralbag lists many reasons. (1) Because, as shepherds, it was a place they could live comfortably; (2) because it was the best part of the country; (3) because he wanted them to be united in one place so they would not (later) suffer as much as if they were spread out among the Egyptians; (4) there were fewer negative spiritual influences there than in the rest of Egypt, either because the Egyptians in Goshen were not idol worshippers or because the region was sparsely inhabited.

בְּמֵתֵי מֵעֵט

כָּמָה שְׁנָאֵמַר: בְּשִׁבְעִים נֶפֶשׁ יָרְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִצְרַיִם, וְעַתָּה שָׂמָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם לְרַב.

ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה את יעקב איש וביתו באו: ראובן שמעון לוי ויהודה: יששכר זבולן ובנימן: דן ונפתלי גד ואשר: ויהי כל-נפש יצאי ירד-יעקב שבעים נפש ויוסף היה במצרים: (שמות א:א-ה)

The number 70 includes Ya'aqov's wives, his sons and daughter, his male grandchildren and one female grandchild. It does not include his sons' wives, nor his grandchildren's wives.

The list provided in *Bereishit* 46:8-28 only comes to 69. There are several explanations for how the number 70 arrived at:

- The 70th person is Yocheved, daughter of Levi, who was conceived, but not born, before arriving in Egypt. (*Rashi, Hizkuni*)
- 70 is a round number; the actual number was 69 (*Ibn Ezra*)
- Ya'aqov is included in the number 70 (*Ibn Ezra, Rashbam*) [The problem is how can Ya'aqov be counted among ירד יעקב?]

וְיָהִי שֵׁם לְגוֹי

מִלְמַד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְצַיְנִים שֵׁם

When the children of Israel came to Egypt they did not assimilate, but rather became a distinct national entity with their own language, mores, and names.

גְּדוּל עַצוֹם

כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ בְּמָאד מְאֹד, וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם.

וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף וְכָל-אָחָיו וְכָל הַדּוֹר הַהוּא: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצְמוּ בְּמָאד מְאֹד וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם: (שמות א:ו-ז)

After the death of Yosef's generation, the children of Israel swiftly multiplied.

Rashbam translates the verse in a way that would explain the massive population growth that must have occurred before the exodus. פרו refers to high fertility rates, וישרצו to low rates of infant death during childbirth, וירבו to low rates of infant mortality and ויעצמו to high life expectancy, which would allow for long periods in which Israelites could bear children. If, in a group with a starting population of 70 males, every male in each generation had 2.5 male children who survived to adulthood, then there would be more than 600,000 males within 10 generations. Parallels to such population growth can be found among the New England colonists of the 16th and 17th centuries and in sub-Saharan Africa today.

וּרְב

כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: רִבְבָה כְּצֶמַח הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְתִּיף, וַתִּרְבִּי וַתִּגְדְּלִי וַתִּבְאֵי בְעַדִּי עַדִּיִּים, שָׂדִים נִכְנּוּ וּשְׂעָרָךְ צִמְחָה, וְאֵת עָרֶם וְעָרֶיהָ.

וַאֲמַר אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ שְׁקוּצֵי עֵינָיו הַשְּׁלִיכוּ וּבְגָלוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶל-תַּטְמְאוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: וַיִּמְרוּ-בִי וְלֹא אָבוּ לִשְׁמֹעַ אֵלַי אִישׁ אֶת-שְׁקוּצֵי עֵינֵיהֶם לֹא הִשְׁלִיכוּ וְאֶת-גְּלוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם לֹא עָזְבוּ וַאֲמַר לְשִׁפְךָ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם לְכָלֹת אֶפֶי בָהֶם בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (יחזקאל כ:ז-ח)

The *Haggadah* tells us, based on *Sefer Yehezkel*, that, after growing numerous, but prior to enslavement, the children of Israel fell into sin. *Sefer Yehezqel* would appear to indicate that their sin was idolatry (see *Ibn Ezra, Shemot 2:23*).

וירעו אתנו המצרים

כָּמָה שָׁנָאֵמַר: הָבָה נִתְחַכְמָה לּוֹ פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה כִּי תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֵף גַּם הוּא עַל שְׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם-בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ.

וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ-חֲדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע אֶת-יוֹסֵף: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-עַמּוֹ הִנֵּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעַצוּם מְאֹד: הָבָה נִתְחַכְמָה לּוֹ פֶּן-יִרְבֶּה וְהָיָה כִּי-תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֵף גַּם-הוּא עַל-שְׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם-בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ: (שמות א: ח-י)

A new Pharaoh arises who 'did not know (of?) Yosef' and he declares to the Egyptians that the numerousness of the children of Israel makes it necessary to enslave them lest they multiply further and side with Egypt's enemies in the event of a future war.

The enslavement begins with the Egyptians considering the children of Israel negatively (וירעו אתנו המצרים).

Why was Pharaoh worried that the children of Israel would leave the land?

If Pharaoh was worried that the children of Israel were too numerous, why was he concerned about the possibility of them going 'up from the land'?

- *Rashbam* suggests that Pharaoh was worried about the land becoming depopulated.
- *Sa'adya Gaon*, *Rashi* and *Rabeinu Bahya* follow a midrashic explanation according to which Pharaoh was expressing in a roundabout way his concern that the children of Israel would force the Egyptians out of the land.
- *Ramban* suggests that Pharaoh's concern was that they would join Egypt's enemies in looting the land and then leave with Egypt's wealth.

ויעֲנוּנוּ

כָּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם. וַיִּבְּנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת לְפָרְעָה. אֶת־פֶּתֶם וְאֶת־רַעְמֵסֶס.

וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיִּבְּנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת לְפָרְעָה אֶת־פֶּתֶם וְאֶת־רַעְמֵסֶס: וְכֹאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרֹץ וַיִּקְצוּ מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (שמות א: יא-יב)

The Egyptians place taskmasters over the children of Israel 'in order to afflict them' and they build storage cities for Pharaoh. However, the more the Egyptians afflict the children of Israel, the more they multiply.

וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה

כָּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיַּעֲבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרְךְ.

וַיַּעֲבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרְךְ: וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה בְּחֹמֶר וּבִלְבָנִים וּבְכָל־עֲבֹדָה בְּשָׂדֵה אֶת־כָּל־עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר־עֲבָדוּ בָּהֶם בְּפָרְךְ: (שמות א: יג-יד)

The Egyptians respond by intensifying the labour of the children of Israel.

Ramban explains the process of worsening oppression as follows. At first, Pharaoh placed a form of collective *corvée* (tax paid in kind) on the children of Israel, appointing שרי מסים to select Israelites to perform a fixed quota of construction work. When this did not succeed in decreasing the Israelite rate of reproduction, he gave a general order allowing any Egyptian to take any Israelite for any form of servile work, overworking them with deliberate cruelty. In addition, the children of Israel were now required to produce the bricks and mortar for the building projects, with only straw being provided for them.

וַנִּצְעַק אֶל-ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

כָּמָה שָׁנָאֵמַר: וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, וַיֵּאָנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבוּדָה וַיִּזְעֻקוּ, וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־הָעֲבוּדָה. (שמות ב: כג)

After Pharaoh dies, the children of Israel cry out and their cry goes up to God.

The connection between the death of the Pharaoh and the children of Israel crying out is not clear.

- *Ramban and Hizkuni* argue that while the first Pharaoh was alive they retained hope that slavery would be a temporary decree limited to the lifespan of that king. Once a new king had come to the throne it became clear that it was permanent.
- *Rabbeinu Bahya* suggests that they were afraid that an even worse king would rise to the throne and intensify their suffering.

וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ

כָּמָה שָׁנָאֵמַר: וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקֹתָם, וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם, אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב. (שמות ב: כד)

God hears the cry of the children of Israel and remembers the covenant he made with their forefathers.

The Torah tells us that God's decision to redeem the children of Israel was a result of hearing their cry, seeing their suffering, and remembering his covenant with the forefathers. Many commentators infer that all this was necessary because they were still not worthy of being redeemed. *Ramban* and *Rabeinu Bahya* write that this was so even though the appointed time for their redemption had arrived, whereas *Ralbag* writes that the combination of the covenant with the *avot* and the prayer of the children of Israel led God to bring out the children of Israel before the appointed time.

וַיֵּרָא אֶת-עֲנִינוֹ

זו פְּרִישׁוֹת דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים. (שמות ב: כה)

God saw the suffering of the children of Israel and the effect that it was having on their ability to reproduce.

The interruption of conjugal life.

The *Haggadah* comments that the suffering which God saw was specifically the effect that slavery had on the ability of married couples to engage in normal conjugal activity. This is the only outstanding example of the *Haggadah* stating something that has no obvious support in a biblical text. Possible explanations include.

- The verbs 'to know' (יָדַע) [from the verse in *Shemot*] and 'to oppress' (עָנָה)¹ [from the verse in *Devarim*] both have an alternative (or, in the first case, euphemistic) usage in the Tanach in which they refer to sexual congress. The *Haggadah* is therefore finding a hidden allusion to something pertaining to reproduction. (*Raavan*).
- By contrast, the verb (עָנָה) is also used in Rabbinic literature to refer to the withholding of sexual intercourse (*Ritva, Avudraham, Rashbatz, Shibalei haLeqet*)
- The use of the two verbs, 'to see' and 'to know' in the verse from *Shemot* imply knowledge of some hidden form of suffering, i.e. in a couples' private affairs (See *Rabbeinu Bahya, Hizkuni, Ibn Ezra*).
- God was bound to bring the descendants of Avraham, Yitzhaq and Ya'aqov to the land of Israel. If the suffering had become so intense that their descendants were no longer able to reproduce then that would necessitate immediate action.

¹ In modern Hebrew, the root has the meaning of 'to rape', but it does not have the exclusive connotation of coerced intercourse in the Tanach.

וְאֵת-עַמִּלְנוּ

אלו הבנים. כמה שנאמר: כִּלְהֵבֶן הַיְלֹוד הַיְאֲרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכִלְהֵבֶת תַּחֲיוֹן.

ויאמר מֶלֶךְ מְצָרִים לְמִילֵדֹת הָעֵבְרִית אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם הָאֵחָת שִׁפְרָה וְשֵׁם הַשְּׁנִית פּוּעָה: ויאמר בְּיַלְדֹכֶן אֶת-הָעֵבְרִיּוֹת וּרְאִיתֶן עַל-הָאֲבָנִים אִם-בֶּן הוּא וְהַמְתֵּן אֹתוֹ וְאִם-בַּת היא וְחָיָה: וְתִירָאן הַמִּילֵדֹת אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵן מֶלֶךְ מְצָרִים וְתַחֲיִין אֶת-הַיְלָדִים: וַיִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ-מְצָרִים לְמִילֵדֹת וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן מַדּוּעַ עֲשִׂיתֶן הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְתַחֲיִין אֶת-הַיְלָדִים: וְתֹאמְרֶן הַמִּילֵדֹת אֶל-פְּרֹעָה כִּי לֹא כֹנָשִׁים הַמְצָרִית הָעֵבְרִית כִּי-חַיּוֹת הֵנָּה בְּטָרִם תָּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמִּילֵדֹת וַיִּלְדּוּ: וַיִּיטֹב אֱלֹהִים לְמִילֵדֹת וַיִּרְבֶּה הָעָם וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ מְאֹד: וַיְהִי כִי-יִרְאוּ הַמִּילֵדֹת אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים: וַיֵּצֵאוּ פְּרֹעָה לְכָל-עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כִּלְהֵבֶן הַיְלֹוד הַיְאֲרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכִלְהֵבֶת תַּחֲיוֹן:

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת-בַּת-לְוִי: וַתְּהִי הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּרְאֵהוּ אֹתוֹ כִּי-טוֹב הוּא וַתְּצַפְנֶהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: וְלֹא-יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצְּפִינּוּ וַתִּקַּח-לוֹ תַּבַּת גָּמָא וַתַּחְמְרָהּ בַּחֲמֵר וּבַזָּפֶת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל-שִׁפְתַּי הַיְאֵר: וַתַּתְּצֵב אֶחָתוֹ מֵרַחֵק לְדַעַה מֵהַיַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: וַתִּרְדַּב בַּת-פְּרֹעָה לְרַחֵץ עַל-הַיְאֵר וְנִעְרַתְיָהּ הִלְכַת עַל-יַד הַיְאֵר וַתִּרְאֵהוּ אֶת-הַתְּבֵה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת-אֶמְתָּהּ וַתִּקַּח: וַתִּפְתַּח וַתִּרְאֶהוּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד וְהֵנֵחַ-נֶעַר בְּכַה וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִיֶּלְדֵי הָעֵבְרִים זֶה: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶחָתוֹ אֶל-בַּת-פְּרֹעָה הַאֵלֶךְ וַקְרָאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקַת מִן הָעֵבְרִית וַתִּינַק לָךְ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד: וַתֹּאמֶר-לָהּ בַּת-פְּרֹעָה לְכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ הָעַלְמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-אִם הַיֶּלֶד: וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַּת-פְּרֹעָה הַיְלִיכִי אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה וְהִינִקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת-שִׁכְרִי וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּינַקְהוּ: וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּבְאֶהוּ לְבַת-פְּרֹעָה וַיְהִי-לָהּ לְבֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן-הַמַּיִם מְשִׁיתֶהוּ: (שמות א: טו-בי)

- Pharaoh instructs the 'Hebrew midwives' to kill all male Hebrew newborns.
- Because the midwives 'feared God', they do not execute this order and excuse themselves by claiming that the Hebrew women always gave birth before a midwife could arrive.
- Pharaoh responds by giving a general order to throw all male children into the river.
- Amram, a grandson of Levi, and Yocheved have a male child. After three months of hiding him she places him in a waterproofed wicker box and puts it into the bulrushes at the side of the river.
- Pharaoh's daughter finds the baby and identifies him as a Hebrew. His older sister, Miriam, who is watching from a distance, suggests that she can find a Hebrew woman to nurse him and brings the baby to Yocheved.

Who were the midwives?

The vast majority of commentators accept that the midwives, Shifra and Puah, are alternative names for Moshe's mother and sister, Yocheved and Miriam. However, there remains the question of why there are only two midwives for the entire Hebrew population. Answers to this problem include:

- Shifra and Puah were official representatives in charge of all the Hebrew midwives. (*Hizkuni, Ibn Ezra*)
- Shifra and Puah were the midwives in the Egyptian capital. After Pharaoh saw that he was unable to implement his plan in the capital, he did not attempt to carry it out nationwide.

Who were the Hebrews?

In this passage, the children of Israel are referred to exclusively as 'Hebrews' (עבריים/עבריות). The term is used occasionally in the Tanakh, particularly in *Shemot* and *Sefer Shmuel*. The first incident of it being used is in *Bereishit* 14:13 where Avraham is referred to as 'Avram the Hebrew' when learning that Lot has been kidnapped by the four Kings who made war on Sodom. There are two possible etymologies for the term. The first is that it refers to the descendants of Ever (עבר), the great grandson of Shem and the sixth-generation ancestor of Avraham. This is based on *Bereishit* 10:21, where Shem is identified as 'the father of all the sons of Ever', that is, presumably, the Hebrews. The second is that it is based on the verb 'to cross' (עבר) and refers to people who have crossed from one place to another, that is a foreign or migrant people. This may be based on the fact that Avraham crossed over the river Euphrates from his homeland to Canaan, or that the children of Israel crossed the boundary into Egypt and then subsequently to Canaan.

As a rule, the term is used when the verse is narrating from the perspective of those who view the Israelites as a foreign people, either the natives of Canaan in the time of Avraham, the Egyptians, or the Philistines. The term 'children of Israel', by contrast, is used when speaking from the perspective of the Israelites or that of God. This might indicate that the term Hebrew is an ethnic identifier, as opposed to a religious one, similar to the term Semite (that is, descendant of Shem) in modern English. When speaking to Pharaoh, Moshe sometimes calls *HASHEM* the 'the God of the Hebrews', thereby identifying Him as the national God of a particular people, as opposed to identifying the children of Israel by their worship of a particular God (YisraEL). This perspective may be that of Onkelos, who translate the term as יהודאי, 'Jews', a national, rather than religious term. Like the term Semite, it may be that 'Hebrew' could be used both to refer specifically to the children of Israel and also to a wider racial or linguistic group of which they were a part. *Sforno* and *Ibn Ezra*, however, take the opposite approach, arguing that 'Hebrew' denotes those who followed the religious perspective of Ever, that is those who believed in one God.

וְאֵת לַחֲצֵנוּ

זו הדחק, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְגַם־רֵאִיתִי אֶת־הַלַּחֲץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לַחֲצִים אֹתָם.

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם מִכָּה אִישׁ־עִבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו: וַיִּפֶן כֹּה וְכֹה וַיֵּרָא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיֵּד אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַחֹל: וַיֵּצֵא בַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי וַהֲנִה שְׁנֵי־אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים נָצִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָרֶשַׁע לָמָּה תִכֶּה רַעֲךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר מִי שְׂמֶךָ לְאִישׁ שֶׁר וְשִׁפְט עָלֵינוּ הַלְהַרְגֵנִי אַתָּה אָמַר כְּאֲשֶׁר הִרְגַת אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן נֹדַע הַדְּבָר: וַיִּשְׁמַע פְּרַעֲה אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּבְקֶשׁ לְהַרְג אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וַיִּבְרַח מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי פְרַעֲה וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־מִדְיָן וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־הַבְּאֵר: וַלְכֹהֵן מִדְיָן שָׁבַע בְּנוֹת וַתְּבֹאנָה וַתְּדַלְּנָה וַתְּמַלְאנָה אֶת־הַרְהָטִים לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבִיהֶן: וַיָּבֹאוּ הָרַעִים וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם וַיִּקָּם מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹשַׁעַן וַיִּשְׁק אֶת־צֹאנָם: וַתְּבֹאנָה אֶל־רַעֲוֹאֵל אֲבִיהֶן וַיֹּאמֶר מַדּוּעַ מֵהֲרַתֶּן בְּאֵי הַיּוֹם: וַתֹּאמְרֵן אִישׁ מִצְרִי הִצִּילֵנוּ מִיַּד הָרַעִים וְגַם־דָּלָה דָּלָה לָנוּ וַיִּשְׁק אֶת־הַצֹּאן: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בְּנֹתָיו וְאֵינוּ לָמָּה זֶה עֲזַבְתֶּן אֶת־הָאִישׁ קְרָאן לוֹ וַיֹּאכַל לֶחֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְשִׁבְת אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־צִפְרָה בְּתוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה: וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גֵרְשֵׁם כִּי אָמַר גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נֹכְרִיָּה: ...

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רַעֲה אֶת־צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֲתָנוּ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן וַיִּנְהַג אֶת־הַצֹּאן אַחַר הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֲרֵבָה: וַיֵּרָא מְלֹאךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלִבְת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֵּרָא וַהֲנִה הַסֵּנֶה בְּעַר בְּאֵשׁ וַהֲסֵנָה אֵינָנו אֶכָּל: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמְּרָאָה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה מַדּוּעַ לֹא־יָבֵעַר הַסֵּנֶה: וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לְרֵאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּקְרַב הָלֵם שְׁלִנְעֵלִיךְ מֵעַל רִגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְת־קֶדֶשׁ הוּא: וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מֵהִבִּיט אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה רָאָה רֵאִיתִי אֶת־עַנְי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־צַעֲקוֹתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו כִּי יַדְעֵתִי אֶת־מַכְאֲבָיו: וְאֶרְד לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וְלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן־הָאֶרֶץ הַהִוא אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ זֹבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ אֶל־מָקוֹם הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי: וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה צַעֲקַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאָה אֵלַי וְגַם־רֵאִיתִי אֶת־הַלַּחֲץ אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לַחֲצִים אֹתָם: וְעַתָּה לָכֵה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל־פְּרַעֲה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אָנֹכִי כִּי אֵלֶךְ אֶל־פְּרַעֲה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְזֶה־לְךָ הָאוֹת כִּי אָנֹכִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאֶךָ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה: (שְׁמוֹת ב:יא-ב:כב ג:א-יב)

- Moshe grows up in Pharaoh's court. One day he goes out to look at the Hebrew slaves and kills an Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew.
- When Moshe learns that the news has spread, he flees to Midian where he marries Yitro's daughter, Tzipporah, who bears him a son.
- One day, Moshe is shepherding Yitro's flock when he sees a bush that is burning, but not being consumed. From the bush, God speaks to Moshe, telling him that he will be His emissary to save the children of Israel.

'And this is your sign that I have sent you'

When God tells Moshe his mission, Moshe is sceptical that he is capable or worthy of going to Pharaoh or freeing the children of Israel. God tells him that he will succeed 'For I will be with you, and this is your sign that I have sent you, when you bring out the children of Israel, you will worship [the] God on this mountain'. On first glance, this looks like God is telling Moshe that the sign that he is worthy will be the subsequent revelation on Sinai, but this seems illogical since this can only happen *after* Moshe has already performed his mission. There are two basic ways of interpreting this verse.

- *Ramban* argues that Moshe was worried about two things: (i) that Pharaoh would refuse to send out the children of Israel, and (ii) that though the children of Israel would willingly leave servitude they would not follow Moshe to conquer the land of Israel. God's answer addresses both concerns. (i) 'I will be with you' in overpowering Pharaoh and (ii) 'This will be the sign' after the exodus that proves Moshe is a true prophet and that the children of Israel should obey his commands thereafter. *Ramban* argues similarly (*Hilchot Yesodei haTorah* 8:2) that the various miracles Moshe performed in Egypt were only temporary signs of his authority, but that the absolute truth of his prophecy, and those of subsequent prophets, would only be confirmed at Sinai.
- *Rashi*, *Rashbam*, and *Ibn Ezra* interpret 'this is your sign' as referring to the burning bush itself, which is sufficient evidence that God can achieve miracles. According to *Rashi* and *Ibn Ezra*, the rest of the sentence explains God's reason for bringing out the children of Israel, namely that they should come to Sinai. *Ibn Ezra* understands this as the *purpose* of bringing them out, while *Rashi* views it as the meritorious cause of their being brought out. According to *Rashbam*, the rest of the verse is a suggestion for what Moshe should argue when facing Pharaoh, namely that the children of Israel need to leave Egypt to serve God on the mountain.

Moshe's early life

When Moshe receives his prophecy at the burning bush, he is already around 80 years old. The Torah provides only a few details about his life up to this point, but they are important in understanding why he was chosen to save the children of Israel (see esp. *Sforno*).

- Being raised at Pharaoh's court gave him the opportunity to develop the dignity and cultural tools to negotiate with Pharaoh that an ordinary Hebrew would have lacked.
- Killing the Egyptian demonstrated Moshe's intense nationalist instincts which he would need to lead the children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness and plead on their behalf.
- In trying to make peace between the two arguing Hebrews, Moshe demonstrated his concern not only for protecting Hebrews from others, but for promoting internal harmony.
- Moshe showed his concern that justice should be done, aside from his nationalist instincts, in assisting Yitro's daughters at the well.
- Before returning to Egypt, Moshe had matured and raised his own family, preparing him for leadership.

ויוצאנו יהוה ממצרים

לא על־ידי מלאך, ולא על־ידי שרף, ולא על־ידי שליח, אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו ובעצמו. שנאמר: ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה, והכיתי כל־בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה, ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים אני יהוה.

ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה - אני ולא מלאך
והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים - אני ולא שרף
ובכל־אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים - אני ולא השליח
אני ה' - אני הוא ולא אחר

ויאמר משה אלה־אלהים הנה אנכי בא אל־בני ישראל ואמרת להם אלהי אבותיכם שלחני אליכם ואמרו־לי מה־שמו מה אמר אלהם: ויאמר אלהים אל־משה אהיה אשר אהיה ויאמר כה תאמר לבני ישראל אהיה שלחני אליכם: ויאמר עוד אלהים אל־משה כה־תאמר אל־בני ישראל יהוה אלהי אבותיכם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב שלחני אליכם זה־שמי לעלם וזה זכרי לדר דר: לך ואספת את־זקני ישראל ואמרת אלהם יהוה אלהי אבותיכם נראה אלי אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב לאמר פקד פקדתי אתכם ואת־העשוי לכם במצרים: ואמר אעלה אתכם מעני מצרים אל־ארץ הכנעני והחתי והאמרי והפרזי והחוי והיבוסי אל־ארץ זבת חלב ודבש: ושמעו לקלך וקבאת אתה וזקני ישראל אל־מלך מצרים ואמרתם אליו יהוה אלהי העבריים נקרה עלינו ועתה נלכה־נא דרך שלשת ימים במדבר ונזבחה ליהוה אלהינו: ואני ידעתי כי לא־יתן אתכם מלך מצרים להלך ולא ביד חזקה: ושלחתי את־ידי והכיתי את־מצרים בכל נפלאתי אשר אעשה בקרבן ואחר־יכן ישלח אתכם: ונתתי את־חזן העם־הזה בעיני מצרים והיה כי תלכו לא תלכו ריקם: ושאלה אשה משכנתה ומגרת ביתה כלי־כסף וכלי זהב ושמלת ושמלת על־בניכם ועל־בנותיכם ונצלתם את־מצרים: ויען משה ויאמר והן לא־יאמינו לי ולא ישמעו בקלי כי יאמרו לא־נראה אליך יהוה: ויאמר אליו יהוה מזה [מה־] [זה] בידך ויאמר משה: ויאמר השליכהו ארצה וישליכהו ארצה ויהי לנחש ויגס משה מפניו: ויאמר יהוה אל־משה שלח ידך ואחז בזנבו וישלח ידו ויחזק בו ויהי למטה בכפו: למען יאמינו כי־נראה אליך יהוה אלהי אבותם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב: ויאמר יהוה לו עוד הבאת נא ידך בחיקך ויבא ידו בחיקו ויוצאה והנה ידו מצרעת כשֶׁלֶג: ויאמר השב ידך אל־חיקך וישב ידו אל־חיקו ויוצאה מחיקו והנה־שבה כבשרו: והיה אס־לא יאמינו לך ולא ישמעו לקל האת הראשון והאמינו לקל האת האחרון: והיה אס־לא יאמינו גם לשני האתות האלה ולא ישמעו לקלך ולקחת מממי היאר ושפכת היבשה והיו המים אשר תקח מן־היאר והיו לדם ביבשת: ויאמר משה אל־

יהוה בי אֲדַנִּי לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנֹכִי גַם מִתְּמוֹל גַּם מִשְׁלָשׁם גַּם מֵאִזְ דְּבָרְךָ אֶל-עַבְדְּךָ כִּי כַבֵּד-פָּה וּכְבֹד לְשׁוֹן אֲנֹכִי: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מִי שֵׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם אוֹ מִי־יְשׁוּם אֵלָם אוֹ חֲרָשׁ אוֹ פֶקַח אוֹ עוֹר הֲלֹא אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה: וְעַתָּה לֵךְ וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם-פִּיךָ וְהוֹרִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדַנִּי שְׁלַח-נָא בְיַד-תְּשַׁלַּח: וַיַּחֲרֵאֲף יְהוָה בְּמִשְׁחָה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶהְרֹן אַחִיךָ הֲלוֹי יִדְעָתִי כִּי-דַבֵּר יִדְבַר הוּא וְגַם הִנְחָה-הוּא יֵצֵא לְקִרְאָתְךָ וְרָאָךְ וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ: וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו וְשִׁמַּת אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים בְּפִיו וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם-פִּיךָ וְעִם-פִּיהוּ וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּן: וְדַבַּר-הוּא לֵךְ אֶל-הָעָם וְהָיָה הוּא יְהִי־לְךָ לְפֶה וְאַתָּה תְהִי־לוֹ לְאֱלֹהִים: וְאַתָּה-מִטָּה הִזָּה תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה-בּוֹ אֶת-הָאֵת:...

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵךְ לְקִרְאֵת מִשְׁחָה הַמַּדְבְּרָה וְיִלֵּךְ וַיַּפְגֵּשְׁהוּ בְּהַר הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁקֵלוּ: וַיַּגִּד מִשְׁחָה לְאַהֲרֹן אֵת כָּל-דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח וְאֵת כָּל-הָאֵת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ: וַיִּלֵּךְ מִשְׁחָה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֵּאסְפוּ אֶת-כָּל-זַקְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיְדַבֵּר אֶהְרֹן אֵת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-מִשְׁחָה וַיַּעַשׂ הָאֵת לְעֵינֵי הָעָם: וַיֵּאמְרוּ הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי-פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה אֶת-עַנְיָם וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ: וְאַחַר כֵּן מִשְׁחָה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פְּרַעֲהַ כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלַח אֶת-עַמִּי וַיַּחֲגוּ לִי בַמִּדְבָּר: וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲהַ מִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁמַּע בְּקִלּוֹ לְשַׁלַּח אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִדְעָתִי אֶת-יְהוָה וְגַם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח: (שמות ג: יג – ד: יז, ד: כז – ה: ב)

- Moshe asks which name of God he should use when announcing his mission to the children of Israel. God tells him to tell them that ‘*HASHEM* the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzhaq, and the God of Ya’aqov sent me’.
- God gives Moshe three signs to convince the children of Israel: (i) turning his staff into a snake, (ii) turning the flesh of his hand leprous and (iii) turning water into blood.
- Moshe argues that his speaking abilities are not adequate for the mission, so God tells him that his brother, Aharon, will speak on his behalf.

What is God’s name?
 Moshe asks God what he should say when the children of Israel ask him for the name of the God of their fathers who sent him. God gives two answers: (i) ‘I am what I am and you shall say “I am” sent you’ and (ii) ‘*HASHEM*, the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzhaq, and the God of Ya’aqov sent me to you, this is My Name forever, and this is My memorial for all generations’. There are two approaches found in the *Rishonim* towards explaining why God gives two answers.

- *Rashbam* and *Hizkuni* explain that the first answer is God’s proper name and the second (which is assumed to be read as אד-וני) is his title, equivalent to saying ‘Charles’ and ‘King’ respectively.
- *Rabbeinu Bahya* argues that the names are equivalent, or that the first is an explanation of the second, since they are both derived from the verb root ‘to be’ (ה, י ה) and י being often interchangeable. *Rashbam* and *Hizkuni* give a ‘secret’ explanation according to which [א-ה-י] is God referring to himself in the first person and [י-ה-ו] is the equivalent used by us referring to him in the third person. The two names based on the root ‘to be’ refer either to God’s eternity (*Sa’adya Gaon*), His absolute, un-dependent state of being (*Rambam*), or His manifesting Himself under the characteristic of mercy in which He performs open miracles that violate the normal order of nature (*Ramban*). *Ibn Ezra* writes that the name *HASHEM* signifies the knowledge of God achieved by prophets after extended meditation, which allows them to receive direct emanations of ‘כח עליון’ from God by means of which they can perform miracles.

בִּיד חֲזָקָה

זו הדבר, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הִנֵּה יַד־ה' הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה, בַּסּוּסִים, בַּחֲמֹרִים, בַּגְּמָלִים, בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן, דְּבַר כָּבֵד מְאֹד.

וּבְזֹרַע נְטוּיָה

זו הַחֲרָב, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַחֲרָבוֹ שְׁלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ, נְטוּיָה עַל־יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעַבְרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ גִלְכָה נָא דָרָךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בְּמִדְבָר וְנִזְבַּחַה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ פֹּן־יִפְגְּעוּנוּ בַדָּבָר אוֹ בַחֲרָב: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמָה מָשָׁה וְאַהֲרֹן תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִמַּעֲשָׂיו לְכוּ לְסִבְלַת־יִכָּם: וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲהוּ הַזֶּה־רַבִּים עִתָּה עִם הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁבַּתְּם אֹתָם מִסִּבְלַתְּם: וַיֵּצֵא פְרַעֲהוּ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַנְּגִשִׁים בָּעָם וְאֶת־שֹׁטְרָיו לֵאמֹר: לֹא תֹאסְפוּן לָתֵת תְּבוֹן לָעָם לְלַבֵּן הַלְּבָנִים כִּתְמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ הַיָּמִים יִלְכוּ וְקִשְׁשׁוּ לָהֶם תְּבוֹן: וְאֶת־מִתְכַנֶּתֶת הַלְּבָנִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים תְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ הַיָּמִים תְּשִׁימוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי־נִרְפִים הֵם עַל־פָּנָיו הֵם צֹעְקִים לֵאמֹר גִּלְכָה נִזְבַּחַה לַאֱלֹהֵינוּ: תִּכְבֵּד הָעֶבֶדָה עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־בָהּ וְאֶל־יִשְׁעוֹ בַדְּבַר־שֹׁטְרָיו: וַיֵּצֵאוּ נְגִשֵׁי הָעָם וְשֹׁטְרָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר פְּרַעֲהוּ אֵינֶנִּי נֹתֵן לָכֶם תְּבוֹן: אֹתָם לָכוּ קָחוּ לָכֶם תְּבוֹן מֵאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצְאוּ כִּי אֵין נִגְרַע מֵעֲבַדְתְּכֶם דְּבַר: וַיִּפֹּץ הָעָם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְקִשֵׁשׁ קִשׁ לְתְבוֹן: וְהַנְּגִשִׁים אָצִים לֵאמֹר כָּלוּ מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ כֹּאֲשֶׁר בְּהַיּוֹת הַתְּבוֹן: וַיִּכּוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמוּ עֲלֵהֶם נְגִשֵׁי פְרַעֲהוּ לֵאמֹר מִדּוּעַ לֹא כָלִיתֶם חֲקֶכֶם לְלַבֵּן כִּתְמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁ־גַם־תְּמוֹל גַּם־הַיּוֹם: וַיָּבֹאוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־פְּרַעֲהוּ לֵאמֹר לְמָה תַעֲשֶׂה כֹה לְעַבְדֶּיךָ: תְּבוֹן אֵין נֹתֵן לְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְלַבְּנִים אֲמָרִים לָנוּ עָשׂוּ וְהִנֵּה עַבְדֶּיךָ מִכִּים וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר נִרְפִים אֹתָם נִרְפִים עַל־כֵּן אֹתָם אֲמָרִים גִּלְכָה נִזְבַּחַה לַיהוָה: וְעִתָּה לָכוּ עַבְדוֹ וְתְבוֹן לֹא־יִנְתֵן לָכֶם וְתְכוֹן לַבְּנִים תִּתְנוּ: וַיִּרְאוּ שֹׁטְרֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתָם בָּרַע לֵאמֹר לֹא־תִגְרְעוּ מִלְּבַנֵיכֶם דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: וַיִּפְגְּעוּ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן נְצָבִים לְקִרְאָתָם בְּצִאתָם מֵאֵת פְּרַעֲהוּ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם יִרְא יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־רִיחֲנוּ בְעֵינֵי פְרַעֲהוּ וּבְעֵינֵי עַבְדָּיו לְתֵת־חֲרָב בְּיָדָם לְהַרְגֵנוּ: וַיֹּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לְמָה הִרְעַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה לְמָה זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: וּמֵאֵז בְּאֵתִי אֶל־פְּרַעֲהוּ לְדַבֵּר בְּשֵׁמֶךָ הִרַע לָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִצַּל לֹא־הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת־עַמְּךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עִתָּה תִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אַעֲשֶׂה לְפְרַעֲהוּ כִּי בִיד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם וּבִיד חֲזָקָה יִגְרַשֵׁם מֵאֶרְצוֹ: (שְׁמוֹת ה: ג: - ו: א)

- Moshe and Aharon ask to be allowed to go three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the 'God of the Hebrews'.
- Pharaoh responds by saying the Hebrews need to work harder. He decrees that they will no longer be provided with straw to make bricks, but will have to produce the same amount as usual.
- The officers of the children on Israel complain to Moshe that he has only worsened their situation.
- Moshe complains to God about being sent, since all he seems to have done is harm.

Lest he strike us with the plague or the sword

Moshe and Aharon plead with Pharaoh that they be allowed to go three days in the wilderness to sacrifice to the God of the Hebrews, 'lest he strike us with the plague or the sword'. Since, presumably, Pharaoh was not likely to be moved by compassion for the slave population, it needs to be explained why they thought this plea would be effective.

- *Rashi* claims that 'lest he strike us' is a polite euphemism for 'lest he strike **you**', which Moshe used out of respect since he did not want to directly threaten a king.
- *Ibn Ezra*, *Sforno*, and *Hizkuni* interpret 'lest he strike us' as including the entire population of Egypt, both Egyptian and Hebrew. This would function both as a threat and way of establishing a sense of common interest.
- *Bekhor Shor*, cited by, *Ralbag* and *Hizkuni* offers the possibility that Moshe was threatening Pharaoh with the economic loss of his slave population if he did not comply with their demands: 'it is better for you that we should go and return than that we should die and you lose everything'.

Let us go three days into the wilderness

In his first meeting with Pharaoh, Moshe asks that the Hebrews be allowed to go three days into the wilderness to 'sacrifice to *HASHEM* our God'. On the face of it, this seems to be simply a lie. Moshe had been told by God that the purpose of his mission was to free the children of Israel permanently from slavery and bring them to the Land of Israel. He knew they were never coming back. The *Ibn Ezra* points out that, strictly speaking, Moshe only said they would go three days into the wilderness, not that they would ever come back, but this argument is rather Jesuitical. *Ralbag* argues that it was necessary to ask for something less than permanent liberation because Pharaoh would never agree to it. *Ran* rejects both such lines of argument, pointing out that the miracles performed by God in Egypt should have been sufficient and that, further, it is not fitting that in manifesting His power to the world, *Hashem* should make use of any deception. Instead, *Ran* picks up upon a further suggestion of *Ibn Ezra* and argues that the purpose of this subterfuge was to engineer a final punishment of the Egyptians at the *Yam Suf*, so as to punish them appropriately for drowning the Hebrew babies. Had Pharaoh known that the children of Israel had left permanently, he would not have pursued them when they did not come back. By introducing the fiction of a three-day trek into the wilderness, God ensured that the Egyptians would travel to the *Yam Suf* and receive their just punishment.

וּבְמִוֶּרְא גְדֹל

זו גלוי שכינה. כמה שנאמר, או הנסה אלהים לבוא לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי במסת באתת ובמופתים ובמלקמה ובכיד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובמוראים גדולים ככל אשר עשה לכם יי אלהיכם במצרים לעיניך.

וידבר אלהים אל-משה ויאמר אליו אני יהוה: וארא אל-אברהם אל-יצחק ואל-יעקב באל שדי ושמי יהוה לא נודעתי להם: וגם הקמתי את-בריתי אתם לתת להם את-ארץ כנען את ארץ מגריהם אשר-גרו בה: וגם אני שמעתי את-נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים מעבדים אתם ואזכר את-בריתי: לכן אמר לבני-ישראל אני יהוה והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלת מצרים והצלתי אתכם מעבדתם וגאלתי אתכם בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים גדלים: ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלהים וידעתם כי אני יהוה אלהיכם המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים: והבאתי אתכם אל-הארץ אשר נשאתי את-ידי לתת אתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה אני יהוה: וידבר משה כן אל-בני ישראל ולא שמעו אל-משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה: (שמות ו:ב-ט)

- After Moshe complains to God, God tells him that He was known to Avraham, Yitzhaq and Ya'aqov as *El Shaddai*, but by 'my name *HASHEM* I was not known to them' and that now the time has come to establish His covenant.
- God tells Moshe to tell the children of Israel that he is *HASHEM* and will take the people out of Egypt, bring them to the land of Canaan, and be for them a God, so that they will know that 'I am *HASHEM*'.
- Moshe tells the children of Israel, but, in their miserable state, they do not listen.

‘My name *HASHEM*, I was not known to them’

Translated literally, God’s opening statement to Moshe here reads as follows. ‘I am *HASHEM*. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzhaq, and to Ya’aqov as *El Shaddai* and my name *HASHEM* I was not known to them.’ This statement is difficult to parse on a grammatical level and also presents a major interpretative problem because numerous verses in *Bereishit* makes clear that the *avot* did know the name *HASHEM*.

The grammatical difficulty is usually solved by positing that the ablative ך before *El Shaddai* also applies to the name *HASHEM* so the verse reads ‘and **by** my name *HASHEM* I was not known to them’. *Rashbam*, however, punctuates the verse differently, reading it with a pause in the middle and an extra implied ך: ‘And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzhaq, and to Ya’aqov as *El Shaddai*, but my [true] name is *HASHEM*. **And** [thus] I was not known to them’. Both *Ralbag* and *Rabeinu Bahya* explain the grammatical difficulty in the verse by arguing that it should be construed as ‘and my name *HASHEM* is/was not known to them’, but that it is written ‘and my name *HASHEM* I was not known to them’ because God’s total unity necessarily entails that He and His name are indivisible.

Many solutions have been suggested for the second problem.

- Rav Sa’adya Gaon adds the implied word ‘alone’. God was known to the *avot* as both *El Shaddai* and *HASHEM*, but not as *HASHEM* alone.
- *Rashi* interprets the name *El Shaddai* as denoting the making of promises and *HASHEM* as denoting the fulfilling of them. The *avot* received God’s promises, but it is only now that the children of Israel will see them fulfilled.
- *Ibn Ezra* and *Sforno* argue that *El Shaddai* represents a lower, more indirect level, of divine providence than *HASHEM*. The *avot* received protection and blessing, but did not witness miracles that transcended the order of nature.
- *Ramban* and *Rabeinu Bahya* agree with *Ibn Ezra*, but add that the verse also refers specifically to Moshe’s higher state of prophecy, an interpretation also recorded by *Rambam* in *Moreh Nevuhim*. God was ‘seen’ by the *avot* in visions, but ‘known’ by Moshe at a more profound level. Only through this highest level of prophecy was he able to perform open miracles.

According to most of these interpretations, the verse is not talking about awareness of any given name. Instead, the verse means that the *avot* were familiar with *HASHEM* as a proper noun or signifier, but in its full significance as a description of God’s essence. *Ralbag* interprets ‘not known to them’ as referring to the Children of Israel, rather than the *avot*, and explains the verse as a declaration that even though the children of Israel did not yet have a true understanding of His nature, God was still activating his covenant.

Ibn Ezra quotes a Qaraite author who argued that, in fact, the *avot* did not know the name *HASHEM*, and that when the term is used in *Bereishit* it is from the perspective of Moshe. He also quotes a Rabi Merinos, who argued that ‘and my name *HASHEM*’ is a figure of speech connoting an oath, so that the verse means ‘and, indeed, on My name, I have not yet been known to them’.

וּבְאֵתוֹת

זֶה הַמִּטָּה, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְאֵת הַמִּטָּה הַזֶּה תִקַּח בְּיָדְךָ, אֲשֶׁר תַעֲשֶׂה-בּוֹ אֵת הָאֵתוֹת.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: כִּי יִדְבַר אֲלֵכֶם פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר תִּנּוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל-אַהֲרֹן קַח אֶת-מִטְּךָ וְהִשְׁלַךְ לִפְנֵי-פַרְעֹה יְהִי לְתַנִּין: וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-פַּרְעֹה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כִן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אַהֲרֹן אֶת-מִטְּהוֹ לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְלִפְנֵי עַבְדָּיו וַיְהִי לְתַנִּין: וַיִּקְרָא גַם-פַּרְעֹה לְחֹכְמָיִם וְלְמַכְשָׁפִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם-הֵם חֲרֻטִּים מִצְרַיִם בְּלִהְטִיהֶם כֵּן: וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ אִישׁ מִטְּהוֹ וַיְהִיו לְתַנִּינִם וַיִּבְלַע מִטְּה-אַהֲרֹן אֶת-מִטְּתָם: וַיַּחֲזֹק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: (שמות ז: ח-ג)

- God tells Moshe to instruct Aharon to throw down his staff at Pharaoh's court where it will turn into a crocodile (*tannin*).
- Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers also turn their staffs into crocodiles though magic, but Aharon's staff eats theirs.
- Pharaoh's heart is strong and he does not listen.

The wise men and sorcerers

The Torah tells us that Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers were able to turn their staffs into *taninim* by means of their להטים. This word is unusual and *Ibn Ezra* suggests it may not be a Hebrew word. There are two main approaches to explaining how Pharaoh's courtiers were able to perform the same miracle as Moshe.

- Rav Sa'adya Gaon and *Ibn Ezra* suggest that it was some sort of trick or optical illusion and that in fact no real change had occurred. This fits best with the interpretation according to which the *taninim* were snakes, since these resemble staffs when they are still. They could have moved their staffs in such a way that they resembled snakes, or they could have trained snakes to resemble staffs by remaining still in their hands.
- *Ramban* and *Ran*, by contrast, believe that they performed genuine magic by manipulating the מלאכי חבלה (angels of destruction/demons), which is efficacious, but forbidden because it goes against their intended use.

Rabbeinu Bahya merges these two opinions. Pharaoh's wise men were able to perform genuine magic, but it was not of the same level as true miracles. Thus, Aharon and Moshe's staff was able to eat theirs. *Sforno* similarly explains that they were able to modify their staffs to have the form of *taninim*, but only God can animate an animal by giving it a soul.

וּבְמִפְתֵּי־הַיָּם

זֶה הַדָּם, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְנָתַתִּי מוֹפְתִים בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבְאָרֶץ דָּם וְאֵשׁ וְתִמְרוֹת עֶשֶׂן.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּבֹד לֵב פְּרַעַה מֵאֵן לְשַׁלַּח הָעַם: לֵךְ אֶל־פְּרַעַה בְּבֹקֶר הַיּוֹם יֵצֵא הַמִּימָה וְנִצַּבְתָּ לְקִרְאָתוֹ עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר וְהַמַּטֵּה אֲשֶׁר־נִהַפְדָּ לְנַחֵשׁ תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ: וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים שְׁלַח־נִי אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי בַמִּדְבָּר וְהִנֵּה לֹא־שָׁמַעְתָּ עַד־כֹּה: כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּזֹאת תִּדְעֶה כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה הַיּוֹם אֲנֹכִי מִכָּה בַמַּטֵּה אֲשֶׁר־בְּיָדִי עַל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר וְנִהַפְכוּ לְדָם: וְהִדְגָּה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר תָּמוּת וּבָאֵשׁ הַיָּאֵר וְנִלְאוּ מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִזֶּה־יָאֵר: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח מַטֶּה וְנִטְהֵי־יָדְךָ עַל־מִימֵי מִצְרַיִם עַל־נְהַרְתָּם עַל־יָאֵרֵיהֶם וְעַל־אֲגַמִּייהֶם וְעַל־כָּל־מְקוֹה מִימֵיהֶם וַיְהִי־וַיִּדְם וְהָיָה דָם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּבְעֵצִים וּבְאֲבָנִים: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה וַיִּרְם בַּמַּטֵּה וַיִּדְ אֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר לְעֵינֵי פְרַעַה וּלְעֵינֵי עַבְדָּיו וַיַּהֲפֹכוּ כָּל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר לְדָם: וְהִדְגָּה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר מָתָה וַיִּבָּאֵשׁ הַיָּאֵר וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִזֶּה־יָאֵר וַיְהִי הַדָּם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלִטְיָהֶם וַיַּחֲזִק לִב־פְּרַעַה וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: וַיִּפֹּן פְּרַעַה וַיָּבֵא אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וְלֹא־שָׁתָה לְבוֹ גַם־לְזֹאת: וַיַּחֲפְרוּ כָל־מִצְרַיִם סְבִיבֹת הַיָּאֵר מַיִם לְשִׁתּוֹת כִּי לֹא יָכְלוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת מִמֵּי הַיָּאֵר: וַיִּמְלֵא שְׁבַעַת יָמִים אַחֲרֵי הַכּוֹת־יְהוָה אֶת־הַיָּאֵר: (שְׁמוֹת ז:יד-כה)

- God tells Moshe to meet Pharaoh in the morning by the edge of the river with his staff and announce to Pharaoh that he will turn the river into blood.
- Aharon stretches the staff over the waters of Egypt and turns them into blood.
- Pharaoh's sorcerers also turn water into blood by magic. Pharaoh's heart remains strong and he refuses to listen.

Where did the sorcerers find water?

Since Aharon had already turned the waters of Egypt into blood, it has to be explained where Pharaoh's sorcerers found the water with which they performed their own tricks. Answers include:

- Aharon only turned the waters that were above the ground into blood. The Torah reports that the Egyptians dug up subterranean water to drink and it was this that the sorcerers used. (*Ibn Ezra, Hizkuni, Ralbag*)
- The water in the rivers and lakes only remained as blood for a short time and the reason it was undrinkable afterwards is because the water life died and rotted, rendering it poisonous. There was thus plenty of (albeit undrinkable) water available for the sorcerers to use. (*Hizkuni*)
- The waters of Egypt did not all turn to blood at once. Aharon turned the Nile to blood, which then flowed into the other rivers, or, alternatively, he first struck the Nile with his staff and then raised it to the sky to transform the other bodies of water. While this process was ongoing, Pharaoh's sorcerers took water that was in the process of turning into blood and merely pretended that they were responsible through conjuring tricks. (*Rabbeinu Bahya*)
- The plague did not affect Goshen where the Children of Israel lived, so the sorcerers got water from there (*Pseudo Targum Yonatan*).

דְּבַר אַחַר

דְּבַר אַחַר: בְּיַד חֲזָקָה שְׁתִּים, וּבְזֹלַע נְטוּיָה שְׁתִּים, וּבְמָרָא גָדֹל – שְׁתִּים, וּבְאַתּוֹת – שְׁתִּים, וּבְמִפְתִּים – שְׁתִּים. אֵלּוּ עֶשֶׂר מִכּוֹת שֶׁהֵבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל־הַמְצָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן:

דָּם, צְפַרְדֵּעַ, כְּנִים, עָרוֹב, דְּבַר, שְׁחִין, בְּרָד, אֲרָבָה, חֶשֶׁךְ, מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הָיָה נוֹתֵן בָּהֶם סְמָנִים דְּצ"ף עַד"ש בְּאַח"ב

צְפַרְדֵּעַ

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פְּרַעֲה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי: וְאִם־מָאֵן אַתָּה לְשַׁלַּח הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי נֹגֵף אֶת־כָּל־גְּבוּלְךָ בַּצְּפַרְדָּעִים: וְשָׂרַץ הַיָּאֵר צְפַרְדָּעִים וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְחֹדֶר מִשְׁכַּבְךָ וְעַל־מִטְתְּךָ וּבְבֵית עַבְדֶּיךָ וּבַעֲמֻדָּה וּבַתְּנוּרֶיךָ וּבְמִשְׁאֲרוֹתֶיךָ: וּבָכָה וּבַעֲמָה וּבְכָל־עַבְדֶּיךָ יַעֲלוּ הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן נֹטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ בְּמִטָּה עַל־הַנְּהָרֹת עַל־הַיָּאֲרִים וְעַל־הָאֲגָמִים וְהֵעַל אֶת־הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיֹּט אַהֲרֹן אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל מִימֵי מִצְרַיִם וַתַּעַל הַצְּפַרְדָּע וַתִּכַּס אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחֲרֻטָּמִים בְּלִטְיָהֶם וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיִּקְרָא פְּרַעֲה לְמִשָּׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲעִתִּירוּ אֵלַי־יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים מִמֶּנִּי וּמֵעַמִּי וְאֶשְׁלַחָה אֶת־הָעַם וַיִּזְבְּחוּ לַיהוָה: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְפְרַעֲה הֲתִפָּאֵר עָלַי לְמַתִּי אֶעֱתִיר לָךְ וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ וְלַעֲמָדָה לְהַכְרִית הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים מִמֶּךָ וּמִבְּתֶיךָ רַק בִּיֹאֵר תִּשְׁאַרְנָה: וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַחֵר וַיֹּאמֶר כַּדְּבַרְךָ לְמַעַן תִּדַּע כִּי־אִין כִּי־הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ: וְסָרוּ הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים מִמֶּךָ וּמִבְּתֶיךָ וּמֵעַבְדֶּיךָ וּמֵעַמְּךָ רַק בִּיֹאֵר תִּשְׁאַרְנָה: וַיִּצְא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מֵעַם פְּרַעֲה וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה עַל־דְּבַר הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם לְפְרַעֲה: וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כַּדְּבַר מֹשֶׁה וַיָּמָתוּ הַצְּפַרְדָּעִים מִן־הַבָּתִּים מִן־הַחֲצֹלֹת וּמִן־הַשְּׂדֵת: וַיִּצְבְּרוּ אֹתָם חֲמָרִם חֲמָרִם וַתִּבְאֵשׁ הָאֶרֶץ: וַיֵּרָא פְּרַעֲה כִּי הִיְתָה הַרְּוָחָה וַהֲכַבֵּד אֶת־לְבוֹ וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דְּבַר יְהוָה: (שְׁמוֹת ז: כו-ח: יא)

- God tells Moshe to warn Pharaoh that if he does not send out the children of Israel, He will strike the whole country with frogs.
- Aharon stretches out his staff and brings up frogs from the rivers and streams. Pharaoh's sorcerers also produce frogs though their magic.
- Pharaoh begs Moshe to pray for the frogs to go away in return for letting the children of Israel go.
- Moshe prays and the frogs die the next day, but Pharaoh makes his heart heavy and refuses to let the people go.

What were the צפרדעים?

In the entire *Tanach*, the term צפרדע appears only in this section of the Torah and *Tehillim* 105:30 where it also refers to the plague. It is an unusual word and may not actually be Hebrew. The traditional view is that this creature is the frog, and this is its meaning in modern Hebrew. *Onkelos* translates the term as עורדעניא which likely means frogs. However, there is no source in *Hazal* that clearly identifies צפרדעים as frogs and a surprisingly large number of commentators believed that they were crocodiles.

- *Sforno* bases his entire interpretation of the plague on the assumption that צפרדעים were crocodiles. According to his view, they were a unique creation that God introduced into the world in order to manifest his power. Unlike other creatures they move their upper jaw rather than their lower one.
- *Rabbeinu Hananel*, cited by both *Ramban* and *Rabbeinu Bahya*, assumes the translation of צפרדע as crocodiles in explaining Moshe's declaration that, following his prayer, 'only in the Nile will they remain'. This promise, he argued, extended thousands of years later, when the crocodile is still unique to Egypt. [In fact, crocodiles are also widely found in the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia, but they are rare in the Mediterranean, Europe and Middle East, with the exception of Egypt].

Ibn Ezra discusses both understandings of צפרדע, concluding that the identification of it as the frog is more likely. The correct identification makes a difference to how we understand the plague. Crocodiles are particularly associated with Egypt, whereas frogs exist throughout the world. More significantly, frogs would represent a nuisance to the Egyptians, but a plague of crocodiles would result in many actual deaths. This consideration weighs strongly in favour of identifying the צפרדעים as frogs, because this fits in with the general pattern of the plagues increasingly gradually in terms of their destructive power. A plague of crocodiles would be every bit as bad, if not worse, than hail and locusts. Moreover, the Torah describes the צפרדעים as entering the ovens and kneading troughs of the Egyptians which is far more plausible to posit of frogs than crocodiles.

כְּנִיִּים

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן נָטָה אֶת־מִטְּךָ וְהָךְ אֶת־עַפְרַת הָאָרֶץ וְהָיָה לְכֹנֶם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן וַיֵּט אַהֲרֹן אֶת־יָדוֹ בְּמִטְּהוֹ וַיָּךְ אֶת־עַפְרַת הָאָרֶץ וְתָהִי הַכֹּנֶם בְּאָדָם וּבְבַהֲמָה כָּל־עַפְרַת הָאָרֶץ הָיָה כְּנִיִּים בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחֲרָטְמִים בְּלִטְיָהֶם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הַכְּנִיִּים וְלֹא יָכְלוּ וְתָהִי הַכֹּנֶם בְּאָדָם וּבְבַהֲמָה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחֲרָטְמִים אֶל־פְּרֹעֶה אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים הוּא וַיַּחֲזֶק לִב־פְּרֹעֶה וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֶל־הֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: (שמות ח:יב-טו)

- God tells Moshe to instruct Aharon to strike the dust of Egypt and turn it into lice.
- The sorcerers of Egypt try to follow suit but cannot and announce 'this is the finger of God'.
- Pharaoh's heart is strong and he refuses to send out the children of Israel.

The defeat of the sorcerers

Up until the plague of lice, the Egyptian sorcerers had been able to mimic God's plagues in order to convince Pharaoh that they were not genuine miracles. However, when they tried to produce lice, they were unable. There are different explanations about why they were able to turn their staffs into crocodiles, turn water into blood, and make frogs emerge from the water, but were unable to turn dust into lice.

- The sorcerers could not turn dust into lice because all the dust in Egypt had already been turned into lice and there was none left. (*Hizkuni*)
- *Rashi*, quoting *Bavli Sanhedrin* 67b writes that 'a demon cannot rest on a creature smaller than a barley grain', meaning the magic the sorcerers used does not work on very small objects. *Ralbag* explains this to mean that the tricks that the sorcerers deceptively used are only effective for large objects.
- *Sforno* and *Ramban* argue that they had the power to move objects and living creatures or to change their attributes, but not to actually create a living thing, which is beyond the scope of magic.
- *Ramban* suggests that the sorcerers actually could create lice using their methods, but that at this point God prevented them from doing so.

This is the finger of God

After failing to produce lice, the sorcerers announce 'this is the finger of God'. Rav Sa'adya Gaon and *Rashi*, following *Shemot Rabbah*, interpret this as an admission that the plagues created by Moshe and Aharon were genuine miracles and not magic of the sort that the sorcerers were able to compete with. *Ibn Ezra*, however, explain the phrase completely differently. He points out that the sorcerers refer to the finger of God, whereas Moshe and Aharon when talking to Pharaoh identify him either as *HASHEM* or the 'God of the Hebrews'. Based on this, he argues that the sorcerers were making a kind of excuse, claiming that the lice were a divine phenomenon produced by the movement of the constellations and that, though the sorcerers were not capable of producing lice themselves, neither were Moshe and Aharon. *Ibn Ezra* argues that Pharaoh and his courtiers believed in some sort of God and only denied the existence of *HASHEM*, the God of the Hebrews. Since Moshe did not give Pharaoh any warning before this plague, this gave the Egyptians the opportunity to explain the lice within their existing religious framework. This would explain why Pharaoh's heart strengthened, whereas in the previous plague he had relented until the frogs were removed. *Rashbam* and *Hizkuni* explain similarly.

עָרוֹב

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִשְׁכֵּם בְּבֹקֶר וְהִתְיַצַּב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְהִנֵּה יוֹצֵא הַמִּימָה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלַח עַמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי: כִּי אִם־אֵינְךָ מְשַׁלַּח אֶת־עַמִּי הַנְּנִי מִשְׁלִיחַ בָּךְ וּבַעֲבָדֶיךָ וּבַעֲמָךְ וּבְבָתֶּיךָ אֶת־הָעָרֹב וּמְלֹאוֹ בְּתֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶת־הָעָרֹב וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הֵם עֲלֶיהָ: וְהַפְּלִיתִי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־אֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן אֲשֶׁר עַמִּי עֹמֵד עָלֶיהָ לְבִלְתִּי הִיוֹת־שָׁם עָרֹב לְמַעַן תִּדַּע כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּקִרְבְּ הָאֶרֶץ: וְשַׁמְתִּי פֶדֶת בֵּין עַמִּי וּבֵין עַמָּךְ לְמַחֵר יִהְיֶה הָאֵת הַזֶּה: וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כֵּן וַיָּבֵא עָרֹב כַּבֵּד בֵּיתָה פַרְעֹה וּבֵית עַבְדָּיו וּבְכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם תִּשְׁחַת הָאֶרֶץ מִפְּנֵי הָעָרֹב: וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וּלְאֹהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר לְכוּ וּזְבַחוּ לַאלֹהֵיכֶם בְּאֶרֶץ: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לֹא נִכּוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן כִּי תוֹעֵבֶת מִצְרַיִם נִזְבַּח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֵן נִזְבַּח אֶת־תּוֹעֵבֶת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקָלוּנוּ: דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים גַּלְךָ בְּמִדְבָר וּזְבַחְנוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר פַרְעֹה אֲנִי אֶשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם וּזְבַחְתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִדְבָר רַק הֲרַחֵק לֹא־תִרְחִיקוּ לְלַכֵּת הַעֲתִירוּ בְעַדִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא מִעַמָּךְ וְהַעֲתַרְתִּי אֶל־יְהוָה וְסָר הָעָרֹב מִפְּרֻעָה מֵעַבְדָּיו וּמִעַמּוֹ מִחֵר רַק אֶל־יִסַּף פַרְעֹה הַתֵּל לְבִלְתִּי שְׁלַח אֶת־הָעַם לְזִבַּח לַיהוָה: וַיֹּצֵא מֹשֶׁה מֵעַם פַרְעֹה וַיַּעֲתַר אֶל־יְהוָה: וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כְּדַבַּר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּסָּר הָעָרֹב מִפְּרֻעָה מֵעַבְדָּיו וּמִעַמּוֹ לֹא נִשְׂאָר אֶחָד: וַיִּכְבַּד פַרְעֹה אֶת־לְבוֹ גַם בַּפֶּעַם הַזֹּאת וְלֹא שְׁלַח אֶת־הָעַם: (שמות ח: טז-כח)

- God tells Moshe to meet Pharaoh at the water and announce that if Pharaoh does not send out the people he will send the *arov*, which will not affect Goshen and the children of Israel, 'so that you will know that I am *HASHEM* in the midst of the land'.
- After the *arov* arrives, Pharaoh calls Moshe and tells him that the children of Israel may go and sacrifice to their God. Moshe demands to be allowed to go three days into the wilderness and Pharaoh agrees so long as they do not go too far.
- Moshe prays and the *arov* is removed, but Pharaoh makes his heart heavy and refuses to send out the people.

The identity of the *arov*

Midrash Rabah records a debate between Rabi Yehuda and Rabi Nehemya as to the identity of the עָרוֹב. Both identify the word as being derived from the root 'to mix' [ע ר ב]. Rabi Yehuda interprets this as referring to a mixture of lions, bears, and leopards. This is essentially the view of the majority of commentators, though they add other animals including snakes and scorpions (*Rashi*), wolves (*Ibn Ezra*), or jackals (*Ralbag*). Rabi Nehemya, by contrast, identified them as a mixture of stinging flies. This interpretation was included in the *Septuagint*, and is used in most non-Jewish translations. *Shadal* favours this interpretation on the grounds that it is more plausible that flies would enter the houses of the Egyptians than wild animals. *Rashbam* offers a third opinion according to which עָרוֹב refers to a specific species, which he identifies as a type of man-eating wolf that preys at night, (the name being derived from עָרַב – evening). This is similar to *Ibn Ezra's* suggestion in his original commentary that it was a specific type of 'small animal'.

דָּבָר

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים
 שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי: כִּי אִם־מֵאֵן אַתָּה לְשַׁלַּח וְעוֹדֶדָּ מַחֲזִיק בָּם: הִנֵּה יַד־יְהוָה
 הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה בְּסוֹסִים בַּחֲמָרִים בַּגְּמָלִים בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן דָּבָר כְּבֹד מְאֹד:
 וְהַפְּלָה יְהוָה בֵּין מִקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין מִקְנֵה מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָמוּת מִכָּל־לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּבָר:
 וַיֵּשֶׁם יְהוָה מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר מָחָר יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה בְּאַרְצָךְ: וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֶת־הַדָּבָר
 הַזֶּה מִמַּחֲרַת וַיָּמָת כָּל מִקְנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּמִמִּקְנֵה בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־מָת אֶחָד: וַיִּשְׁלַח
 פַּרְעֹה וְהִנֵּה לֹא־מָת מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־אֶחָד וַיִּכְבֹּד לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם:
 (שמות ט: א-ז)

- God tells Moshe to warn Pharaoh that if he continues to refuse to send out the people, He will send a plague against the Egyptian livestock.
- God creates a plague that kills the Egyptian livestock. Pharaoh sends and confirms that not a single Israelite animal died, but still his heart is heavy and he does not send out the people.

And all the livestock of Egypt died

The Torah reports that the entirety of the Egyptian livestock died. However, before the plague of hail, Moshe warns the Egyptians to gather in their livestock from the fields. How could there be any cattle left over if they already perished during the plague?

- *Ibn Ezra* argues that the verse simply means 'most of the livestock of Egypt died' and this use of rhetorical hyperbole is a feature of biblical language. *Ralbag* suggests that cattle in the field died, but those inside the cities survived.
- *Hizquni* parses the phrase as 'and that which died was all the livestock of Egypt'. On this understanding, this phrase is a parallel reinforcement of the conclusion of the verse, which states that not a single Hebrew animal died.
- *Rabbeinu Bahya* suggests that in between the plagues the Egyptians bought new livestock from abroad or, alternatively, any animals owned in partnership by Egyptians and Israelites survived and it was these that Moshe told the Egyptians to take inside from the fields.

שַׁחִין

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן קַחוּ לָכֶם מֵלֶאחַח חֲפִינֵיכֶם פִּיחַ כִּבְשָׁן וַיִּזְרוּ מִשָּׁה
הַשָּׁמַיְמָה לְעֵינֵי פַרְעֹה: וְהָיָה לְאַבְקַ עַל כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה עַל-הָאָדָם וְעַל-
הַבְּהֵמָה לְשַׁחִין פֶּרַח אֲבַעְבֵּעַת בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: מוֹיָקָחוּ אֶת-פִּיחַ הַכִּבְשָׁן וַיַּעֲמְדוּ
לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וַיִּזְרוּ אֹתוֹ מֹשֶׁה הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וַיְהִי שַׁחִין אֲבַעְבֵּעַת פֶּרַח בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה:
וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ הַחֲרָטְמִים לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי הַשַּׁחִין כִּי-הָיָה הַשַּׁחִין בַּחֲרָטְמִם
וּבְכָל-מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּחֲזֵק יְהוָה אֶת-לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-
מֹשֶׁה: (שמות ט:ח-יב)

- God tells Moshe and Aharon to take ash and throw it at the sky in front of Pharaoh. It becomes a plague of boils that strikes all the Egyptians and their animals.
- The sorcerers were not able to stand before Moshe because of the boils.
- God strengthens Pharaoh's heart and he does not listen to Moshe and Aharon.

And *HASHEM* strengthened Pharaoh's heart

After the first five plagues, the Torah records either that Pharaoh's heart was hard or that he deliberately hardened it. However, after the plague of boils, God intervenes to strengthen Pharaoh's heart. This poses obvious theological difficulties, since if God was actively preventing Pharaoh from letting the children of Israel go, how could he punish him for it?

- *Ramban* justifies God's actions on two grounds. First, Pharaoh had already merited punishment for the way he had treated the children of Israel, so it was appropriate to strengthen his heart in order to give him his full punishment. Secondly, God did not strengthen Pharaoh's heart until after he had given him five chances to repent, which he did not take. God may take away an evildoer's capacity to repent, but only after giving him ample opportunity beforehand.
- *Ralbag* expands upon this idea, arguing that direct divine intervention, such as hardening Pharaoh's heart, only happens to benefit the righteous. While God was justified in hardening Pharaoh's heart by his prior obstinate wickedness, the reason for doing so was to increase the faith of the children of Israel by allowing them to witness God's miracles.
- *Rashi* provides a similar idea, explaining that God punishes the wicked among the nations in order that Israel might witness it and develop an appropriate fear of sin.
- *Ibn Ezra* struggled with the issue. In his short commentary he provides an original idea, according to which God did not interfere with Pharaoh's free will at all, but rather strengthened his resolve, giving him the courage not to relent in the face of his suffering and not give in to fear. This view is echoed by *Sforno*. In his expanded commentary, however, *Ibn Ezra* rejects this idea. Instead he argues that every person is given the wisdom to cleave to God and receive divine blessing and improve himself. Since Pharaoh had not availed himself of this opportunity, he did not deserve to retain his free will.

בְּרָד

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִשְׁכֵּם בְּבֹקֶר וְהִתְיַצַּב לִפְנֵי פְרַעֲהַ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה
 אֵלָהִי הָעִבְרִים שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי: כִּי בַפֶּעַם הַזֹּאת אֲנִי שֹׁלַח אֶת־כָּל־מַגְפָּתַי אֶל־לְבָבְךָ
 וּבַעֲבֹדֶיךָ וּבַעֲמֹךָ בַּעֲבוּר תִּדַע כִּי אִין כְּמִנִּי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ: כִּי עַתָּה שְׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־יָדֵי וְאָךְ
 אוֹתְךָ וְאֶת־עַמְּךָ בַדָּבָר וּתְכַחֵד מִן־הָאָרֶץ: וְאוֹלָם בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת הָעֲמֻדָתִיךָ בַּעֲבוּר הָרֵאֲתָךְ
 אֶת־כַּחֲוֵי וְלִמְעַן סִפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ: עוֹדָךְ מִסְתּוֹלָל בְּעַמִּי לְבַלְתִּי שְׁלַחֶם: הַנְּנִי מִמְטִיר
 כְּעַת מֶחֶר בְּרָד כָּבֵד מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה כִּמְהוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לְמוֹנֵי־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְעַד־עַתָּה:
 וְעַתָּה שְׁלַח הָעִז וְאֶת־מִקְנֶה וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר־יִמְצָא
 בַּשָּׂדֶה וְלֹא יֵאָסֵף הַבֵּיתָה וַיִּרַד עֲלֵהֶם הַבְּרָד וּמָתוּ: הִירָא אֶת־דְּבַר יְהוָה מִעַבְדֵי פְרַעֲהַ
 הַנִּיִּס אֶת־עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבְּתִיִּם: וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׂם לְבוֹ אֶל־דְּבַר יְהוָה וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־
 עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ בַּשָּׂדֶה: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נִטָּה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי בְרָד
 בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל־הָאָדָם וְעַל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְעַל כָּל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה בְּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה
 אֶת־מַטְהוֹ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהוּה נָתַן קֶלֶת וּבְרָד וּתְהַלֵּךְ אִשׁ אֲרָצָה וַיִּמָּטֵר יְהוָה בְּרָד עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 מִצְרַיִם: וַיְהִי בְרָד וְאִשׁ מִתְלַקַּחַת בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּרָד כָּבֵד מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה כִּמְהוּ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ
 מִצְרַיִם מֵאִז הָיְתָה לְגוֹי: וַיֵּךְ הַבְּרָד בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה מֵאָדָם וְעַד־
 בְּהֵמָה וְאֶת כָּל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה הִכָּה הַבְּרָד וְאֶת־כָּל־עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה שָׁבַר: רַק בְּאָרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן אֲשֶׁר־
 שָׂם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא הָיָה בְרָד: וַיִּשְׁלַח פְּרַעֲהַ וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם חֲטָאתִי
 הַפֶּעַם יְהוָה הִצְדִּיק וְאֲנִי וְעַמִּי הָרָשָׁעִים: הֲעִתִּירוּ אֵלַיִהוּה וְרַב מֵהֵיִת קֶלֶת אֱלֹהִים וּבְרָד
 וְאֲשִׁלַּח אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא תִסְפוֹן לַעֲמֹד: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מֹשֶׁה כִּצְאָתִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֶפְרַיִם אֶת־כַּפִּי
 אֶל־יְהוָה הַקְּלוֹת יִחְדְּלוֹן וְהַבְּרָד לֹא יְהִי־עוֹד לְמַעַן תִּדַע כִּי לִיְהוָה הָאָרֶץ: וְאִתָּה וְעַבְדֶּיךָ
 יִדְעֵתִי כִּי טָרָם תִּירָאוֹן מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים: וְהַפְּשָׁתָה וְהַשְׁעָרָה נִכְתָּה כִּי הַשְׁעָרָה אָבִיב
 וְהַפְּשָׁתָה גְבַעַל: וְהַחֲטָה וְהַכְּסַמְתָּ לֹא נָכוֹ כִּי אֶפִּילֶת הִנֵּה: וַיִּצָּא מֹשֶׁה מֵעַם פְּרַעֲהַ אֶת־
 הָעִיר וַיִּפְרֹשׁ כַּפְּיוֹ אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּחְדְּלוּ הַקְּלוֹת וְהַבְּרָד וּמָטֵר לֹא־נָתַךְ אֲרָצָה: וַיִּרָא פְּרַעֲהַ כִּי־
 חָדַל הַמָּטֵר וְהַבְּרָד וְהַקְּלֶת וַיִּסָּף לַחֲטָא וַיִּכְבֵּד לְבוֹ הוּא וְעַבְדָּיו: וַיַּחֲזֵק לֵב פְּרַעֲהַ וְלֹא
 שְׁלַח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר דָּבַר יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה: (שְׁמוֹת ט:יג-לה)

- God tells Moshe to warn Pharaoh that if he continues not to send out the people, He will send 'all my plagues ... so that you may know that there is none like Me in all the land'.
- God tells Moshe to warn Pharaoh that any man or animal left in the field will perish in the plague of hail. Those who fear *HASHEM* follow these instructions.
- Moshe stretches his staff to the sky and a plague of hail containing fire appears, the like of which 'there had not been in Egypt since it became a nation'.
- The hail destroys every living thing in the field, but there is no hail in Goshen.
- Pharaoh relents, declaring to Moshe and Aaron that 'this time I have sinned, *HASHEM* is righteous, and I and my people are wicked'. He begs Moshe to remove the hail and thunder and pledges to send out the people.
- Moshe prays for the hail to stop, and as predicted, Pharaoh returns to his sin and refuses to let the people go.

דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב

The Torah presents the first nine plagues as being divided into three groups of three.

- The first plague in each set (blood, *arov* and hail) is introduced by God commanding Moshe to go to Pharaoh in the morning, to 'stand himself up' [להיצב or להתיצב] and give an elaborate warning announcing the plague.
- The second plague (frogs, plague, locusts) begins with God telling Moshe to 'come' [בא] to Pharaoh.
- The third plague (lice, boils, darkness) is performed by either Moshe or Aharon performing a symbolic act without any prior warning.

Each set of plagues has a theme that is specified in Moshe's opening speech to Pharaoh and then realized in the proceeding narrative:

- דצ"ך: The first set of plagues are introduced with the formula 'by this you shall know that I am *HASHEM*'. The theme of this triad is the demonstration of God's superiority over the Egyptian sorcerers, which follows naturally from the confrontation where Aharon turned his staff into a crocodile. Two of the plagues involved transformations (water to blood and dust to lice) which resemble conjuring tricks and the ability to make frogs rise from the Nile also seems to have been feature of Egyptian magic. The triad ends with the inability of the sorcerers to keep up with Moshe by producing lice and their declaration, 'this is the finger of God'.
- עד"ש: The second set is introduced with Moshe announcing that God will make a division between Goshen and the rest of Egypt, 'so that you may know that I am *HASHEM* in the midst of the land'. The theme of the triad is God distinguishing between the Egyptians and Hebrews, the Torah specifying that in each plague the Hebrews were not affected. The triad ends with Pharaoh's sorcerers, covered in boils, unable to even stand in the presence of Moshe. At this point, Pharaoh's resolve fails and God intervenes directly to strengthen his heart.
- באח"ב: The third set begins with the announcement that 'I am sending all my plagues ... so that you will know that there is none like me in all the land'. These plagues are distinguished from those of the first two triads by their novelty and severity. Previous plagues have not directly threatened the lives of the Egyptians, but the hail kills all those outside in the field and the locusts bring on famine conditions. Both the fire-containing hail and locust swarm are described as being unprecedented. The triad ends with Pharaoh closing down negotiations after repeatedly going back on his word, thus setting the stage for the final plague.

אַרְבֵּה

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פְּרַעֲהוּ כִּי־אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לִבּוֹ וְאֶת־לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי
 אֶתְתִּי אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבּוֹ: וְלַמַּעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנִי בְנֵה וּבְזִבְנֵה אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלֹתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־
 אֶתְתִּי אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמְתִי בָם וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה: וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־פְּרַעֲהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו כֹּה־
 אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים עַד־מָתַי מֵאַנְתָּ לַעֲנֹת מִפְּנֵי שְׁלַח עָמִי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי: כִּי אִם־מָאֵן אַתָּה
 לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־עָמִי הַנְּנִי מִבְּיַד מַחֵר אַרְבֵּה בְּגִבְלָךְ: וְכִסָּה אֶת־עֵינֵי הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא יוּכַל לָרֹאֵת אֶת־
 הָאָרֶץ וְאָכַל אֶת־יֵתֶר הַפְּלִטָה הַנִּשְׁאַרְתָּ לָכֶם מִן־הַבֶּרֶד וְאָכַל אֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ הַצֹּמַח לָכֶם מִן־
 הַשָּׂדֶה: וּמָלְאוּ בְתִיד וּבְתִי כָל־עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְתִי כָל־מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־רָאוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְאֲבֹת אֲבֹתֶיךָ
 מִיּוֹם הַיּוֹתֵם עַל־הָאָדָמָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּצֵא מֵעַם פְּרַעֲהוּ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדֵי פְרַעֲהוּ אֵלָיו עַד־
 מָתַי יִהְיֶה זֶה לָנוּ לְמוֹקֵשׁ שְׁלַח אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֲטָרַם תִּדְעַ כִּי
 אָבָדָה מִצְרַיִם: וַיּוֹשֶׁב אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן אֶל־פְּרַעֲהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם לָכוּ עַבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִי וּמִי הֵהֱלִכִים: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה בְּנַעֲרֵינוּ וּבְזִקְנֵינוּ גִלְךָ בְּבָנֵינוּ וּבְבָנוֹתֵנוּ בְּצֹאֲנֵנוּ
 וּבְבָקֵרֵנוּ גִלְךָ כִּי חָגִי־יְהוָה לָנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יְהִי כֵן יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁלַּח אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־
 טַפְּכֶם רְאוּ כִּי רָעָה נִגַּד פְּנִיכֶם: לֹא כֵן לְכוּ־נָא הַגְּבֵרִים וְעַבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי אַתָּה אַתָּם
 מִבְּקָשִׁים וַיִּגְרַשׁ אֶתְכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי פְרַעֲהוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נָטָה יָדְךָ עַל־אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
 בְּאַרְבֵּה וַיַּעַל עַל־אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאכַל אֶת־כָּל־עֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר הַשָּׂאִיר הַבֶּרֶד: וַיִּט
 מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מַטְּהוֹ עַל־אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּהְיֶה נִהַג רוּחַ קָדִים בְּאָרֶץ כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל־הַלִּילָה
 הַבֶּקֶר הָיָה רוּחַ הַקָּדִים נֹשֵׂא אֶת־הָאַרְבֶּה: וַיַּעַל הָאַרְבֶּה עַל כָּל־אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּנַּח בְּכָל
 גְּבוּל מִצְרַיִם כְּבַד מְאֹד לְפָנָיו לֹא־הָיָה כֵן אַרְבֶּה כָּמֹהוּ וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא יִהְיֶה־כֵן: וַיִּכַּס אֶת־עֵינֵי
 כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וַתַּחֲשֹׁךְ הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאכַל אֶת־כָּל־עֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל־פְּרִי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר הוֹתִיר הַבֶּרֶד
 וְלֹא־נֹתֵר כָּל־יֵרֶק בְּעֵץ וּבְעֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה בְּכָל־אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּמְהַר פְּרַעֲהוּ לְקַרְא לְמֹשֶׁה
 וְלֹא־הָרִן וַיֹּאמֶר חֲטָאתִי לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלָכֶם: וַעֲתָה שָׂא נָא חֲטָאתִי אֶךְ הַפַּעַם וְהַעֲתִירוּ
 לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וַיִּסַּר מֵעֲלֵי רַק אֶת־הַמּוֹת הַזֶּה: וַיֵּצֵא מֵעַם פְּרַעֲהוּ וַיַּעֲתֵר אֶל־יְהוָה: וַיַּהֲפֹךְ
 יְהוָה רוּחִים חֲזָקִים מְאֹד וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־הָאַרְבֶּה וַיִּתְקַעְהוּ יָמָה סוּף לֹא נִשְׂאָר אַרְבֶּה אֶחָד בְּכָל
 גְּבוּל מִצְרַיִם: וַיַּחֲזֵק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פְּרַעֲהוּ וְלֹא שְׁלַח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (שְׁמוֹת י: א-כ)

- Moshe and Aharon go to Pharaoh and tell him that if he refuses to send out the people, God will send an unprecedented plague of locusts that will destroy any crops left in Egypt.
- Pharaoh's courtiers plead with him to relent and he permits the Hebrew males to celebrate a festival to *HASHEM*, but refuses to allow the women and children to go.
- Moshe stretches his staff to the sky and God summons an east wind that brings with it locusts that destroy all remaining crops in Egypt.
- Pharaoh summons Moshe and Aharon, begs for forgiveness and asks them to pray for the locusts to be removed.
- Moshe prays and a west wind removes the locusts, but God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he again refuses to send out the people.

And afterwards there shall not be

The Torah states that not only was the plague of locusts unprecedented, but that it will never be repeated. However, the prophet Yoel describes a plague of locusts during the first temple period and says that this too was unprecedented in its severity. For that to be true, it must have been greater than the plague of locusts in Egypt, but the Torah seems to rule that out in advance.

- *Rashi* points out that Yoel (chapter 2:2) describes four sub-species of locusts, ארבה, ילק, גזם and חסיל and explains the Torah as meaning that there will never be a plague of similar magnitude that consists of the species ארבה alone. On the face of it, however, this cannot be correct since *Tehillim* (78:46 and 105:34) recounts that the species ילק and גזם were included in the plague against the Egyptians. *Rabeinu Bahya* and others explain *Rashi* as meaning that the component of the plague consisting of the sub-species ארבה was greater in Egypt and the other sub-species put together were greater in the time of Yoel.
- *Hizquni* observes that Yoel describes the different subspecies of locusts as coming in waves (יתר הגזר אכל הארבה...), whereas the Torah apparently indicates that in Egypt they were all mixed up together, with ארבה serving as a general term for the entire species. Thus, the cumulative impact of the waves of locusts in the time of Yoel may have been greater though each individual wave was less than the plague in Egypt.
- *Ralbag* argues that the Torah means that there will never be a plague of similar severity in Egypt, but that there may be ones of equal or greater magnitude in other countries.
- *Ramban* argues that the Torah means that the plague of locusts in Egypt was greater than any of the periodic waves of locusts that affect countries from time to time according to the natural way of things. However, the Torah does not rule out God creating another supernatural plague of locusts that exceeds it.
- *Rabeinu Hananel* observes that Yoel only exhorted the people in the wake of a plague of locusts that had already happened, whereas Moshe announced the plague beforehand and initiated it by waving his staff. He explains that the Torah means there will never be another plague of locusts brought about by a prophet.
- *Shadal* interprets both the Torah and Yoel as employing rhetorical hyperbole, in which case the whole problem doesn't arise.

חֹשֶׁךְ:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה נְטֵה יָדְךָ עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּמַּשׁ חֹשֶׁךְ: וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ-אֲפֹלָה בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים: לֹא-רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו וְלֹא-קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחְתּוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים וְלִכְלֹ-בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר בְּמוֹשְׁבֹתָם: וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר לָכֵן עֲבַדוּ אֶת-יְהוָה רַק צֹאנְכֶם וּבְקָרְכֶם יֵצֵג גַּם-טַפְּכֶם יֵלֶךְ עִמָּכֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה גַם-אֲתָה תִתֵּן בְּיַדְךָ זְבָחִים וְעֹלוֹת וְעֲשִׂינוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: וְגַם-מִקְנֵנוּ יֵלֶךְ עִמָּנוּ לֹא תִשָּׂא רַחֲסָה כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ נִקַּח לְעִבְדֹת אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַנְחֵנוּ לֹא-נִדְעַע מֶה-נִּעֲבַד אֶת-יְהוָה עַד-בֵּאֵנוּ שָׁמָּה: וַיַּחֲזֵק יְהוָה אֶת-לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא אָבָה לְשַׁלְּחָם: וַיֹּאמֶר-לוֹ פַּרְעֹה לֵךְ מֵעַלֵי הַשָּׂמֶר לֵךְ אֶל-תִּסְרֹף רְאוֹת פָּנָי כִּי בַיּוֹם רִאֲתָךְ פָּנַי תָּמוּת: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן דַּבַּרְתָּ לֹא-אֶסְרֶךָ עוֹד רְאוֹת פָּנָיךְ: (שמות י:בא-כט)

- God tells Moshe to stretch his hand out to the heavens and bring darkness.
- There is darkness for three days in all of Egypt, but the children of Israel have light in their dwellings.
- Pharaoh summons Moshe and tells him that the children of Israel can leave to serve God and take their children, with the sole condition that they leave their livestock behind.
- Moshe responds by demanding that, to the contrary, the Egyptians must supply the Hebrews even with additional livestock to sacrifice to *HASHEM*.
- God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he sends Moshe away, forbidding him to appear before him again.

What was the plague of darkness?

While all the plagues are supernatural and thus beyond human comprehension in terms of their cause, the plague of darkness is unique in that it is hard to understand what it actually was. Darkness is not a thing, so what can it mean that God 'sent darkness and made it dark' (*Tehillim* 105:28)? In addition, the Torah's description of the plague is extremely brief and the phrase חֹשֶׁךְ is ambiguous because it is not clear whether it comes from the root [מ ש ח] 'to feel/grope', [מ ו ח] 'depart/remove' or [א ש ח] 'night/gloom'. The further descriptive word אֲפֹלָה appears to be just a poetic synonym for darkness:

- *Ibn Ezra* argues that the plague was thick sea mist of the type that occur periodically in the Atlantic and make it impossible to tell whether it is day or night. Similarly, *Ramban* explains it as a thick cloud that descended from the sky.
- *Rabeinu Bahya* views the plague as thickening of the air which blocked the passage of light. According to this, the 'thick darkness' which impeded the Egyptians from moving was an intensification of the same process.
- *Torah Temimah* offered a novel interpretation according to which the darkness was actually a membrane that grew over the Egyptians eyes making it impossible for them to see.
- *Shadal* discusses the possibility that it was an intense sandstorm, but points out that the Torah does not indicate that that the darkness was brought about by wind as it does with the locusts.

מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עוֹד נֹגַע אֶחָד אֲבִיא עַל-פְּרֹעָה וְעַל-מִצְרַיִם אַחֲרֵי-כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה כְּשִׁלְחוֹ כָּלֵה גֵרֶשׁ יִגְרֶשׁ אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה: דְּבַר-נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ אִישׁ | מֵאֵת רַעְיוֹ וְאִשָּׁה מֵאֵת רְעוּתָהּ כְּלִי-כֶסֶף וְכִלְי זָהָב: וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֶת-חֲזוֹן הָעָם בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם גַּם | הָאִישׁ מִשֶּׁה גָדוֹל מְאֹד בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּעֵינֵי עַבְדֵי-פְרֹעָה וּבְעֵינֵי הָעָם: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה כַּחֲצֵת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם: וּמֵת כָּל-בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרֹעָה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל-כִּסְאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר הַשֹּׁפְחָה אֲשֶׁר אַחַר הַרְחִים וְכֹל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה: וְהִיתָה צַעֲקָה גְדוֹלָה בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר כָּמְהוּ לֹא נְהִיְתָה וְכָמְהוּ לֹא תִסָּף: וְלִכְל | בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִחַרְצוּ-כְּלָב לְשַׁנּוֹ לְמֵאִישׁ וְעַד-בְּהֵמָה לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּן אֲשֶׁר יִפְלֶה יְהוָה בֵּין מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיִּרְדּוּ כָל-עַבְדֵיךָ אֵלֶּה אֵלַי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לִי לֵאמֹר צֵא אִתָּה וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-בְּרַגְלֶיךָ וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן אֵצֵא וַיֵּצֵא מֵעַם-פְּרֹעָה בְּחֲרִירָאָף: (שמות יא:א-ח)

- God tells Moshe that he will bring one more plague against the Egyptians and then Pharaoh will send out the people.
- God tells Moshe to instruct the children of Israel to borrow gold and silver items from the Egyptians.
- Moshe announces to Pharaoh that God will kill all of the Egyptian firstborn at midnight, both man and beast, and that afterwards Pharaoh and his servants will prostrate themselves to the children of Israel and send them out. Moshe then leaves Pharaoh's court in anger.

Borrowing from the Egyptians

On God's instruction, the children of Israel 'borrow' valuable items from the Egyptians, thus leaving Egypt with great wealth. This presents an obvious moral difficulty because they never return what they borrowed.

- *Ibn Ezra* affirms that the children of Israel did indeed trick the Egyptians, but that this was entirely licit because all property belongs to G-d and he may transfer it from one person to another when He wishes. In addition, the Egyptians only lent their goods to the Hebrews because God had given them grace in the eyes of the Egyptians. Finally, the deception was an essential component of tempting Pharaoh to pursue the Hebrews thus enabling the great *qidush HASHEM* at the Sea of Reeds.
- *Rashbam* shows that the verb 'to borrow' [ל ש א ל] can be used to refer to a permanent transfer of property and claims that is the case here. On these lines, *Rabeinu Bahye* argues that this gift was an act of justice both because of the many years the Hebrews had been unjustly put to work and because a slave should always be sent away with sufficient property to start a new life.
- *Bechor Shor* suggests that when the Hebrews asked the Egyptians for their possessions, they really thought they were borrowing them for the festival in the wilderness to return them later.
- *Rashi* writes that the deception was necessary in order to fulfil the prophecy given to Moshe at the covenant between the parts that his descendants would leave Egypt with רכוש גדול.

המדרש 'רבי יוסי אומר' והשיר 'דיינו' מופיעים בהגדה פה אבל באמת זה הפסק בסיפור יציאת מצרים ועדיף לאחר אם אפשר בלי מחלוקת

רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר: מנין אתה אומר ש'לקו המצרים במצרים עשר מכות ועל הים לקו חמשים מכות? במצרים מה הוא אומר? ויאמרו החרטום אל פרעה: אצבע אלהים הוא, ועל הים מה הוא אומר? וירא ישראל את־היד הגדלה אשר עשה ה' במצרים, וייראו העם את־ה', ויאמינו ביי ובמשה עבדו. כמה לקו באצבע? עשר מכות. אמור מעתה: במצרים לקו עשר מכות ועל הים לקו חמשים מכות.

רבי אליעזר אומר: מנין שכל־מכה ומכה שהביא הקדוש ברוך הוא על המצרים במצרים הייתה של ארבע מכות? שנאמר: ישלח־בם חרון אפו, עברה וזעם וצרה, משלחת מלאכי רעים. עברה – אחת, וזעם – שתיים, וצרה – שלש, משלחת מלאכי רעים – ארבע. אמור מעתה: במצרים לקו ארבעים מכות ועל הים לקו מאתיים מכות.

רבי עקיבא אומר: מנין שכל־מכה ומכה שהביא הקדוש ברוך הוא על המצרים במצרים הייתה של חמש מכות? שנאמר: ישלח־בם חרון אפו, עברה וזעם וצרה, משלחת מלאכי רעים. חרון אפו – אחת, עברה – שתיים, וזעם – שלוש, וצרה – ארבע, משלחת מלאכי רעים – חמש. אמור מעתה: במצרים לקו חמשים מכות ועל הים לקו חמשים ומאתים מכות.

כמה מעלות טובות למקום עלינו!

- אלו הוציאנו ממצרים ולא עשה בהם שפטים, דינו.
- אלו עשה בהם שפטים, ולא עשה באלהיהם, דינו.
- אלו עשה באלהיהם, ולא הרג את־בכוריהם, דינו.
- אלו הרג את־בכוריהם ולא נתן לנו את־מונם, דינו.
- אלו נתן לנו את־מונם ולא קרע לנו את־הים, דינו.
- אלו קרע לנו את־הים ולא העבירנו בתוכו בחרבה, דינו.
- אלו העבירנו בתוכו בחרבה ולא שקע צרנו בתוכו דינו.
- אלו שקע צרנו בתוכו ולא ספק צרכנו במדבר ארבעים שנה דינו.
- אלו ספק צרכנו במדבר ארבעים שנה ולא האכילנו את־המן דינו.
- אלו האכילנו את־המן ולא נתן לנו את־השבת, דינו.
- אלו נתן לנו את־השבת, ולא קרבונו לפני הר סיני, דינו.
- אלו קרבונו לפני הר סיני, ולא נתן לנו את־התורה. דינו.
- אלו נתן לנו את־התורה ולא הכניסנו לארץ ישראל, דינו.
- אלו הכניסנו לארץ ישראל ולא בנה לנו את־בית הבחירה דינו.

על אחת, כמה ופמה, טובה כפולה ומכפלת למקום עלינו: שהוציאנו ממצרים, ועשה בהם שפטים, ועשה באלהיהם, והרג את־בכוריהם, ונתן לנו את־מונם, וקרע לנו את־הים, והעבירנו בתוכו בחרבה, ושקע צרנו בתוכו, וספק צרכנו במדבר ארבעים שנה, והאכילנו את־המן, ונתן לנו את־השבת, וקרבונו לפני הר סיני, ונתן לנו את־התורה, והכניסנו לארץ ישראל, ובנה לנו את־בית הבחירה לכפר על־כל־עוונותינו.

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הָיָה אוֹמֵר: כָּל שְׁלֹא אָמַר שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים אֱלוֹ בַּפֶּסַח, לֹא יֵצֵא יְדֵי חוֹבָתוֹ, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן: פֶּסַח, מִצֵּה, וּמְרוֹר.

פֶּסַח

שְׁהִיּוּ אַבוֹתֵינוּ אוֹכְלִים בְּזִמְן שְׁבִית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הָיָה קִיָּם, עַל שׁוּם מָה? עַל שׁוּם שְׁפֶסֶח הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל בְּתֵי אַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְאָמַרְתֶּם זִבַּח פֶּסַח הוּא לִי, אֲשֶׁר פֶּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם, וְאֶת־בְּתֵינוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּקַּד הָעַם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר: הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֹאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה: דַּבְּרוּ אֶל־כָּל־עַדְת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּעֲשֹׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם חֹמֶה אֶל־אִישׁ שֶׁהָיָה לְבֵית־אֵבֶת שֶׁהָיָה לְבֵיתוֹ: וְאִם־יִמְעַט הַבַּיִת מִהֵיטֵב מִשֶּׁהָיָה וְלָקַח הוּא וּשְׁכֵנוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ בְּמִכְסֵת נֶפֶשׁ אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוּ תִכְסּוּ עַל־הַשֶּׁה: שֶׁהָיָה תָמִים זָכַר בְּזִמְנָהּ יְהִיָּה לָכֶם מִן־הַכֹּבָשִׁים וּמִן־הָעִזִּים תִּקְחוּ: וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת עַד אַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וּשְׁחַטוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל קַהֲל עַדְת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין הָעֲרָבִים: וְלָקְחוּ מִן־הַדָּם וְנָתְנוּ עַל־שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וְעַל־הַמַּשְׁקוּף עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר־יֹאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ בָּהֶם: וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה צְלִי־אֵשׁ וּמִצּוֹת עַל־מִרְרִים יֹאכְלוּ: אֶל־תֹּאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נָא וּבָשָׂל מִבָּשָׂל בְּמַיִם כִּי אִם־צְלִי־אֵשׁ רֹאשׁוֹ עַל־כַּרְעֵיו וְעַל־קַרְבּוֹ: וְלֹא־תוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּתֶר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר בָּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹפוּ: וְכִכָּה תֹאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ מִתְּנִיכֶם חֲגָרִים נֹעֲלִיכֶם בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם וּמַקְלֵכֶם בְּיַדְכֶם וְאָכַלְתֶּם אֹתוֹ בַּחֲפִזוֹן פֶּסַח הוּא לִיהוָה: וְעַבְרַתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה וְהִכִּיתִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם וְעַד־בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֲעַשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי יְהוָה: וְהָיָה הַדָּם לָכֶם לְאֵת עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר אֲתֶם שָׂם וְרֵאִיתִי אֶת־הַדָּם וּפִסַּחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם וְלֹא־יְהִיָּה בְּכֶם נֶגֶף לְמִשְׁחִית בְּהַכְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (שְׁמוֹת יב:א-ג)

- God tells Moshe to instruct the children of Israel to bring the *Pesah* sacrifice.
- Each household is to take one lamb or goat in the first year of its life on the 10th day of the first month. On the afternoon of the 14th they are to slaughter it and spread the blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses.
- The *Pesah* is to be eaten completely roasted that night, in haste, with the children of Israel dressed and ready to leave. None should be left over till morning and any leftovers are to be burnt.
- God tells Moshe that on that night He will pass through Egypt and kill every firstborn, passing only over the houses that have sacrificial blood on the door.

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְכָל־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מְשֹׁכוּ וּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵּיכֶם וּשְׁחֲטוּ הַפֶּסַח: וְלִקְחֶתֶם אֲגֵדַת אֲזוּב וּטְבִלְתֶּם בְּדָם אֲשֶׁר־בְּסֹף וְהִגַּעְתֶּם אֶל־הַמִּשְׁקוֹף וְאֶל־שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת מִזֵּהָדָם אֲשֶׁר בְּסֹף וְאִתְּם לֹא תֵצְאוּ אִישׁ מִפֶּתַח־בֵּיתוֹ עַד־בֹּקֶר: וְעַבְרַיִהוּ לִנְגֹף אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְרָאָה אֶת־הַדָּם עַל־הַמִּשְׁקוֹף וְעַל שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וּפֶסַח יִהְיֶה עַל־הַפֶּתַח וְלֹא יִתֵּן הַמִּשְׁחִית לְבֹא אֶל־בְּתִיכֶם לִנְגֹף: וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְחֻק־לֶךְדָּ וּלְבִנְיָדָ עַד־עוֹלָם: וְהָיָה כִּי־תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן יְהוָה לָכֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת: וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מָה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם: וְאָמַרְתֶּם זָבַח־פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל־בְּתִי בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־בְּתִינוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ: וַיִּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כִּן עָשׂוּ: וַיְהִי בַחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיְהוּה הַכָּה כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרָעָה הַיֵּשֵׁב עַל־פְּסָאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר הַשֶּׁבִי אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַבּוֹר וְכֹל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה: וַיִּקַּם פְּרָעָה לַיְלָה הוּא וְכָל־עַבְדָּיו וְכָל־מִצְרַיִם וַתְּהִי צַעֲקָה גְדֹלָה בְּמִצְרַיִם כִּי־אִין בַּיִת אֲשֶׁר אִין־שָׁם מֵת: וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צִאוּ מֵתוֹךְ עַמִּי גַם־אַתֶּם גַּם־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְכוּ עַבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כַּדְּבַרְכֶם: גַּם־צֹאנְכֶם גַּם־בְּקִרְכֶם קְחוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתֶּם וּלְכוּ וּבְרַכְתֶּם גַּם־אֹתִי: (שמות יב:כא-לב)

- Moshe tells the children of Israel to offer the *Pesah* sacrifice and not to leave their homes until the morning.
- Moshe tells them that when they come to the land of Israel they will observe this sacrifice annually in order that future generations shall remember the plague of the first born.
- The children of Israel follow their instructions and at midnight on the 15th of the month the Egyptian firstborn die.
- Pharaoh tells the children of Israel to leave with all their livestock to serve God.

Who were the firstborn?

The Torah repeatedly emphasizes that all the Egyptian firstborn died, from the lowest to the highest rungs of society, as well as the animals. However, it leaves ambiguous exactly what a firstborn is. Generally, in the Torah, the term בכור refers only to the firstborn of a mother and usually only if the child is male. With regard to the mitzvah of *pidyon haben*, a בכור has to be the 'opening of the womb' and if the mother's first baby is female there is no בכור. In the context of the laws of inheritance, it refers simply to the first male child, regardless of older sisters.

However, *Tehillim* 78:51, describes the dead firstborn as ראשית אונים apparently indicating that they were the firstborn of their father. Further, the Torah states that 'there was no house without a dead body', which would be unlikely if only the firstborn according to the maternal line died. *Ibn Ezra* interprets this verse as being a figure of speech, but *Rashi* quotes two explanations that account for all the data. According to the first, the concept of בכור in Egypt included not just firstborn children, but the head of every household. According to the second, both the firstborn of the mother and the father were killed. In a healthy society this would not have made a great difference, but because the Egyptians were progressives, many women had multiple firstborn sons by different fathers, greatly increasing the death count.

מצה

זו שאנו אוכלים, על שום מה? על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא, וגאלם, שנאמר: ויאפו אתהבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגת מצות, כי לא חמץ, כי גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה, וגם צדה לא עשו להם.

ותחזק מצרים על-העם למהר לשלחם מן-הארץ כי אמרו כלנו מתים: וישא העם את-בצקו טרם יחמץ משארתם צרות בשמלתם על-שכמם: ובני-ישראל עשו כדבר משה וישאלו ממצרים כלי-כסף וכלי זהב ושמלת: ויהוה נתן את-חזן העם בעיני מצרים וישאלום וינצלו את-מצרים: ויסעו בני-ישראל מרעמסס סכתה כשש-מאות אלה רגלי הגברים לבד מטף: וגם-ערב רב עלה אתם וצאן ובקר מקנה כבד מאד: ויאפו את-הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגת מצות כי לא חמץ כי-גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם-צדה לא-עשו להם: ומושב בני ישראל אשר ישבו במצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה: ויהי מקץ שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה ויהי בעצם היום הזה יצאו כל-צבאות יהוה מארץ מצרים: ליל שמרים הוא ליהוה להוציאם מארץ מצרים הוא-הלילה הזה ליהוה שמרים לכל-בני ישראל לדרתם:...

ויאמר משה אל-העם זכור את-היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים כי בחזק יד הוציא יהוה אתכם מזה ולא יאכל חמץ: היום אתם יצאים בחדש האביב: והיה כי-יביאך יהוה אל-ארץ הכנעני והחתי והאמרי והחוי והיבوسی אשר נשבע לאבתך לתת לך ארץ זבת חלב ודבש ועבדת את-העבדה הזאת בחדש הזה: שבעת ימים תאכל מצת וביום השביעי חג ליהוה: מצות יאכל את שבעת הימים ולא-יראה לך חמץ ולא-יראה לך שאר בכל-גבלך: והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה יהוה לי בצאתי ממצרים: והיה לך לאות על-ידך ולזכרון בין עיניך למען תהיה תורת יהוה בפיך כי ביד חזקה הוצאך יהוה ממצרים: ושמרת את-החקה הזאת למועדה מימים ימימה: (שמות יב: לג-מב, יג: ג-י)

- The Egyptians press upon the children of Israel to leave and lend them gold and silver articles, and clothing.
- They children of Israel journey from Ramesses to Succot and bake their dough into matzot.
- Moshe commands them about a seven-day festival of matzot that they will observe in the land of Israel so that future generations will remember the exodus.

Why did the children of Israel eat *Matzot*?

In the Geonic *Haggadah* that we use, we find the most well-known explanation for eating *matzot* on *Pesah*: the children of Israel brought dough with them from Egypt and baked it as *matzot* because there was not time for it to rise. This is based on reading *Shemot* 12:39 as a series of clauses each explaining the one before: *and they baked the dough they had brought out from Egypt into matzot because it had not risen because they had been driven out from Egypt and were not able to tarry...* This understanding however faces a serious objection. The children of Israel had already eaten their *Pesah* sacrifice with *matzot* and God had instructed Moshe about the seven-day festival of *matzot* (*Shemot* 12:15-20). The traditional view, necessarily implies, however, that, had the children of Israel been given more time by the Egyptians, then they would have allowed their dough to rise and become *hametz*.

- *Ibn Ezra* and *Barternura* defend the traditional view by arguing that there was no festival of *matzot* in Egypt. The commandment to eat the *Pesah* sacrifice with *matzot* implies nothing about the following day and God's command to celebrate a seven-day festival of eating *matzot* applied only to the future. This view however, contradicts *Tosefta* 8:21 in which two opinions are presented about the *Pesah* in Egypt. The first is that the prohibition of *hametz* lasted for seven days as in future generations and the second is that is lasted only for one day. The second of these views is accepted as normative by the *Talmud Bavli* (*Pesahim* 94b). Various elaborate solutions have been suggested for this problem.
- *Ramban* interprets the verse entirely differently. In his view, the third clause explains the first: the children of Israel baked their dough in Succot because they had been driven out of Egypt and were not able to tarry long enough to bake or prepare other provisions. They baked their dough into *matzot* because they had already been forbidden to eat any *hametz*. According to the *Ramban*, therefore, there must be another reason altogether for eating *matzot*. Answers that have been given include (i) *matzot* are a memorial of the cheap and filling unleavened bread given to the slaves in Egypt (ii) unleavened bread symbolizes spiritual purity and humility (iii) leavened bread was particularly associated in the ancient world with Egypt, whereas the nomadic patriarchs ate unleavened bread, the bread of freedom.

מָרוֹר

זֶה שְׁאָנוּ אוֹכְלִים, עַל שׁוּם מָה? עַל שׁוּם שְׁמִירוֹ הַמְצָרִים אֶת־חַיֵּי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם, שְׁנֵאָמַר: וַיִּמְרוּ אֶת חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעַבְדָּה קָשָׁה, בְּחֶמֶר וּבְלִבָּנִים וּבְכָל־עַבְדָּה בִּשְׂדֵה אֶת כָּל עַבְדָּתָם אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ בָהֶם בְּפָרֶךְ.

הַלֵּל

בְּכַל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר חָיֵב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עֲצָמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. לֹא אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַלְבָּד גָּאֵל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֲלֵא אִךְ אוֹתָנוּ גָּאֵל עִמָּהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם, לְמַעַן הִבִּיא אוֹתָנוּ, לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם.

ויגד לְמִלְךָ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעַם וַיִּהְפֹּךְ לִבָּב פָּרַעַה וַעֲבָדוּ אֶל־הָעַם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵ־זֹאת עֲשִׂינוּ כִּי־שַׁלַּחְנוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעֲבָדוֹ: וַיֹּאסֶר אֶת־רַכְבּוֹ וְאֶת־עַמּוֹ לְקַח עִמּוֹ: וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בַּחֹר וְכָל רֶכֶב מִצְרַיִם וּשְׁלֹשׁ עַל־כִּלּוֹ: וַיַּחֲזֵק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פָּרַעַה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵצְאִים בְּיַד רָמָה: וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁיִגּוּ אוֹתָם חַגִּים עַל־הֵימָּם כָּל־סוֹס רֶכֶב פָּרַעַה וּפָרָשָׁיו וַחִילוֹ עַל־פִּי הַחִירָת לִפְנֵי בַעַל צְפֹן: וּפָרַעַה הִקְרִיב וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם וַהֲנִה מִצְרַיִם נֹסֵעַ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַמְבִלִי אִיזֶקְבָּרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לְמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר מֵ־זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ לְהוֹצִיאֵנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם: הֲלֹא־זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר חַדַּל מִמֶּנּוּ וְנַעֲבֹדְךָ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ עַבְדּוֹתֵי מִצְרַיִם מִמֵּתְנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעַם אֶל־תִּירְאוּ הַתִּיַצְבוּ וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתֶם אֶת־מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם לֹא תִסִּיפוּ לְרַאֲתָם עוֹד עַד־עוֹלָם: יְהוָה יִלְחֶם לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִישׁוּן: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מֵ־הַתְּצַעַק אֵלַי דְּבַר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ: וְאַתָּה הָרַם אֶת־מַטְּךָ וְנָטָה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הֵימָּם וַיִּבְקַעְהוּ וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֵּשׁ: וְאַנִּי הֲנִי מַחֲזִיק אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֵאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאִכְבְּדָהּ בְּפָרַעַה וּבְכָל־חִילוֹ בְּרַכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו: וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בַּהֲכַבְדֵי בְּפָרַעַה בְּרַכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו: וַיִּסַּע מֶלֶךְ הַיָּם אֶל־הַיָּם לִפְנֵי מַחְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְךְ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּסַּע עִמּוֹד הָעַנָּן מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֵד מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם: וַיָּבֵא בֵּין מַחְנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הָעַנָּן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיִּצָּר אֶת־הַלַּיְלָה וְלֹא־קָרַב זֶה אֶל־זֶה כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה: וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הֵימָּם וַיִּזְלַךְ יְהוָה אֶת־הֵימָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עִזָּה כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת־הֵימָּם לְחַרְבָּה וַיִּבְקַעַו הַיָּם: וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֵּשׁ וְהַיָּם לָהֶם חֲמָה מִיַּמִּינָם וּמִשְׂמָאלָם: וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֵאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם כָּל סוֹס פָּרַעַה רֶכֶב וּפָרָשָׁיו אֶל־תּוֹךְ הַיָּם: וַיְהִי בְּאֲשַׁמְרַת הַבֶּקֶר וַיִּשְׁקֹף יְהוָה אֶל־מַחְנֵה מִצְרַיִם בְּעִמּוֹד אֵשׁ וַעֲנָן וַיְהִי אֶת מַחְנֵה מִצְרַיִם: וַיִּסַּר אֶת אַפְּנוֹ מִרַכְבָּתוֹ וַיִּנְהַגְהוּ בְּכַבְדָּת וַיֹּאמֶר מִצְרַיִם אָנוּסָה מִפְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יְהוָה גִּלְחֵם לָהֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נָטָה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הֵימָּם וַיִּשְׁבוּ הַיָּם עַל־מִצְרַיִם עַל־רַכְבּוֹ וְעַל־פָּרָשָׁיו: וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הֵימָּם וַיִּשָּׁב הַיָּם לִפְנוֹת בָּקֶר לְאִיתָנוּ וּמִצְרַיִם נָסִים לְקִרְאָתוֹ וַיִּנְעַר יְהוָה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם: וַיִּשְׁבוּ הַיָּם וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת־הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת־הַפָּרָשִׁים לְכָל חֵיל פָּרַעַה הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיָּם לֹא־נִשְׂאָר בָּהֶם עַד־אֶחָד: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִלְכוּ בַּיַּבֵּשׁ בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם וְהַיָּם לָהֶם חֲמָה מִיַּמִּינָם וּמִשְׂמָאלָם: וַיִּוָּשַׁע יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירָאוּ הָעַם אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ בֵּיהוָה וַיִּבְרָא הָעִבְדוֹ: (שְׁמוֹת יד: לא)

לְפִיכֶם אֲנַחְנוּ חַיִּבִּים לְהוֹדוֹת, לְהַלֵּל, לְשַׁבַּח, לְפָאֵר, לְרוּמֵם, לְהַדִּיר, לְבָרֵךְ,
לְעַלֵּה וּלְקַלֵּם לְמִי שֶׁעָשָׂה לְאַבּוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַנְּסִים הָאֵלֹהִים: הוֹצִיאָנוּ
מֵעַבְדוֹת לְחֵרוֹת מִיְּגוֹן לְשִׁמְחָה, וּמֵאֶבֶל לְיוֹם טוֹב, וּמֵאֶפְלָה לְאוֹר גְּדוֹל,
וּמִשְׁעָבוֹד לְגֹאֲלָהּ. וְנֹאמַר לְפָנָיו שִׁירָה חֲדָשָׁה: הַלְלוּיָהּ

הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי ה', הַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם ה'. יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבֹרָךְ
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. מִמְזֶרֶח שֶׁשָּׁמֶשׁ עַד מְבוֹאוֹ מְהַלֵּל שֵׁם ה'. רַם
עַל־כָּל־גּוֹיִם ה', עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ. מִי כִּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַמְּגַבִּיֵּה
לְשָׁבֶת, הַמְּשַׁפִּילֵי לְרֵאוֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבְאָרֶץ. מְקִימֵי מַעֲפָר דָּל,
מֵאֲשַׁפֵּת יָרִים אֲבִיוֹן, לְהוֹשִׁיבֵי עַם־נְדִיבִים, עִם נְדִיבֵי עַמּוֹ.
מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֵקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת, אִם הַבָּנִים שְׂמִחָהּ. הַלְלוּיָהּ.

בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם, בַּיַּת יַעֲקֹב מֵעַם לַעֲז, הִיְתָה יְהוּדָה
לְקַדְשׁוֹ, יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמְּשֻׁלוֹתָיו. הֵיִם רָאָה וַיִּנָּס, הִירֵדֵן יֹסֵב לְאַחֹר.
הֶהָרִים רָקְדוּ כְּאֵילִים, גְּבַעוֹת כְּבָנֵי צֹאן. מַה לָּךְ הֵיִם כִּי תִנוּס,
הִירֵדֵן – תֹּסֵב לְאַחֹר, הֶהָרִים – תִּרְקְדוּ כְּאֵילִים, גְּבַעוֹת כְּבָנֵי־
צֹאן. מִלְּפָנֵי אֲדוֹן חוֹלֵי אֶרֶץ, מִלְּפָנֵי אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. הַהֶפְכִי הַצּוֹר
אֲגַם־מָיִם, חִלְמֵי־שׁ לְמַעֲיֵנו־מָיִם.

מגביהים את הכוס עד סוף ברכת היין

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר גָּאֲלָנוּ וְגֹאֲלֵנוּ אֶת־אַבּוֹתֵינוּ
מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְהַגִּיעָנוּ הַלִּילָה הַזֶּה לְאַכְלֵי־בֹר מִצָּה וּמְרוֹר. כֵּן ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וְאֱלֹהֵי אַבּוֹתֵינוּ יַגִּיעֵנוּ לְמוֹעֲדִים וְלְרַגְלִים אַחֲרִים הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאָתָנוּ
לְשָׁלוֹם, שְׂמִחִים בְּבִנְיַן עִירָךְ וְשָׂשִׁים בְּעַבּוֹדָתְךָ. וְנֹאכַל שָׂשׁ מִן
הַזִּבְחִים וּמִן הַפְּסָחִים אֲשֶׁר יַגִּיעַ דָּמָם עַל קִיר מִזְבִּיחֶךָ לְרִצּוֹן, וְנוֹדָה
לָךְ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ עַל גְּאֻלָּתָנוּ וְעַל פְּדוּת נַפְשָׁנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', גֹּאֲלֵ
יִשְׂרָאֵל.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

רְחֵצָה

נוטלים את הידים ומברכים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

מוֹצֵיא מַצָּה

יקח המצות בסדר שהניחון, הפרוסה בין שתי השלמות, יאחז שלשתן בידו ויברך "המוציא" בכוונה על העליונה, ו"על אכילת מצה" בכוונה על הפרוסה. אחר כך יבצע כזית מן העליונה השלמה וכזית שני מן הפרוסה, ויטבלם במלח:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצֵיא לָחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

מְרוֹר

כל אחד מהמסבים לוקח כזית מרור, מטבלו בחרוסת ומנער החרוסת, מברך ואוכל בלי הסבה:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מְרוֹר.

כוּרֵךְ

כל אחד מהמסבים לוקח כזית מן המצה השלישית עם כזית מרור, כורכים יחד, אוכלים בהסבה ובלי ברכה. לפני אכלו אומר

זָכַר לְמִקְדָּשׁ כְּהִלָּל. כֵּן עָשָׂה הֵלֵל בְּזִמְנֵי שְׁבִית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הַזֶּה קָיָם:

הָיָה כוּרֵךְ מַצָּה וּמְרוֹר וְאוֹכֵל בְּיַחַד, לְקָיָם מָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: עַל מִצְוֹת וּמְרוֹרִים יֵאָכְלֶהוּ.

שֶׁלֶחַן עוֹרֵךְ

אוכלים ושתיים

צָפוֹן

אחר גמר הסעודה לוקח כל אחד מהמסבים כזית מהמצה שהייתה צפונה לאפיקומן ואוכל ממנה כזית. וצריך לאוכלה קודם חצות הלילה.

לפני אכילת האפיקומן יאמר:

זָכֹר לְקֶרְבֶּן פֶּסַח הַנֶּאֱכָל עַל הַשׁוֹבֵעַ.

בִּרְךְ

מוזגים כוס שלישי ומברכים ברכת המזון:

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, בְּשׁוֹב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הֵינּוּ כְּחֹלְמִים. אֲזַי יִמְלֵא שְׁחֹק פִּינוּ וְלִשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה. אֲזַי יֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם: הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ, הֵינּוּ שְׂמֵחִים. שׁוֹבָה ה' אֶת שְׁבִיתֵנוּ פְּאִפְיָקִים בְּנִגְבִּי. הִזְרַעִים בְּדִמְעָה, בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ. הַלֹּחֶם יִלֶּךְ וּבִכְהָ נִשְׂא מִשֶּׁךְ הַזֶּרַע, בֹּא יִבֵּא בְרִנָּה נִשְׂא אֶלְמֹתָיו.

רבותי נברך

יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבָרָךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם

בְּרִשׁוֹת מְרִנָּה וְרִבְּנָה וְרִבְּוִתִּי, נְבָרָךְ [אַלְהֵינוּ] שְׂאֲכֵלְנוּ מִשְּׁלוֹ

בְּרוּךְ [אַלְהֵינוּ] שְׂאֲכֵלְנוּ מִשְּׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ חֵינּוּ

בְּרוּךְ [אַלְהֵינוּ] שְׂאֲכֵלְנוּ מִשְּׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ חֵינּוּ

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם, הֵזַן אֶת הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹ בְטוֹבוֹ בְּחֵן בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים, הוּא נוֹתֵן לָחֶם לְכָל בֶּשֶׂר כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד. וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַגְּדוֹל תִּמְיֵד לֹא חָסַר לָנוּ, וְאֵל יִחְסַר לָנוּ מִזֶּן לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בְּעֶבֶר שְׁמוֹ הַגְּדוֹל, כִּי הוּא אֵל זָן וּמְפָרֵס לְכָל וּמְטִיב לְכָל, וַיִּמְכֵּן מִזֶּן לְכָל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הֵזַן אֶת הַכֹּל.

נוֹדָה לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל שֶׁהִנְחַלְתָּ לָּאֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה, וְעַל שֶׁהוֹצַאתָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וּפְדִיתָנוּ מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים, וְעַל בְּרִיתְךָ שֶׁחֲתַמְתָּ בְּבִשְׁרֵנוּ, וְעַל תּוֹרַתְךָ שֶׁלְּמַדְתָּנוּ, וְעַל חֻקֶּיךָ שֶׁהוֹדַעְתָּנוּ, וְעַל חַיִּים חַן וְחֶסֶד שֶׁחֻנַּנְתָּנוּ, וְעַל אֲכִילַת מְזוֹן שֶׁאַתָּה זָן וּמְפַרְנֵס אוֹתָנוּ תָּמִיד, בְּכָל יוֹם וּבְכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה: וְעַל הַכֹּל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ וּמְבָרְכִים אוֹתְךָ, יִתְבָּרֵךְ שְׁמֶךָ בְּפִי כָל חַי תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּפְתוּב: וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשִׂבַּעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאֶרֶץ הַטוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', עַל הָאֶרֶץ וְעַל הַמְּזוֹן:

רַחֵם נָא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִירְךָ וְעַל צִיּוֹן מְשֻׁכָּן כְּבוֹדְךָ וְעַל מַלְכוּת בֵּית דָּוִד מְשִׁיחֶךָ וְעַל הַבַּיִת הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ שֶׁנִּקְרָא שְׁמֶךָ עָלָיו: אֱלֹהֵינוּ אָבִינוּ, רַעֲנוּ זוּגְנוּ פְּרִנְסָנוּ וְכִלְכַּלְנוּ וְהִרְוִיחְנוּ, וְהִרְוַח לָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְהֵרָה מְכֹל צָרוֹתֵינוּ. וְנָא אֵל תִּצְרִיכְנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לֹא לִיְדֵי מַתְנַת בְּשׂוֹר וְדָם וְלֹא לִיְדֵי הַלְוָאתָם, כִּי אִם לִיְדֵךָ הַמְּלֶאכֶה הַפְּתוּחָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה וְהִרְחָבָה, שְׁלֹא נָבוֹשׁ וְלֹא נִכְלָם לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

בשבת מוסיפים

רצה והחליצנו ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּמִצּוֹתֶיךָ וּבְמִצְוֹת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַשְּׁבֶת הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ הַזֶּה. כִּי יוֹם זֶה גָּדוֹל וְקְדוֹשׁ הוּא לְפָנֶיךָ לְשֶׁבֶת בּוֹ וְלַנּוּחַ בּוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה כְּמִצְוֹת רְצוֹנָךְ. וּבְרִצּוֹנְךָ הֵנִיחַ לָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁלֵא תְהֵא צָרָה וְיָגוֹן וְאִנְחָה בְּיוֹם מְנוּחָתָנוּ. וְהִרְאָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּנִחְמַת צִיּוֹן עִירְךָ וּבְכַנְיֵן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קְדֻשְׁךָ כִּי אַתָּה הוּא בַעַל הַיְשׁוּעוֹת וּבַעַל הַנְּחֻמוֹת.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, יַעֲלֶה וְיָבֵא וְיַגִּיעַ וְיִרְאֶה וְיִרְצֶה וְיִשְׁמַע וְיִפְקֹד וְיִזְכֹּר זְכוֹרֵנוּ וּפְקֻדוֹתֵנוּ, וְזָכוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְזָכוֹן מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ, וְזָכוֹן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קְדֻשְׁךָ, וְזָכוֹן כָּל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָנֶיךָ, לְפָלִיטָה לְטוֹבָה לְחַן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים, לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם בְּיוֹם חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה זְכוֹרֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בּוֹ לְטוֹבָה וּפְקֻדָּנוּ בּוֹ לְבִרְכָה וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ בּוֹ לְחַיִּים. וּבְדַבַּר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים חוּס וְחַנּוּן וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ, כִּי אֲלֶיךָ עֵינֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל מְלֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה. וּבְנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקְּדֻשָׁה בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', בּוֹנֵה בְּרַחֲמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. אָמֵן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הָאֵל אָבִינוּ מְלַכְנוּ אֲדִירָנוּ בּוֹרְאָנוּ גּוֹאֲלָנוּ יוֹצְרָנוּ קְדוֹשָׁנוּ קְדוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב רוֹעֵנוּ רוֹעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמְּלֶךְ הַטוֹב וְהַמְּטִיב לְכָל שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם וְיוֹם הוּא הַטִּיב, הוּא מְטִיב, הוּא יִטִּיב לָנוּ. הוּא גְּמָלָנוּ הוּא גּוֹמְלָנוּ הוּא יְגַמְלָנוּ לְעַד, לְחַן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים וּלְרוּחַ הַצְּלָה וְהַצְּלָחָה, בְּרַכָּה וְיִשׁוּעָה נְחֻמָּה פְּרִנְסָה וְכִלְכַּלָּה וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשָׁלוֹם וְכָל טוֹב, וּמְכֹל טוֹב לְעוֹלָם עַל יַחְסְרָנוּ.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִתְבַּרֵךְ בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ.
הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִשְׁתַּבַּח לְדוֹר דוֹרִים, וְיִתְפָּאֵר בְּנוֹ לְעַד וּלְנִצְחָה נְצַחִים, וְיִתְהַדַּר בְּנוֹ לְעַד וּלְעוֹלָמֵי
עוֹלָמִים.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִפְרֹנְסֵנוּ בְּכָבוֹד.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִשְׁבּוֹר עָלֵנוּ מֵעַל צְוֹאֲרֵנוּ, וְהוּא יוֹלִיכֵנוּ קוֹמְמִיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ בְּרָכָה מְרֻבָּה בְּבֵית הַזֶּה, וְעַל שְׁלַחַן זֶה שְׂאֻכְלָנוּ עָלֵינוּ.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַנְּכִיָּא זְכוֹר לְטוֹב, וְיִבְשֹׁר לָנוּ בְּשׂוֹרֹת טוֹבוֹת יְשׁוּעוֹת
וְנִחְמוֹת.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִבְרַךְ אֶת בְּעָלֵי / אֲשֵׁתֵי. הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִבְרַךְ אֶת [אָבִי מוֹרִי] בְּעַל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה. וְאֶת
[אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי] בְּעַלֹת הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה, אוֹתָם וְאֶת בֵּיתָם וְאֶת זֶרְעָם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם. אוֹתָנוּ וְאֶת כָּל
אֲשֶׁר לָנוּ, כְּמוֹ שְׁנֵתְבָרְכוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבֹרָהֶם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב בְּכָל מַפְלָל, כֵּן יִבְרַךְ אוֹתָנוּ כְּלָנוּ יַחַד
בְּבְרָכָה שְׁלֵמָה, וְנֹאמֵר, אָמֵן.

בְּמָרוֹם יִלְמְדוּ עָלֵינוּ וְעָלֵינוּ זְכוֹת שְׁתַּהַא לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת שְׁלוֹם. וְנִשְׂא בְּרָכָה מֵאֵת ה', וְצַדִּיקָה
מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ, וְנִמְצָא חַן וְשִׂכָּל טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם.

בשבת: הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִנְחִילָנוּ יוֹם שְׁכָלוֹ שֶׁבֶת וּמְנוּחָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָמִים.

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִנְחִילָנוּ יוֹם שְׁכָלוֹ טוֹב. [יוֹם שְׁכָלוֹ אַרְוֵף. יוֹם שְׁצַדִּיקִים יוֹשְׁבִים וְעִטְרוֹתֵיהֶם
בְּרֵאשֵׁיהֶם וְנִהְיִים מִזֵּיו הַשְּׂכִינָה וְיִהִי חֵלְקֵינוּ עִמָּהֶם].

הַרְחַמֵּן הוּא יִזְכְּנוּ לִימֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ וְלְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. מְגִדוֹל יְשׁוּעוֹת מְלָכוֹ וְעֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד
לְמִשִּׁיחוֹ לְדוֹר וּלְדוֹר עַד עוֹלָם.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶמְרוּ, אָמֵן. יִרְאוּ אֶת ה'
קְדוֹשׁוֹ, כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו. כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרַעֲבוּ, וְדָרְשֵׁי ה' לֹא יִחְסְרוּ כָּל טוֹב. הוֹדוּ לֵי כִּי
טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד. פּוֹתַח אֶת יַדָּהּ, וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רִצּוֹן. בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בֵּי, וְהִנֵּה
ה' מְבַטְחוֹ. נַעַר הִיִּתִּי גַם זְקֵנָתִי, וְלֹא רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק נֶעְזֵב, וְזָרְעוֹ מְבַקֵּשׁ לָחֶם. יֵי עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן,
ה' יִבְרַךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשְׁלוֹם.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

ושותים ואינו מברך ברכה אחרונה

מוזגים כוס של אליהו ופותחים את הדלת:

שִׁפּוֹךְ חֲמַתְךָ אֱלֹהֵיגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִדְעוּךָ וְעַל-מְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ.
כִּי אָכַל אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת-נְוֵהוּ הַשָּׁמוּ. שִׁפּוֹךְ-עָלֵיהֶם זַעֲמָךָ וְחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ יִשִּׁיגֵם.
תִּרְדֹּף בָּאֵף וְתִשְׁמִידֵם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי ה'.

הלל

לא לנו, ה', לא לנו, כי לשמך תן כבוד, על חסדך על אמתך. למה
 יאמרו הגוים אייה נא אלהיהם. ואלהינו בשמים, כל אשר חפץ עשה.
 עצביהם כסף וזהב מעשה ידי אדם. פה להם ולא ידברו, עינים להם
 ולא יראו. אזנים להם ולא ישמעו, אף להם ולא יריחון. ידיהם ולא
 ימישון, רגליהם ולא יהלכו, לא יהגו בגרונם. כמוהם יהיו עשיהם, כל
 אשר בטח בהם. ישראל בטח ביי, עזרם ומגנם הוא. בית אהרן בטחו
 ביי, עזרם ומגנם הוא. יראי ה' בטחו ביי, עזרם ומגנם הוא. יי זכרנו
 יברך. יברך את בית ישראל, יברך את בית אהרן, יברך יראי ה',
 הקטנים עם הגדלים. יסף ה' עליכם, עליכם ועל בניכם. ברוכים אתם
 ליי, עשה שמים וארץ. השמים שמים ליי והארץ נתן לבני אדם. לא
 המתים יהללו יה ולא כל ירדי דומה. ואנחנו נברך יה מעתה ועד
 עולם. הללויה.

אהבתי כי ישמע ה' את קולי תחנוני. כי הטת אזנו לי ובימי אקרא.
 אפפוני חבלי מות ומצרי שאול מצאוני, צרה ויגון אמצא. ובשם ה'
 אקרא: אנה ה' מלטה נפשי. חנון ה' וצדיק, ואלהינו מרחם. שמר
 פתאים ה', דלותי ולי יהושיע. שובי נפשי למנוחכי, כי ה' גמל עליכי.
 כי חלצת נפשי ממות, את עיני מן דמעה, את רגלי מדחי. אתה הלך לפני
 ה' בארצות החיים. האמנתי כי אדבר, אני עניתי מאד. אני אמרתי
 בחפזי כל האדם כזב. מה אשיב ליי כל תגמולוהי עלי. כוס ישועות
 אשא ובשם ה' אקרא. נדרי ליי אשלם נגדה נא לכל עמו. יקר בעיני ה'
 המותה לחסידיו. אנה ה' כי אני עבדך, אני עבדך בן אמתך, פתחת
 למוסרי. לך אזבח זבח תודה ובשם ה' אקרא. נדרי ליי אשלם נגדה נא
 לכל עמו. בחצרות בית ה', בתוככי ירושלים. הללויה.

הללו את ה' כל גוים, שבחוהו כל האמים. כי גבר עלינו חסדו, ואמת
 ה' לעולם. הללויה.

הודו ליי כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו.
 יאמר נא ישראל כי לעולם חסדו.
 יאמרו נא בית אהרן כי לעולם חסדו.
 יאמרו נא יראי ה' כי לעולם חסדו.

מן המצר קראתי יְהוָה, עָנְנִי בְמִרְחֵב יְהוָה. ה' לי לא אִירָא מַה יַעֲשֶׂה לִי אָדָם. ה' לי בְּעֲזָרִי וְאֲנִי אֶרְאֶה בְּשִׁנְאָי. טוב לַחֲסוֹת בְּיַי מִבְּטַח בְּאָדָם. טוב לַחֲסוֹת בְּיַי מִבְּטַח בְּנֹדִיבִים. כָּל גּוֹיִם סָבְבוּנִי, בְּשֵׁם ה' כִּי אֲמִילָם. סְבֻבֵי גַם סָבְבוּנִי, בְּשֵׁם ה' כִּי אֲמִילָם. סְבֻבֵי כְדֹבְרִים, דַּעְכוּ כְּאֵשׁ קוֹצִים, בְּשֵׁם ה' כִּי אֲמִילָם. דַּחַח דְּחִיתַנִּי לְנֹפֶל, וַיִּי עֲזָרְנִי. עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה. קוֹל רִנָּה וִישׁוּעָה בְּאֶהְלִי צַדִּיקִים: יָמִין ה' עֲשֶׂה חֵיל, יָמִין ה' רֹמְמָה, יָמִין ה' עֲשֶׂה חֵיל. לֹא אָמוֹת כִּי אֶחְיֶה, וְאֶסַּפֵּר מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה. יִסֵּר יִסְרֵנִי יְהוָה, וְלִמּוֹת לֹא נִתְּנָנִי. פִּתְחוּ לִי שַׁעֲרֵי צְדָקָה, אָבֹא בָם, אֹדְדָה יְהוָה. זֶה הַשַּׁעַר לִי, צַדִּיקִים יָבֹאוּ בּוֹ. אֹדְדָה כִּי עֲנִיתַנִּי וַתְּהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה. אֹדְדָה כִּי עֲנִיתַנִּי וַתְּהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה. אָבֹן מֵאֶסוּ הַבּוֹנִים הִיִּתָּה לְרֹאשׁ פְּנֵה. אָבֹן מֵאֶסוּ הַבּוֹנִים הִיִּתָּה זֵאת הַיּוֹם נִפְלְאָת בְּעֵינֵינוּ. מֵאֵת ה' הִיִּתָּה זֵאת הַיּוֹם נִפְלְאָת בְּעֵינֵינוּ. זֶה הַיּוֹם עֲשֶׂה ה'. נְגִילָה וְנִשְׁמְחָה בּוֹ.

אָנָּה ה', הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא. אָנָּה ה', הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא.

אָנָּה ה', הַצְּלִיחָה נָּא. אָנָּה ה', הַצְּלִיחָה נָּא.

בְּרוּךְ הַבּוֹא בְּשֵׁם ה', בְּרִכּוֹתֵיכֶם מִבֵּית ה'. בְּרוּךְ הַבּוֹא בְּשֵׁם ה', בְּרִכּוֹתֵיכֶם מִבֵּית ה'. אֵל ה' וַיָּאֵר לָנוּ. אֶסְרוּ חַג בְּעֵבֶתֵיכֶם עַד קִרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ. אֵל ה' וַיָּאֵר לָנוּ. אֶסְרוּ חַג בְּעֵבֶתֵיכֶם עַד קִרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ. אֵלֵי אַתָּה וְאֹדְדָה, אֱלֹהֵי – אַרְוִמְמֶךָ. אֵלֵי אַתָּה וְאֹדְדָה, אֱלֹהֵי – אַרְוִמְמֶךָ. הוֹדוּ לִי כִי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ. הוֹדוּ לִי כִי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ.

יְהַלְלוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ, וַחֲסִידֶיךָ צַדִּיקִים עוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנְךָ, וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִנָּה יוֹדוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ, וַיִּשְׂבְּחוּ וַיִּפְאֲרוּ, וַיְרֹמְמוּ וַיַּעֲרִיצוּ, וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ וַיִּמְלִיכוּ אֶת שִׁמְךָ, מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. כִּי לָךְ טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְשַׁמְּחָה נָּא לְזִמְרָה, כִּי מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל.

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
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 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
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 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.
 כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ.

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב

הוֹדוּ לַאלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם
 הוֹדוּ לַאֲדֹנָי הָאֲדָנִים
 לַעֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת
 לַעֲשֵׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּתִבְוֵנָה
 לְרוֹקַע הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם
 לַעֲשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדוֹלִים
 אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמַמְשָׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם
 אֶת הַיָּרֵחַ וְכוֹכָבִים לְמַמְשָׁלוֹת בַּלַּיְלָה
 לְמַכּוּהַ מְצָרִים בְּבִכּוּרֵיהֶם
 וַיּוֹצֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם
 בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה
 לְגַזֵּר יַם סוּף לַגְּזָרִים
 וְהֶעֱבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹכוֹ
 וַנַּעַר פְּרַעֲהַ וַחֲבִילוֹ בַיָּם סוּף
 לְמוֹלִיךְ עַמּוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר
 לְמַכּוּהַ מְלָכִים גְּדוֹלִים
 וַיִּהְיֶה מְלָכִים אֲדִירִים
 לְסִיחּוֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֲמֹרִי
 וְלַעֲוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַכְּשִׁיטִין
 וַנִּתֵּן אֲרָצָם לְנַחֲלָה
 נַחֲלָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדוֹ
 שִׁבְשִׁפְלֵנוּ זָכַר לָנוּ
 וַיִּפְרֹקֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ
 נָתַן לָחֵם לְכָל בָּשָׂר
 הוֹדוּ לַאלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם

נשמת כל חי תברך את שמך, ה' אלהינו, ורוח כל בשר תפאר ותרום זכרך, מלכנו, תמיד. מן העולם ועד העולם אתה אל, ומבלעדיך אין לנו מלך גואל ומושיע, פודה ומציל ומפנים ומרחם בכל עת צרה וצוקה. אין לנו מלך אלא אתה. אלהי הראשונים והאחרונים, אלוה כל בריות, אדון כל תולדות, המהלל ברב התשבחות, המנהג עולמו בחסד ובריותיו ברחמים. ויי לא ינום ולא יישן – המעורר ישנים והמקיץ נרדמים, והמשיח אלמים והמתיר אסורים והסומך נוֹפלים והזוקף כפופים. לך לבדך אנחנו מודים. אלו פינו מלא שירה כים, ולשוננו רנה כהמון גליו, ושפתותינו שבח כמרחבי רקיע, ועינינו מאירות כשמש וכירח, וידינו פרושות כנשרי שמים, ורגלינו קלות כאילות – אין אנחנו מספיקים להודות לך, ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, ולברך את שמך על אחת מאלף, אלפי אלפים ורבי רבבות פעמים הטובות שעשית עם אבותינו ועמנו. ממצרים גאלתנו, ה' אלהינו, ומבית עבדים פדיתנו, ברעב זנתנו ובשבע כלכלתנו, מחרב הצלתנו ומדבר מלטתנו, ומחלים רעים ונאמנים דליתנו. עד הנה עזרונו רחמיה ולא עזבונו חסדיך, ואל תטשנו, ה' אלהינו, לנצח. על כן אברים שפלגת בנו ורוח ונשמה שנפחת באפינו ולשון אשר שמת בפינו – הן הם יודו ויברכו וישבחו ויפארו וירוממו ויעריצו ויקדישו וימליכו את שמך מלכנו. כי כל פה לך יודה, וכל לשון לך תשבע, וכל ברך לך תכרע, וכל קומה לפניה תשתחוה, וכל לבבות יראוך, וכל קרב וכליות יזמרו לשמך. כדבר שכתוב, כל עצמתי תאמרנה, ה' מי כמוך מציל עני מחזק ממנו ועני ואביון מגזלו. מי ידמה לך ומי ישוה לך ומי יערוך לך האל הגדול, הגבור והנורא, אל עליון, קנה שמים וארץ. נהללך ונשבחך ונפאריך ונברך את שם קדשך, כאמור: לדוד, ברכי נפשי את ה' וכל קרבי את שם קדשו. האל בתעצמות עזך, הגדול בכבוד שמך, הגבור לנצח והנורא בנוראותיה, המלך היושב על כסא רם ונשא. שוכן עד מרום וקדוש שמו. וכתוב: רננו צדיקים ביי, לישרים נאווה תהלה. בפי ישרים תהלהלל, ובדברי צדיקים תתברך, ובלשון חסידים תתרום, ובקרב קדושים תתקדש.

ובמקלות רבבות עמך בית ישראל ברנה יתפאר שמך, מלכנו, בכל דור ודור, שכן חובת כל היצורים לפניך, ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, להודות להלל לשבח, לפאר לרום להדר לברך, לעלה ולקלס על כל דברי שירות ותשבחות דוד בן ישי עבדך משיחך.

יִשְׁתַּבַּח שְׁמֶךָ לְעַד מְלִכְנוּ, הָאֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּשָׁמַיִם
 וּבָאָרֶץ, כִּי לָךְ נָאָה, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שִׁיר וּשְׁבָחָה, הַלֵּל
 וְזִמְרָה, עֲזוֹ וּמְמִשְׁלָה, נְצִיחַ, גְּדֻלָּה וּגְבוּרָה, תְּהִלָּה וְתִפְאֳרָת, קְדֻשָּׁה
 וּמְלָכוּת, בְּרָכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֵל מֶלֶךְ
 גָּדוֹל בְּתִשְׁבָּחוֹת, אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת, אֲדוֹן הַנִּפְלְאוֹת, הַבוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירֵי
 זִמְרָה, מֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי הָעוֹלָמִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עַל הַגֶּפֶן וְעַל פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן, עַל תְּנוּבַת
 הַשָּׂדֶה וְעַל אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה שְׂרָצִיתָ וְהִנְחַלְתָּ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְאֹכֹל
 מִפְּרִיָּהּ וּלְשִׁבְעַת מְטוֹבָה. רַחֵם נָא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמֶּךָ וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
 עִירָךְ וְעַל צִיּוֹן מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדְךָ וְעַל מִזְבְּחֶךָ וְעַל הַיְכָלְךָ וּבְנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר
 הַקְּדֻשָּׁה בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ וְהַעֲלֵנוּ לְתוֹכָהּ וְשִׁמְחֵנוּ בְּכַנְיָנָהּ וְנֹאכַל מִפְּרִיָּהּ
 וְנִשְׂבַּע מְטוֹבָה וְנִבְרַכְךָ עָלֶיךָ בְּקְדֻשָּׁהּ וּבְטַהֲרָהּ [בשבת: וְרָצָה וְהִחֲלִיצֵנוּ
 בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה] וְשִׁמְחֵנוּ בְּיוֹם חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה, כִּי אַתָּה ה' טוֹב וּמְטִיב
 לְכָל, וְנוֹדֶה לָךְ עַל הָאָרֶץ וְעַל פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', עַל הַגֶּפֶן וְעַל פְּרֵי
 הַגֶּפֶן.

נִרְצָה

חֲסֵל סְדוּר פִּסַּח כְּהַלְכָתוֹ, כְּכֹל מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וְחֻקָּתוֹ. כַּאֲשֶׁר
 זָכִינוּ לְסִדֵּר אוֹתוֹ כֵּן נִזְכֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ. זָךְ שׁוֹכֵן מְעוֹנָה,
 קוֹמֵם קָהֵל עֵדֶת מִי מָנָה. בְּקָרוֹב נֵהַל נְטָעֵי כַּנָּה פְּדוּיִם
 לְצִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה.

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּירוּשָׁלַיִם הַבְּנוּיָה

וּבְכֹן וַיְהִי בַחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה.

אז רוב נסים הפלאות בלילה, בראש אשמורת זה הלילה.

גר צדק נצחתו כנחלק לו לילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

דנת מלך גרר בחלום הלילה, הפחדת ארמי באמש לילה.

וישר ישראל למלאך ויוכל לו לילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

זרע בכורי פתרוס מחצת בחצי הלילה, חילם לא מצאו בקומם בלילה, טיסת נגיד חרשת סלית בכוכבי לילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

יעץ מתרף לנופף אווי, הובשת פגרו בלילה, כרע בל ומצבו באישון לילה, לאיש חמודות נגלה רז חזות לילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

משתפר בכלי קדש נהרג בו בלילה, נושע מבור אריות פותר בעתותי לילה, שנאה נטר אנגי וכתב ספרים בלילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

עוררת נצחך עליו בנגד שנת לילה. פורה תדרוך לשומר מה מלילה, צרח פשומר ושח אתא בקר וגם לילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

קרב יום אשר הוא לא יום ולא לילה, רם הודע כי לך היום אף לך הלילה, שומרים הפקד לעירך כל היום וכל הלילה, תאיר כאור יום חשפת לילה, ויהי בחצי הלילה.

וּבְכֹן וַאֲמַרְתֶּם זָבַח פֶּסַח

אמץ גבורותיך הפלאות בפסח, בראש כל מועדות נשאת פסח. גלית לאזרחי חצות ליל פסח, ואמרתם זבח פסח.

דלתיו דפקת כחם היום בפסח, הסעיד נוצצים עגות מצות בפסח, ואל הבקר רץ זכר לשור ערף פסח, ואמרתם זבח פסח.

זועמו סדומים ולוהטו באש בפסח, חלץ לוט מהם ומצות אפה בקץ פסח, טאטאת אדמת מוף ונוף בעברך בפסח. ואמרתם זבח פסח.

יה ראש כל הון מחצת בליל שמור פסח, כביר, על בן בכור פסחת בדם פסח, לבלתי תת משחית לבא בפתחי בפסח, ואמרתם זבח פסח.

מסגרת סגרה בעתותי פסח, נשמדה מדין בצליל שעורי עמר פסח, שורפו משמני פול ולוד ביקד יקוד פסח, ואמרתם זבח פסח.

עוד היום בנב לעמוד עד געה עונת פסח, פס יד כתבה לקעקע צול בפסח, צפה הצפית ערוף השלחן בפסח, ואמרתם זבח פסח.

קהל כנסה הדסה לשלש צום בפסח, ראש מבית רשע מחצת בעץ חמשים בפסח, שתי אלה גע תביא לעוצית בפסח, תעז ידך תרום ימינך כליל התקדש חג פסח, ואמרתם זבח פסח.

כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר

אָדִיר בְּמִלּוּכָה, בְּחֹר פְּהֻלָּה, גְּדוּדָיו יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

דְּגוּל בְּמִלּוּכָה, הַדּוּר פְּהֻלָּה, וְתִקְוֵי יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

זַפְּאֵי בְּמִלּוּכָה, חֲסִין פְּהֻלָּה טַפְסָרְיוֹ יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

יְחִיד בְּמִלּוּכָה, כְּבִיר פְּהֻלָּה לְמוֹדָיו יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

מוֹשֵׁל בְּמִלּוּכָה, נוֹרָא פְּהֻלָּה סְבִיבָיו יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

עֲנָיו בְּמִלּוּכָה, פּוֹדֵה פְּהֻלָּה, צְדִיקָיו יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

קְדוֹשׁ בְּמִלּוּכָה, רְחוּם פְּהֻלָּה שְׂנֵאָנָיו יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

תְּקִיף בְּמִלּוּכָה, תּוֹמֵף פְּהֻלָּה תְּמִימָיו יֹאמְרוּ לוֹ: לֵךְ וּלְךָ, לֵךְ כִּי לֵךְ, לֵךְ אַף לֵךְ, לֵךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָה, כִּי לֹא נֶאֱמַר, כִּי לֹא יֵאָדָר.

אָדִיר הוּא

יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

בְּחֹר הוּא, גְּדוּל הוּא, דְּגוּל הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

הַדּוּר הוּא, וְתִיק הוּא, זַפְּאֵי הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

חֲסִיד הוּא, טְהוֹר הוּא, יְחִיד הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

כְּבִיר הוּא, לְמוֹד הוּא, מְלֵךְ הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

נוֹרָא הוּא, סְגִיב הוּא, עֲזוּז הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

פּוֹדֵה הוּא, צְדִיק הוּא, קְדוֹשׁ הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

רְחוּם הוּא, שְׂדֵי הוּא, תְּקִיף הוּא יְבֻנָּה בֵּיתוֹ בְּקָרוֹב. בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּמַהֲרָה, בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּקָרוֹב. אֵל בְּנָה, אֵל בְּנָה, בֵּיתְךָ בְּקָרוֹב.

חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא

דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי, חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא שׁוֹנְרָא וְאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי. חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא כְּלָבָא וְנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא חוּטְרָא וְהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא נוֹרָא וְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא מֵיָא וְכָבָה לְנוֹרָא, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא תוֹרָא וְשָׂתָה לְמֵיָא, דְּכָבָה לְנוֹרָא, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא הַשׁוּחַט וְשַׁחַט לְתוֹרָא, דְּשָׂתָה לְמֵיָא, דְּכָבָה לְנוֹרָא, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא מְלֶאךְ הַמּוֹת וְשַׁחַט לְשׁוּחַט, דְּשַׁחַט לְתוֹרָא, דְּשָׂתָה לְמֵיָא, דְּכָבָה לְנוֹרָא, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.
 וְאַתָּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְשַׁחַט לְמְלֶאךְ הַמּוֹת, דְּשַׁחַט לְשׁוּחַט, דְּשַׁחַט לְתוֹרָא, דְּשָׂתָה לְמֵיָא, דְּכָבָה לְנוֹרָא, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּהֶכָּה לְכְּלָבָא, דְּנִשְׁפָּךְ לְשׁוֹנְרָא, דְּאַכְלָה לְגְּדִיָּא, דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בְּתַרֵּי זַוְיָי.
 חַד גְּדִיָּא, חַד גְּדִיָּא.

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(v) רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר

This passage is included in the *Seder* of Rav Amram Gaon with no indication that it is any more or less optional than the other sections. In the *Siddur* of Rav Sa'adya Gaon it is explicitly marked as an optional extra. In all the other texts it is absent.

(vi) ורב

We have already discussed this in the introduction, but it is important to note that *all* of the early versions, and indeed all later medieval versions, do not include the second verse from *Yehezqel*.

(vii) A different Land of Israel version

The version from the Land of Israel is almost identical to the Babylonian version, and is certainly imported rather than a parallel development. However, there is one section that is markedly different:

Standard version	Modified Land of Israel version
<p>וישמע יי את קלנו כמו שנאמר: וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכר אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב. וירא את ענינו זו פרישות דרך ארץ. כמו שנאמר: וירא אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים. ואת עמלנו אלו הבנים. כמו שנאמר: כל הבן הילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל הבת תחיון.</p>	<p>וישמע יי את קלנו כמו שנאמר: וישמע אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים. ואת עמלנו זו פרישות דרך ארץ. כמו שנאמר: כל הבן הילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל הבת תחיון.</p>

At first glance, this looks like the work of a distracted scribe making a mistake. The first comment quotes a verse that doesn't exist, but is made up of the beginning of the *Shemot* 2:24 and the end of 2:25. The second part appears to move פרישות דרך ארץ into the comment about decree against the male children by splicing together the verse that goes with ואת עמלנו and the remark that goes with וירא את ענינו. It may, indeed, just be a mess. However, I believe it is possible that this bares witness to an abortive attempt to improve the *Maggid*.

As we discussed in the introduction, the *Maggid's* comment on וירא את ענינו is not original, but taken from the earlier Babylonian *Haggadah*. It fits in somewhat awkwardly to the *Maggid's* structure since it points to something that is not actually part of the story in *Shemot*, though it may be of benefit to insert it. This version may be an essay at an improvement. Whereas in the original, וישמע יי את קלנו and וירא את ענינו point to two consecutive verses whose meaning is equivalent, the land of Israel author combines them into one comment. He then moves זו פרישות דרך ארץ to the discussion of the decree against the male children, which fits in well with the midrashic tradition according to which the one happened as a result of the other. The result is rather clumsy, but with some extra editorial input one can see how this could result in a version of our *Maggid* that did not have to resort to inserting an extra part into the story.

manuscripts that omit it may simply be in error, but it is also possible that some copyists rejected it as a polemical text alien to the Babylonian tradition.

(iv) ויציאנו יי ממצרים

There is a great deal of variation in the versions of the *midrash* on this fragment.

Rav Amram Gaon	Rav Sa'adya Gaon	Rambam	Anon. (Geonic pub. by Lehmann)	Anon. (Land of Israel)
לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי השליח אלא הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו שני ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה...ועברתי בארץ מצרים. אני ולא מלאך. והכיתי כל בכור. אני ולא שרף. "ובכל א-להי מצרים אעשה שפטים. אני ולא שליח. אני יי. אני הוא ולא אחר.	לא על ידי המלאך ולא על ידי השרף ולא על ידי השליח לא על ידי הדבר אלא ה'ק'ב"ה הוא בעצמו.	לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי שליח אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו כמו שנאמר: ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים אני יי.	לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי שליח אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו שנאמר: ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים אני יי.	לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי שליח ולא על ידי הדבר אלא הקב"ה בכבודו שנאמר: ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים אני יי ולא אחר

The differences are as follows:

- Only the version of Rav Amram Gaon quotes the full version of the *midrash* with which we are familiar. Rav Sa'adya Gaon simply quotes the initial sentence. The others quote only the verse. However, the version from the land of Israel also includes the concluding exclusion from the full version **ולא אחר**.
- Rav Amram's version includes the double formula **בכבודו ובעצמו** the others include only one of the other. It is likely there were two separate traditions which at some point were combined.
- The version of Rav Sa'adya Gaon and the version from the Land of Israel have the added exclusion **לא על ידי הדבר** a reference to the *logos*, though it is doubtful that this was understood by his time.
- The versions of Rav Amram Gaon and Rav Sa'adya Gaon read **השליח** (*the emissary*).

With regard to establishing the correct text, it seems to me that it does not matter too greatly since the purpose within our *Maggid* is to direct the reader to the passage where God reveals to his name to Moshe. However, using one of the shorter versions is probably less distracting and it seems likely that the text we have for the *Seder* of Rav Amram Gaon is not accurate. Probably it is also preferable to quote the verse ending **אני יי** in order to make the link between the fragment and the section of *Shemot* clearer. The formula **בעצמו ובכבודו** is rather cumbersome and arguably something of a hostage to theological fortune, so one or the other should be chosen.

(i) Quoting verses

In Rav Amram Gaon's version only the first few words of each quoted verse are cited, except for when the verse is seven words or less and the comment on **ורב**, in which he also includes the last two words **ערם ועריה**. In some cases, it would be clearly necessary to read the entire verse, but his *Seder* was intended for a learned audience who could be presumed to remember the entire verse, as is often the practice in the *Gemara*. Rav Sa'adya Gaon is eclectic, sometimes quoting all of a verse, sometimes only a few words. The other versions quote the verses in full.

Another important point to note is that *all* the early versions do not follow the modern practice of quoting an entire verse from *parshat habikkurim* then dividing it up into fragments. Instead, they simply go through the entire passage bit by bit. The later practice gives the false impression that the verses are being 'explained' by the comments because they appear to be quoting a verse then explaining it bit by bit. The original approach is more certainly more correct. Since the goal is to map the fragments of the verses onto *Shemot*, there is no point in repeating the verse.

(ii) כמה שנאמר

This formula is closely associated with the *Haggadah* and was already used in the early Babylonian version upon which it was built. It is not a little odd, then, to find that *none* of the authoritative texts use it. Instead we find a variety of different formulas, all of which are less cumbersome:

(i) Rav Amram Gaon – כמו שנאמר and occasionally שנאמר.

(ii) Rav Sa'adya Gaon – שנאמר and sometimes כמשנאמר

(iii) *Rambam* – כמו שנאמר

(iv) Anon. Geonic (Lehmann) – כמו שנאמר

(v) Anon. Geonic (Shecter MS) – שנאמר

(vi) Anon. Land of Israel – כמו שנאמר

(iii) אנוס על פי הדבור

This entire comment is missing in the version of *Rambam* and the anonymous Geonic versions. In both Rav Amram Gaon and Rav Sa'adya Gaon's version it appears as **אנוס על פי הדבר**, which must be regarded as the correct version, though it is not clear whether it makes a difference to how it should be vocalized. In the Israeli *Haggadah* it appears as **אנוסה**, which reflected earlier Land of Israel texts.

My belief is that this comment should be included because it fits in with the structure of the *Maggid*, however, it is possible that this is serendipitous, especially since it appears at the beginning of the story where accidental additions are less likely to stand out. *Rambam* who would have had access to texts both with and without probably chose to omit it for theological reasons, likely unaware that originally this comment had been a polemic *against logos* theology. The Geonic

Appendix iv – Geonic texts

There are hundreds of texts of the *Haggadah* that have survived from the middle ages. There are, however, five particularly important sources for establishing an accurate text our *Maggid*, all of which differ in minor, but sometimes important, ways from the standardized text used in *Haggadot* today. These are:

- (i) The *Seder* of Rav Amram Gaon, sent to the Jews of Spain in C.E. 875.
- (ii) The *Siddur* of Rav Sa'adya Gaon, which started to be circulated in the early-mid 900s.
- (iii) An anonymous manuscript published by Menashe Raphael Lehman as authored by Rav Natronai Gaon.
- (iv) A version from the Schechter manuscript that stops a few lines into *parshat habikkurim*.
- (v) The *Mishneh Torah* of *Rambam* compiled between 1170 and 1180 C.E.
- (vi) An anonymous manuscript (TSH 108/2) which shows the Land of Israel rite after it had already been highly influence by Geonic Babylonian customs, including the use of our *Maggid*.

I have elected not to transcribe all six. Those who wish to see the first five side by side can look in S. Safrai & Z. Safrai *הגדת חז"ל* (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 271-4 and the last on p. 287. Instead I will list the different points where they differ, providing the text where appropriate.

First, we should say a brief note about establishing the proper text. A reasonable starting assumption is that the earliest source is the most correct, but in practice this is problematic. The *Siddurim* of Rav Amram and Rav Sa'adya were copied around the Mediterranean and Middle East by different scribes who often made changes or additions to reflect their local practice. Establishing a completely accurate version of either text is impossible. What I quote here should therefore be taken with a pinch of salt, though it is based on the best versions now available. Thanks to the extraordinary labours of Rav Kapah and his successors in the last half century we can be sure that we possess an accurate copy of *Mishneh Torah* down almost to the last letter, but *Rambam* was writing three centuries later. As for the two anonymous Geonic versions, we simply do not know who wrote them or when. Another consideration is that it is more likely than not that the later writers did not copy from Rav Amram Gaon, but had their own source which could have been more (or less!) accurate. When establishing the best version of the text I believe that one of the factors that should be taken into consideration is what version fits best with the structure of the *Maggid* as we have described it above.

(iv) A Mixed Version

This *haggadah* comes from the Cairo Genizah and it is unclear whether it represents a basically Land of Israel rite with Babylonian influence or an earlier Babylonian rite that had developed independently of the tradition later authorized by the Geonim. It can be found in J. Rovner, ‘Two Early Witnesses to the Formation of the “Miqra Bikkurim Midrash” and their Implications for the Evolution of the Haggadah Text’, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 75 (2004), p. 91.

And Lavan sought to uproot the whole, as it says,
My father was a wandering Aramean

ולבן בקש לעקר את הכל שנ' ארמי אבד אבי

And he went down to Egypt forced according
to the word (*logos?*)

וירד מצרימה אנוסה על פי הדיבר

This teaches that he did not go down to settle, but
to dwell temporarily

מלמד שלא ירד להשתקע אלא לגור

Few of number as it says ‘Seventy souls your
fathers went down to Egypt and now *HASHEM*
your God has placed you like the stars of the
heavens for multitude. (*Devarim* 10:22)

במתי מעט שנאמר בשבעים נפש ירדו אבתך
מצרימה ועתה שמך יי אלהיך ככוכבי השמים
לרוב

And *HASHEM* brought us out from Egypt
not by means of an angel, and not by means of a
seraph, not by means of an emissary, but the Holy
One Blessed be He by Himself.

ויוציאנו יי ממצרים לא על ידי מלאך ולא על
ידי שרף לא על ידי שליח אלא הק' בה בעצמו

**With strong hand two with and outstretched
arm two [with great terror two] with signs two
and with wonders two** these are the ten plagues
which the Omnipresent Blessed be He brought
on the Egyptians in Egypt and these are they:
blood, frog, lice, *arov*, animal plague, boil, hail,
locust, darkness, plague of the firstborn.

ביד חזקה שתיים ובזרוע נטויה שתיים
ובמורא גדול שתיים באתות שתיים ובמופתים
שנים אלו עשר המכות שהביא המקום ברוך
הוא על המצרים במצרים ואלו הן דם צפדעה
כנים ערוב דבר שחין ברד ארבה חושך מכת
בכורות

Rabi Yehuda made a mnemonic: *Dtzach 'Adash
B'ahav*

רבי יהודה היה נותן בהם סימנים ד'צ'ך ע, ד'ש
ב'א'ה'ב.

This text has the shorter introductory formula used in the Babylonian version, as well as Rabi Yehuda's mnemonic. It includes the **אנוסה על פי הדיבר** formula from the Land of Israel, along with the citation of *Devarim* 10:22 found in the expanded Land of Israel version. Its unique feature is the comment found in our *Maggid* on **ויגר שם**, though oddly enough the fragment itself is not cited (even more interestingly, there is a gloss by another hand adding *Bereishit* 47:4, the same verse quoted in our *Maggid*). For the third time, we find that every comment in this *haggadah* was incorporated by the author of our *Maggid*, further demonstrating his desire to work with existing sources.

By comparing all the different manuscripts we have, it can be seen that our *Maggid* did not arise out of a process of slow accumulation. We have three short texts that were incorporated into our *Maggid* and one more developed one that was not. While we cannot rule out the future discovery of a missing link, at the moment, the fossil record strongly suggests intelligent design rather than evolution. Scholars have hypothesized a slow process of accretion to deal with the fact that the text in front of them didn't seem to make a great deal of sense. Given that, as we have explained, the *Maggid* actually has an elaborate structure, there is no longer any reason to posit what the documentary record denies.

This text more or less proves that the *Maggid* we use does not back to the *Tannaitic* period (let alone the second Temple as some have claimed!), and was composed no earlier than the Geonic century in Bavel itself before spreading around the globe.

And Lavan sought to uproot the whole, as it says,
My father was a wandering Aramean

And he went down to Egypt and he dwelt there, few of number, and he became there a nation, great and mighty

And he saw out affliction as it says 'And God saw the children of Israel and God knew'

And HASHEM brought us out from Egypt not by means of an angel, not by means of a seraph, not by means of an emissary, but the Holy One Blessed be He.

With strong hand two with and outstretched arm two [with great terror two] with signs two and with wonders two these are the ten plagues which the Omnipresent Blessed be He brought on the Egyptians in Egypt and these are they: blood, frog, lice, *arov*, animal plague, boil, hail, locust, darkness, plague of the firstborn.

Rabi Yehuda made a mnemonic: *Dtzach 'Adash B'abav*

ולבן בקש לעקר את הכל שנ' ארמי אבד אבי

וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול ועצום

וירא את ענינו כמה שנ' וירא אלקים את בני ישראל וידע אלקים.

ויוציאנו יי ממצרים לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף לא על ידי שליח אלא הקב"ה.

ביד חזקה שתיים בזרוע נטויה שתיים [במורא גדול שתיים]* באותות שתיים ובמפתים שנים אילו עשר מכות שהביא המקום ב"ה על המצרים במצרים ואלו הן דם צפדעה כנים ערוב דבר שחין ברד ארבה חושך מכת בכורות.

רבי יהודה היה נותן בהם סימנים דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב.

Two other interesting facts must be pointed out about this *Maggid*. The first is that it does not even include all the verses of *parshat habikkurim* despite having only the barest bones of supporting midrashic material. I believe that this proves conclusively that it was **not** meant to be read off the page as written, but to serve as a tool to help with *ad hoc* exposition of *parshat habikkurim*, which the reader was expected to remember. I believe *all* such short *Maggids* should be read in this way and, so, in a modified sense, should the *Maggid* we use. The second is that it includes apparently original comments that were incorporated by the author of our *Maggid*. The first is the comment beginning **וורא את ענינו כמה שנאמר** on **וירא את ענינו**, which may have served as a sort of prototype for the many comments in the same format that our author added. The second is the mnemonic in the name of Rabi Yehuda. This mnemonic appears in *Sifrei Devarim*, but the author's decision to include it in his *Maggid* probably came from here. It has also been suggested that the mnemonic is an addition to *Sifrei* by a later scribe, in which case this *Haggadah* would be its earliest source.

In fact, all five comments in this text were incorporated by the author of our *Maggid* and thus this may represent the starting point upon which he built. However, he did not stick to the wording used here, but adapted it, using a longer version of the introductory comment to **ארמי אבד אבי** found in the Land of Israel *haggadot* and adding a clause to the comment on **וירא את ענינו** in order to fit it into his system.

Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Ya'aqov our father, for Pharaoh the wicked only decreed over the males and Lavan sought to uproot the whole, as it says **My father was a wandering Aramean**

And he went down to Egypt forced according to the word (*logos?*). Go and see the how cherished was our father Ya'aqov, how cherished he was before the Omnipresent, as it says 'I, I will go down with you to Egypt and I, I will surely bring you up.' (*Bereishit* 46:4)

And he dwelt there, few of number, and he became there a nation, great, mighty see how cherished Israel is, how cherished they are before the Omnipresent since they did not go down to Egypt but few of number, as it says 'Seventy souls your fathers went down to Egypt and now *HASHEM* your God has placed you like the stars of the heavens for multitude. (*Devarim* 10:22)

And *HASHEM* brought us out from Egypt not by means of an angel, and not by means of a seraph, not by means of an emissary, but the Holy One Blessed be He by Himself. As it says, 'And I will pass through the land of Egypt in that night and I will strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt from man unto beast and upon all the gods of Egypt I will perform judgments, I am *HASHEM*.

With strong hand two with and outstretched arm two with great terror two with signs two and with wonders two these are the ten plagues which the Omnipresent Blessed be He brought on the Egyptians in Egypt and these are they: blood, frog, lice, *arov*, animal plague, boil, hail, locust, darkness, plague of the firstborn.

And he brought us out from there as it says 'and us he brought out from there.' Not for our merits did *HASHEM* bring us out of Egypt, but in the merit of Avraham, Yitzhaq, and Ya'aqov, as it says 'And God heard their cry and God remembered his covenant with Avraham, with Yitzhaq and with Ya'aqov. And God saw the children of Israel and God knew.

(iii) An early Babylonian version

This is taken from a Babylonian *haggadah* text of the 10th century. It was first published in J. Rovner, "Two Early Witnesses to the Formation of the "Miqra Bikkurim Midrash" and their Implications for the Evolution of the Haggadah Text', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 75 (2004), p. 83. It can also be found in J. Kulp, *Schechter Haggadah*, (Jerusalem, 2009), p. 220.

צא ולמד מה לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב
אבינו שפרעה הרשע לא גזר אלא על הזכרים
ולבן בקש לעקור את הכל שנאמר ארמי אבד
אבי

וירד מצרימה אנוסה על פי הדיבר ראה חיבתו
שלאבינו יעקב כמה הוא חביב לפני המקום שנ'
אנכי ארד עמך מצרימה ואנכי אעלך גם עלה

ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול ראה
חיבתן של ישראל כמה הן חביבין לפני המקום
שלא ירדו במצרי אלא במתי מעט שנ' בשבעים
נפש ירדו אבותיך מצרימה ועתה שמך יי'
אלהיך ככוכבי השמים לרוב

ויוציאנו יי ממצרים לא על ידי מלאך ולא על
ידי שרף לא על ידי שליח אלא ה'ק'ב'ה בעצמו
שנ' ועברתי בארץ מצ' בלילה הזה והכיתי כל
בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה ובאלה
מצרים אעשה שפטים אני יי'

ביד חזקה שמים ובזרוע נטויה שמים
ובמורא גדול שמים באתות שמים ובמופתים
שנים אלו עשר המכות שהביא המקום ברוך
הוא על המצרים במצרים ואלו הן דם צפדעה
כנים ערוב דבר שחין ברד ארבה חושך מכת
בכורות

והוציאנו משם שנאמר ואותנו הוציא משם לא
בזכותינו הוציאנו יי ממצרים אלא בזכות
אברהם יצחק ויעקב שנ' וישמע אלהים את
נאקתם ויזכור אלהים את בריתו את אברהם
את יצחק ואת יעקב וירא אלהים את בני
ישראל וידע אלהים

This text includes the three items we identified as part of the universal framework present in all *Haggadot* and one more comment, which the author of our *Maggid* also incorporates. Rovner is of the view that this *Maggid* was developed no earlier than the 8th century, but it is much easier to explain the addition of the three comments (and perhaps also **אנוס על פי הדבר**) to the exposition of the *parshat habikkurim* if it happened at an earlier stage. The absence of any earlier documentary evidence means that we cannot say anything more.

An odd element in this *Haggadah* is the closing words ‘And he brought us out from there’ as it says “and us he brought out from there.” The quotation is *Devarim* 6:26 and, oddly enough, in the Talmud *Bavli Pesachim* 116a, Rava says that it is an obligation to say these words, though he doesn’t specify at what point. One possible explanation is that he was citing a tradition from the Land of Israel. What purpose this aggressively tautological statement is supposed to have as conclusion to *parshat habikkurim*, however, is a question that I have not seen adequately resolved.

N.B. Some manuscripts of this *Maggid* omit the actual list of the plagues and the concluding statement, thus ending with the words **על המצרים**. Rovner assumes that this is the more original version on the general principle that liturgies are more frequently added to than subtracted from.

(ii) An expanded Land of Israel Version

In some Byzantine manuscripts, a version of the *Haggadah* has been discovered that can be summed up as basically following the Land of Israel rite, but with changes made to accommodate Babylonian practices and formulas popularized by Rav Amram Gaon and Rav Sa’adya Gaon. Interestingly, however, the *Maggid* shows evidence of an independent development of the Land of Israel version unaffected by Babylonian influence. The text can be found in J. Rovner, ‘A New Version of the Eres Israel Haggadah Liturgy and the Evolution of the Eres Israel ‘Miqra Bikkurim’ Midrash’, *JQR* 92, pp. 423-4. It can also be found in J. Kulp, *Schechter Haggadah*, (Jerusalem, 2009), p. 220 (though with the omission of the first line).

Clearly, this text builds upon the land of Israel version, adding comments with particular teachings. There are two rather otiose comments on how cherished Ya’aqov and the children of Israel are respectively, which Rovner discusses at length. In addition, there is an elaboration of the postscript giving it a theological significance. It also has a longer version of the comment on **ויוצינו יי ממצרים**.

Unlike the earlier Land of Israel text and the early Babylonian text (below) this seems to have had relatively little influence on the author of our *Maggid*. It is just possible that he was influenced by the citation of *Devarim* 10:22 though this is already there in *Sifrei* and is included in another text that it seems more likely the author did have access to (below iv). Further, if he used this *haggadah* as a source, it seems odd that he did not include the citation of *Bereishit* 46:4 appended to **אנוס על פי הדבר** since this would fit in perfectly with his general system. It seems to me probable either that he never saw this text or, if he did, that he didn’t care for it.

Note that here two verse of *parshat habikkurim* are omitted entirely. Rovner argues that this was part of a move away from explaining the verse themselves to a formalized liturgy in which the focus was on the quasi-midrashic comments. This does not seem to me correct as I will explain in the next section.

Appendix iii – Earlier *Maggids*

In this appendix, I have transcribed the known versions of the *parshat habikkurim* section found in earlier *haggadot* with some comments. This will be of some interest to the general reader who will get a better sense of the range – and lack of range – in earlier *haggadot* and also, I hope, be of some small assistance to those who wish to carry out further scholarly work.

In all the following texts, bold type indicates the verses from Devarim and normal type indicates additions, including other cited verses. These texts cannot also be read side by side in J. Rovner, ‘Two Early Witnesses to the Formation of the “Miqra Bikkurim Midrash” and their Implications for the Evolution of the Haggadah Text’, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 75 (2004), p. 102-106.

(i) The standard Land of Israel version

This is the basic text found in many manuscripts from the Land of Israel and communities that followed Land of Israel traditions. Minor differences are found in different manuscripts, but they mostly indicate no more than scribal errors or quirks. The following text was first published in D. Goldschmitt, *הגדה של פסח ותולדותיה*, (Jerusalem, 1960). It also appears in S. Safrai & Z. Safrai *הגדת חז"ל*, (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 287-8 and J. Kulp, *Schechter Haggadah*, (Jerusalem, 2009), p. 218.

Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Ya'aqov our father, for Pharaoh the wicked only decreed over the males and Lavan sought to uproot the whole, as it says **My father was a wandering Aramean**

And he went down to Egypt forced according to the word.

And he dwelt there, few of number, and he became there a nation, great, mighty and numerous. And he Egyptians did bad to us and they afflicted us and they placed upon us hard work. And we cried out to *HASHEM* the God of our fathers and he heard our voice and he saw our affliction and our travail and our oppression

And *HASHEM* brought us out from Egypt not by means of an angel, and not by means of a seraph, not by means of an emissary, but the Holy One Blessed be He by Himself.

With strong hand two with and outstretched arm two [with great terror two] with signs two and with wonders two these are the ten plagues which the Omnipresent Blessed be He brought on the Egyptians in Egypt and these are they: blood, frog, lice, *arov*, animal plague, boil, hail, locust, darkness, plague of the firstborn.

And he brought us out from there as it says ‘and us he brought out from there.’

צא ולמד מה לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב
אבינו שפרעה הרשע לא גזר אלא על הזכרים
ולבן בקש לעקור את הכל שנאמר ארמי אבד
אבי

וירד מצרימה אנוסה על פי הדבר

ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול
עצום ורב וירעו אותנו המצרים ויענונו ויתנו
עלינו עבודה קשה ונצאק אל יי אלהי
אבותינו וישמע יי את קולינו וירא את ענינו
ואת עמלינו ואת להצינו

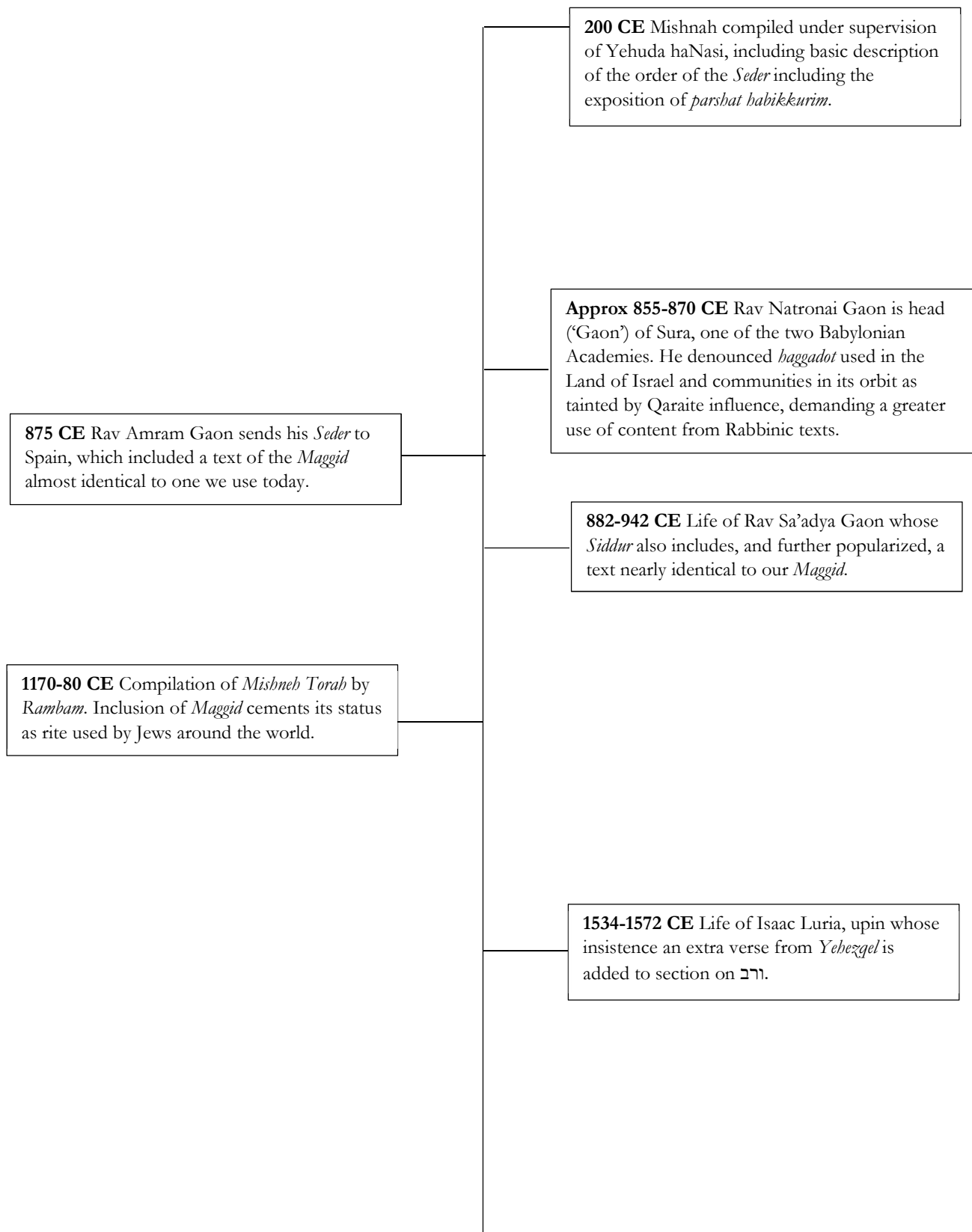
ויוציאנו יי ממצרים לא על ידי מלאך ולא על
ידי שרף לא על ידי שליח אלא ה'ק'ב'ה בעצמו

ביד חזקה שתיים ובזרוע נטויה שתיים
ובמורא גדול שתיים באתות שתיים ובמופתים
שנים אלו עשר המכות שהביא המקום ברוך
הוא על המצרים במצרים ואלו הן דם צפרדעה
כנים ערוב דבר שחין ברד ארבה חושך מכת
בכורות

והוציאנו משם שנאמר ואתנו הוציא משם

Appendix ii – Timeline

Many readers will find this timeline helpful in achieving clarity about the historical process of the development of the *Maggid* as we know it.



וירא את ענינו	2:25	God 'sees' the suffering of the children of Israel	Earlier Babylonian <i>haggadah</i> , also incorporating text from <i>Bavli Yoma</i> or possibly unknown earlier <i>haggadah</i> .
ואת עמלנו	1:15 – 2:22	Moshe is rescued from the drowning of the males, raised by Pharaoh's daughter, kills an Egyptian officer, flees to Midian, becomes a shepherd and finds the burning bush	<i>Sifrei Devarim</i>
ואת לחצנו	3:1-12	God tells Moshe that he is to be His emissary in freeing the children of Israel	Original comment possibly incorporating unknown source.
ויוצאנו יי ממצרים	3:13 – 5:2	Moshe learns <i>HASHEM</i> 's name and reveals it to the children of Israel	Earlier <i>haggadot</i> (universal) originally adapted from <i>Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael</i>
ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה	5:3 – 6:1	Pharaoh responds to Moshe's demands by worsening the burden on the children of Israel	<i>Sifrei Bemidbar</i>
ובמרא גדל	6:2-12	God declares that He will hereafter be known as (or by) <i>HASHEM</i>	Probably original comment
ובאתות	7:8-13	Moshe turns his staff into a crocodile at Pharaoh's court	Probably original comment
ובמפתים	7:14-25	The plague of blood	Probably original comment
ויוצאנו יי ממצרים ביד חזקה... (2nd time)	7:14 – 12:36	The 10 plagues	Earlier <i>haggadot</i> (universal)
דצ"ך	7:14 – 8:15	Plagues of blood, frogs and lice	Earlier Babylonian <i>Haggadah</i> . Probably originally taken from <i>Sifrei Devarim</i>
עד"ש	8:16 – 9:13	Plagues of stinging flies, disease and boils	
באח"ב	9:14 – 12:36	Plagues of hail, locusts, darkness and the killing of the firstborn	

Appendix i – Map of the *Haggadah*

The following is a map of every part of the *Maggid*, describing briefly both how to use it as a tool for telling the exodus story (the second and third columns) and the original source for the *Maggid's* comment establishing the link between *parshat habikkurim* and the story in *Shemot*.

Fragment of <i>parshat habikkurim</i>	Section of exodus story	<i>Synopsis of Story</i>	Original source of <i>Maggid's</i> comment
ארמי אבד אבי	Introduction, also possible ref. to <i>Bereishit</i> 33:1 – 45:28	(The sale of Yosef through to his invitation to the family to settle with him in Egypt)	Earlier <i>haggadot</i> (universal).
וירד מצרימה	46:1-7	God instructs Ya'aqov to descend to Egypt and promises to bring back his descendants	Earlier <i>haggadot</i> from the land of Israel
ויגר שם	46:28 – 47:12	Ya'aqov's family are settled in Goshen	Earlier <i>haggadah</i> , possibly originally derived from <i>Sifrei Devarim</i>
במתי מעט	<i>Shemot</i> 1:1-6	The counting of Ya'aqov's clan	Adapted from <i>Sifrei Devarim</i> via earlier <i>haggadah</i> traditions.
[ויהי שם לגוי]	N/A	N/A In my opinion this comment is not part of the <i>Maggid</i>	<i>Sifrei Devarim</i>
גדול עצום	1:8	The children of Israel rapidly expand	Original comment
ורב	N/A	The children of Israel prosper and fall into sin prior to being enslaved	Original comment based on <i>Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael</i>
וירעו אתנו המצרים	1:8-10	Pharaoh plans to enslave the children of Israel	Original comment
ויענונו	1:11-12	The children of Israel are enslaved and afflicted	Original comment
ויתנו עלינו עבודה קשה	1:13-14	The Egyptians place hard work on the Hebrews	Original comment
ונצעק אל יי אלהי אבתינו	<i>Shemot</i> 2:23	The children of Israel cry out to God after the accession of a new Pharaoh	Original comment
וישמע יי את קלנו	2:24	God hears the cry of the children of Israel and remembers His covenant	Original comment

Secondary sources

The following is a list of books that I have cited or referred to in the above text along with some articles by Rovner that provide indispensable background material. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of *Haggadah* scholarship. In particular, it does not include a number of older works (by Goldschmitt, Bokser, Fleischer, Kasher, Tabory, and Yuval) that are basic texts in the field, but which for most practical purposes have been superseded, at least as far as the *Haggadah* goes. Most of the works included here are also of interest because of the primary sources they contain.

Boyarin, D.

2004 *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia)

[A summary of the more important material found in this book can be found in 'Two Powers in Heaven, Or the Making of a Heresy' available online in pdf, though one has to wade through a large amount of obfuscatory 'theory', which, in the book, is better segregated into separate chapters.]

First, M.

2012 'Armi Oved Avi, Uncovering the Interpretation Hidden in the Mishnah', *Hakirah* 13
[available online in PDF]

Henshke, D.

2012, 'ברכת המצות : הלכה ותודולתיה', *Sidra* 27-28.

Gerald Janzen, J.

1994 'The "Wandering Aramean Reconsidered", *Vetus Testamentum* 44:3

Kulp, J.

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sections of our *Haggadah* that deal with the splitting of the sea are insertions of a later hand, does that mean the author of the *Maggid*, after his labours to include so many neglected parts of the tale, simply ignored the dramatic final scene? Perhaps not. Let us look at the conclusion of the *halacha* we just quoted:

לפיכך אנחנו חייבים להודות להלל לשבח לפאר לרומם לגדל למי שעשה לנו
ולאבותינו את כל הנסים האילו והוציאנו מעבדות לחירות ונאמר לפניו
הללויה

Therefore [i.e. because our fathers were redeemed] we are obligated to thank, to praise, laud, glorify, exalt, and magnify the One who did for us and for all our fathers these miracles and brought us out from slavery to freedom and let us say before Him: Halleluyah!

After discussing *Pesah*, *Matzah*, and *Maror*, the final stage before the meal is singing the first two paragraphs of *Hallel*. Over the centuries, a tradition developed of seeing this *Hallel* not merely as an expression of thanks for an historical event, but as something more. Everyone is familiar with the dictum with which our *Haggadah* introduces the *Hallel*: ‘in every generation each man is obligated to see himself as if he went out from Egypt’. The *Hallel*, according to this view, is not a memorial, so much as a *re-enactment* of the song the children of Israel themselves sang when they left Egypt.

Except that is not quite right. In their haste, the house of Ya’aqov had no time to sing on the day they went out from among the people of strange tongue. For that, they would have to wait seven more days, for the moment when they turned around and saw Pharaoh’s horsemen, dead on the shore of the sea.⁴⁷

Primary Sources

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⁴⁷ In midrashic writings, the second verse of *Hallel* מצאת ישראל ממצרים is explained as referring specifically to the parting of the sea.

Raban Gamliel says: Anyone who did not say these three things on Pesab has not fulfilled his obligation: Pesab, Matzah and Bitter herbs. Pesab because the Omnipresent passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt. Bitter herbs because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt. Matzah because they were redeemed.

Usually, this *halacha* is read separately from the one before. One thing the father must do on *Seder* night is to expound *parshat habikkurim*, another thing he must do is talk about *Pesab*, *Matzah*, and *Maror*. That is not incorrect, but there is way of combining the two, which becomes apparent if we look at the book of *Shemot* with fresh eyes. The *Maggid* has already directed us to tell of the ten plagues, culminating in the slaughter of the firstborn. The structure of *Shemot* at this point is as follows:

<i>Shemot</i> 11:1-3	God tells Moshe there will be one more plague and then they will be freed
<i>Shemot</i> 11:4-10	Moshe tells Pharaoh that God will slaughter the Egyptian firstborn and then the children of Israel will leave
<i>Shemot</i> 12:1-13	God tells Moshe to tell the children of Israel to prepare a <i>Pesab</i> sacrifice and eat it with <i>matzah</i> and <i>marorim</i> so that they will be spared in the slaughter of the firstborn
<i>Shemot</i> 12:14-20	God tells Moshe that this will be a permanent seven-day festival based around eating <i>matzah</i> and not eating <i>hametz</i>
<i>Shemot</i> 12:21-28	Moshe instructs the children of Israel in how to prepare the <i>Pesab</i> and they do so
<i>Shemot</i> 12:29-36	God slaughters the Egyptian firstborn and Pharaoh allows the children of Israel to leave
<i>Shemot</i> 12:37-42	The children of Israel leave and bake <i>matzot</i> from the dough that they take with them
<i>Shemot</i> 12:43-51	God instructs Moshe in the laws of the <i>Pesab</i> sacrifice to be offered by future generations
<i>Shemot</i> 13:1-10	Moshe instructs the children of Israel on the seven-day festival of <i>matzot</i> and the laws of <i>hametz</i>
<i>Shemot</i> 13:11-16	God instructs Moshe on the laws of firstborn animals
<i>Shemot</i> 14:1-31	The parting of the Sea of Reeds and the destruction of Pharaoh and his army

As you can see, *Pesab*, *Matzah*, and *Maror* are not *just* commemorations of the exodus from Egypt, they are part of the exodus itself, indeed, especially in the first case, crucial parts of the story. By moving on from discussion of the ten plagues to discussing them, the father is, in the most literal sense, just continuing with the story.

One question remains. What about the final confrontation between Pharaoh and God at the Sea of Reeds? Apart from being one of the most exciting parts of the story, it is also the theological climax, the moment when all doubts about the supremacy of *HASHEM* are dispelled and the Torah declares of the children of Israel **וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּיְי וּבַמֶּשֶׁה עֲבָדוּ**. If the

ב'אח'י.⁴⁴ This reflects a real feature of the text in *Shemot* that has been recognized by many biblical scholars, both traditional and academic, namely that the first nine plagues are divided into three banks of three. In each set, the first plague is preceded by Moshe confronting Pharaoh in the morning 'at the waters'; the second ends with an observation about Pharaoh's hardened heart and the third is imposed without Pharaoh receiving a prior warning. Each set of three has a theme: the first is the power of God to work miracles beyond those of Pharaoh's necromancers; the second is His placing a distinction between Egypt and Goshen, the habitation of the children of Israel; the third is His sending 'all my plagues ... so you may know that there is none like Me on the earth'.

The author of our *Maggid* has, therefore, done a great service to the father at a *Seder*. If his audience are not flagging, he can give a proper account of the ten plagues, describing the process by which they progressively demonstrated God's rulership of the world and love for the children of Israel. If time is scarce, he can simply list the plagues and get to the next part of the story, which may not be exactly what you may think.

פסח מצה ומרור

At this point in our *Haggadah*, we find an extended piece of midrashic exegesis, lifted from *Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael* concerning the number of plagues at the sea. This passage is omitted from the *Haggadah* text of *Rambam*, as well a Geonic text sometimes attributed to Rav Natronai Gaon. In the Siddur of Rav Sa'adya Gaon it appears as an optional extra. It is clearly a sort of appendix to our *Maggid* and I believe that this was added for two reasons. The first is a general anxiety in the middle to late Geonic period to add as much midrashic material to the *Haggadah* liturgy as possible, motivated by the condemnation of existing *haggadot* as tainted by Qaraite influence.⁴⁵ The second is a more laudable concern that by ending the story before the parting of the Sea of Reeds, the *Maggid* has cut off the story before its climax.

By including this section, however, I believe that it is possible we may have missed one final ingenious feature of our *Maggid*. The obligation to talk about *Pesah*, *Matzah*, and *Maror* is found in Mishnah *Pesahim*, in the *halacha* immediately following the one with which we began.

רבן גמליאל אומר כל שלא אמר שלושה דברים הללו בפסח לא יצא ידו
 חובתו פסח מצה ומרורים. פסח על שם שפסח המקום על בתי אבותינו
 במצרים. מרורים על שם שמררו המצריים את חיי אבותינו במצרים. מצה
 על שם שנגאלו.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ On *Shemot* 8:15. See also the commentary of *Ritva* on this part of the *Haggadah*, though this is apparently an addition of Rav Haviv Toledano.

⁴⁵ The most striking example of this is the inclusion before the four sons of the *halacha* from Mishnah *B'rachot* 1:5 discussing the proof-text for mentioning *yetziat mitzrayim* in the *b'racha* after *q'riat shem'a* at night. Attempts to prove the contrary notwithstanding, this passage has absolutely no relevance to *Seder* night whatsoever.

⁴⁶ Many readers will again notice the numerous differences between the accurate text of this *halacha* and the one they are used to.

That's it. Not the least benefit of understanding how our *Maggid* works is being able to dispense with elaborate answers to questions that turn out not to be questions at all.

ובאתות

זה המטה כמה שנאמר: ואת המטה הזה תקח בידך אשר תעשה בו את האתת

When read as a *d'rasha*, this section looks odd. The staff was an instrument used to perform signs, it was not the signs themselves. However, by this stage you will probably have got the gist. Read on in *Shemot* and you will find Moshe and Aharon turning the staff into a crocodile at Pharaoh's court. The comment, like the previous one and the one after, appears not to be derived from a midrashic source – though that cannot be definitively proven - but is an original creation of the author.

ובמפתים

זה הדם כמה שנאמר: ונתתי מופתים בשמים ובארץ דם ואש ותימרות עשן

In the next part of the story, Aharon turns the waters of Egypt into blood. The author of our *Maggid* therefore required a text linking the word מפתים with blood and he found it in the book of *Yoel*. If one looks on this comment as a 'proof' then it must be said to be decidedly weak. After all, might not it equally be proved from this verse that מפתים refers to a fire? If I have done my job, then you will see why such a question is superfluous.

דבר אחר

"ביד חזקה" – שמים. "ובזרע נטויה" – שמים. "ובמרא גדל" – שמים. "ובאתות" – שמים.
 "ובמפתים" – שמים. אלו עשר מכות שהביא הקב"ה על המצרים במצרים. ואלו הן....

The author of our *Maggid* now proceeds to expound the last verse of *parshat habikkurim* a second time. The reason is obvious: he has finished the last verse, but he hasn't got to the end of the story. He therefore maps this verse on to *Shemot* once more using a *d'rasha* that, as we have seen, he inherited from earlier *haggadot*. However, he does more than this.

Straight after the listing the plagues, he quotes a mnemonic, in the name of Rabi Yehuda. This mnemonic appears in the earlier Babylonian *haggadah* we quoted above and is also in *Sifrei* on this verse.⁴³ The inclusion of this in the *Haggadah* has puzzled many. Memory aids are a perfectly respectable tool of pedagogy, but it's not clear why anyone would need one now given that the complete list of plagues is written on the exact same page. As pointed out by *Hizquni* and many subsequent commentators, however, the noteworthy feature of Rabi Yehuda's statement is not that he wrote down the first letter of each word, it is how he divided them up: דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב rather than, say, דצכ"ע דש"ב

⁴³ It's presence in *Sifrei* has been regarded as anomalous. Some have suggested that it was back-inserted by a scribe working from the *Haggadah* on the grounds that it was attributed to a *tana*. I do not find this persuasive or necessary. As explained by *Hizquni*, Rabi Yehuda's comment is not just a memory aid, but a legitimate piece of exegesis.

God and you shall know that I am HASHEM who brings you out from under the burdens of Egypt.’ (Shemot 6: 2-3, 7)

Without delving into the many explanations of what these verses exactly mean, it is clear that they entail God announcing that he is about to reveal Himself in a way not hitherto witnessed. As we have discussed, in the exodus narrative as told in *Shemot*, this is not just a theme of the story, it is the story.

On a technical level, however, this section looks initially difficult. How does *מרא גדל* relate to *גלוי שכינה* and what is the relevance of the verse cited from *Devarim* aside from it including the words *מוראים גדלים*? The most popular theory among *Haggadah* scholars runs as follows. If we look at *Targum Onkelos* and other early sources, they seem to have understood *מרא גדל* (‘great terror’) as a variant spelling of *מראה גדל* (‘a great vision’). *גלוי שכינה* therefore represents actually seeing a physical image of God and the significance of the verse cited from *Devarim* lies in its closing words, ‘before your eyes’. This is all very learned, but it is quite wrong. There is no reference to an actual vision of God in this section or anywhere else in the exodus story, it goes against the whole thrust of the book, which is about God manifesting himself through miraculous acts, and any such vision is denied in *Devarim* not very far from the verse quoted. The way of resolving this problem is much simpler. Let us look at the verse cited from *Devarim*, along with a few verses before and after.

כִּי שִׂאֲלֶנָּה לַיָּמִים רִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְמִן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם
עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד־קִצְהַ הַשָּׁמַיִם הַנְּהִיָּה כַדְבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ
הַנִּשְׁמַע כְּמַהוּ: הַשְּׁמַע עִם קוֹל אֱלֹהִים מְדַבֵּר מִתּוֹךְ־הָאֵשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַעְתָּ אֶתָּה
וַיְחִי: אוֹ הַנִּסֵּה אֱלֹהִים לְבוֹא לְקַחַת לּוֹ גּוֹי מִקִּרְבִּי גּוֹי בְּמַסַּת בְּאֶתֶת וּבְמוֹפְתִים
וּבְמַלְחָמָה וּבִיד חֲזָקָה וּבְזִרְוֹעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדוֹלִים כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְכֶם יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֶיךָ: אֶתָּה הִרְאֵתָ לְדַעַת כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין עוֹד
מִלְבָּדוֹ:

For ask now of the former days which were before you from the day God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven to the other: has there been anything like this great thing, or has there been heard like it? Has a people heard the voice of God speaking from a fire as you have heard, and lived? Or has God assayed to come, to take a nation from the midst of a nation with trials, with signs, and with wonders, and with war, and with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm and with great terrors, like all that HASHEM your God has done for you in Egypt before your eyes. You have been shown this to know that HASHEM he is the God, there is none beside him. (Devarim 4: 32-5)

The subject of this passage is the unique and unprecedented revelations of God’s power the children of Israel had witnessed both in Egypt and at Sinai. In a certain respect, it is the passage we are being referred to in *Shemot* viewed from the past tense. The linguistic link from the fragment to this passage is established by the position of *מוראים גדולים* at the end of the list of metaphors describing God’s power. Since this passage is equivalent in meaning to the passage from the exodus story from *Shemot*, the author has done what he needs to do: map another part of *parshat habikkurim* on to the next section of *Shemot*.

as part of a trio with רעב (famine). As we have said, to find them directly juxtaposed together, alone, and in that order is very rare. Indeed, *Shemot* 5:3 is the only place where they come one after the other with a definite article. And yet here, lying ready in a midrashic source talking about something else entirely is a link between ביד חזקה ובזרע and נטויה and דבר וחרב already mapped out,⁴² even though no proof-text is used in the midrash to connect the third part (רעב and חמימה שכופה) of the respective trios!

This is, at any rate, a remarkable coincidence, and finding it testifies to the author's command of sources. I am inclined to believe, however, that he did not consider it a coincidence. It is well known that Sa'adya Gaon believed that the Ten Commandments are given special importance by the Torah and Jewish tradition, not so much for their explicit content but because they contain virtually all 613 *mitzvot* amongst them. It is my belief that the author believed a similar thing about *parshat habik'kurim*. He was not, in his view, merely mapping a synopsis from *Devarim* onto a longer account in *Shemot*, he was revealing a connection that already existed. It is for this reason, I believe, that when a natural link between the fragment and the passage it is mapped to doesn't present itself, he turned to existing midrashic sources to create one and quoted them, as much as possible, in their original wording. If *Hazal* instructed us to tell the exodus story by means of *parshat habik'kurim* it must be that, somehow, all of the exodus story is already contained within it, the secret of how this is so being contained in the works of the תורה פה שבעל פה which they bequeathed to us.

ובמרא גדל

זה גלוי שכינה. כמה שנאמר: או הנסה אלהים לבוא לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי במסת באתת ובמופתים ובמלחמה וביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובמוראים גדלים ככל אשר עשה לכם יי אלהיכם במצרים לעיניך

There are many parts of the exodus story that could potentially be described under the term גלוי שכינה (revelation of the divine presence), and there are three separate options suggested by commentators on the *Haggadah*. Speculation, however, is quite unnecessary; the correct way to understand what the *Maggid* is getting at is, once again, to read on in *Shemot*:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה: וְאַרְא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי וְשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: ... וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם:

And God spoke to Moshe, and He said to him 'I am HASHEM. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov as El Shaddai and (by) My name HASHEM, I was not known to them... And I will take you for me for a people and I will be for you for a

⁴² On the face of it, it is also remarkable that the source makes use of the rare formula כמה שנאמר. However, I do not want to make too much of this specific point, since it is not unlikely that the original text did not include this formula and that it was added in by a scribe familiar with the *Haggadah*. See also footnote 13.

'I am HASHEM your God' and why does it say it again? Did it not already say [at the beginning of the verse] I am the HASHEM your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt? And what does the extra 'I am HASHEM' teach? In order that Israel should not say: 'Why did the Omnipresent command us? In order that we should do it and receive a reward. Let us not do it and receive no reward!'. This is similar to what they said to Yehezqel, as it says 'The elders of Israel went out to me and they sat before me' (Yehezqel 20:1). They said to Yehezqel, 'A servant whose master has sold him, does he not go out from his authority?' He said, 'Yes.' They said to him, 'Then since the Omnipresent has sold us to the nations we have gone out from his authority!' He said to them 'Behold, a servant whose master sold him on condition of taking him back does he leave his authority?'

'And that which has come into your mind surely will not be, when you say "We will be like the nations around us and like the families of the earth, to serve wood and stone." As I live, declares HASHEM, but with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm, and fury poured out I will reign over you. (Yehezqel 20: 32-3)

With a strong hand – This is the plague, like that which says 'Behold the hand of HASHEM against your cattle that are in the field [a very heavy plague]. (Shemot 9:3)

And with an outstretched arm – This is the sword, like that which says 'And his sword drawn in his hand stretched over Jerusalem.' (Divrei haYamim 21:16)

And with anger poured out – This is the famine.

After I bring over you these three catastrophes one after another, after that I will rule over you against your will. Therefore, it repeats 'I am HASHEM'.

This source is complex and seems to contain more than one historical layer edited together. It starts by attacking the view (quite popular in our own age) that the *mitzvot* are optional activities through which a Jew can accumulate merits. It then moves on, using a passage from *Yehezqel*, to condemning a different, if not unrelated, misconception, namely that in casting the people of Israel into exile, God had freed them from the obligation to continue keeping His laws. It is in giving concrete meaning to the metaphorical terms used by *Yehezqel* to describe God's punishment that the midrash makes the statements incorporated into our *Maggid*.

Now, quite obviously, none of this has any more than the most tenuous connection to the exodus. Some commentators have come up with far-fetched claims that the *Haggadah* is alluding to something that they already believed, whereas others have concluded that the author stuck them in for no reason at all, bewitched by the discovery of a comment – *any comment* – on the words **בִּיד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֹרֶעַ נְטוּיָה**. If we understand how the *Maggid* works, however, then the whole puzzle doesn't even arise. The author wanted to link this fragment to the passage in *Shemot*; since no natural link existed he needed to find a roundabout one, which he did by splicing in this piece of midrashic exegesis.⁴¹

We should, however, ponder this a bit more. The words **דָּבָר** and **חֶרֶב** appear together with reasonable frequency, especially in the books of *Yehezqel* and *Yirmiyahu*, but almost always

⁴¹ It is just possible to say that there might be a further thematic link because the source talks about Israel during a period of suffering and so does the passage in *Shemot*, but I don't believe that is necessary.

in between God hearing the cry of the children of Israel (related in verse 3 of *parshat habikkurim*) and His bringing them out (related in verse 4). It is to accommodate this extra material that the fourth verse of *parshat habikkurim* has to be mapped out by the *Maggid* twice. This is also the reason why all of the comments by the *Maggid* on this verse take the form of roundabout midrashic links: there exist no natural links between this section of *Shemot* and *parshat habikkurim*.

ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה

זו הדבר. כמה שנאמר: הנה יד יי הויה במקנך אשר בשדה בסוסים בחמרים בגמלים בבקר ובצאן דבר כבד מאד זו החרב. כמה שנאמר: וחרבו שלופה בידו נטויה על ירושלים

The key to understanding the *Maggid* here is to realize that the comments ‘this is the plague’ and ‘this is the sword’ are intended to be read as a pair. Once done, all one has to do is to continue reading. Sure enough, we find:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ גִלְכָּה נָא דְרָךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְנִזְבְּחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּן יִפְגְּעֵנוּ בַדָּבָר אוֹ בַחֶרֶב:

And they said, ‘The God of the Hebrews has happened upon us. Let us go, please, three days travel in the wilderness, and let us slaughter to HASHEM our God, lest he strike us with the plague or with the sword.’ (Shemot 5:3)

The reference here is unmistakable. In the entire *Tanach* there are only two occasions when the words *דבר* and *חרב* are paired together in that order (the other being *Amos* 4:10, where they are separated by four words). The *Maggid* is, therefore, directing us to the next part of the story in which Moshe and Aharon ask to be allowed to bring the children of Israel out on a temporary basis and Pharaoh responds by intensifying their burdens. Again, we may remark that this part of the story is typically left out of the garbled account of the exodus given at a *Seder*, which is a great loss, even from a purely narrative perspective.

The *d’rashot* linking *ביד חזקה* and *זרע נטויה* to *דבר* and *חרב* respectively are both taken from the same source in *Sifrei* on *Bemidbar*, commenting on the last paragraph of the *Shema*:

אני יי אלהיכם עוד למה נאמר והלא כבר נאמר אני יי אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים ומה ת"ל אני יי אלהיכם עוד כדי שלא יהו ישראל אומרים מפני מה צונו המקום לא שנעשה וניטול שכר לא עושים ולא נוטלים שכר כענין שאמרו ליחזקאל שנאמר יצאו אלי זקני ישראל וישבו לפני אמרו לו ליחזקאל עבד שמכרו רבו לא יצא מרשותו אמר להם הין אמרו לו והואיל ומכרנו המקום לאומות העולם יצאנו מרשותו אמר להם הרי עבד שמכרו רבו על מנת לחזור שמא יצא חוץ לרשותו. והעולה על רוחכם היה לא תהיה אשר אתם אומרים נהיה כגוים אשר סביבותינן וכמשפחות האדמה לשרת עץ ואבן חי אני נאם יי אם לא ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובחימה שפוכה אמלוך עליכם ביד חזקה זו הדבר כמה שנאמר הנה יד יי הויה במקנך אשר בשדה ובזרוע נטויה זו החרב כמה שנאמר וחרבו שלופה בידו נטויה על ירושלים ובחימה שכופה זו הרעב אחר שאני מביא עליכם שלש פורעניות הללו זו אחר זו ואחר כך אמלוך עליכם על כרכחם לכן נאמר עוד אני יי אלהיכם.

There is a great deal to unpack in this exchange, but the first thing we might note is that at the typical *Seder* discussion of this part of the story it is omitted entirely. This alerts us to one of the most important defining features of our *Maggid* that emerges when it is correctly understood.

The story of the exodus as told in *parshat habekurim* is essentially one about the people of Israel, their enslavement and their liberation. God certainly appears in this story, indeed, He is central, but He is an actor, not the subject. This is how the exodus story is most commonly told and conceptualized today, in particular at the *Seder*. If one reads *Shemot* in this frame of mind, however, questions start to build up. Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart when he could just have brought the Israelites out after the sixth plague at the latest? Since God has control over Pharaoh's heart why doesn't he just make him release the Hebrews straight away? Why do Moshe and God spend so much time talking to each other, and Moshe to Pharaoh before they actually do anything? Why did God engineer a final showdown with Pharaoh at the Sea of Reeds when the children of Israel had already been released? The more one reads, the deeper the questions become. Why an exodus at all? Why send down the children of Israel to Egypt just to bring them up again?

The answer that becomes more and more inescapable the more one pays attention is that the story of the exodus is not about Israel at all, it is a story about God. He starts the story with even His name unknown, perhaps, at most, considered one deity among others and ends it firmly established as supreme lord of all the earth. This is done through the multiplication of unprecedented miracles and the public humiliation of what was then the world's foremost imperial power led by a man who himself claimed divine status. Liberating Israel is an essential part of this process, for it is through designating for Himself a people, and through raising them out of the lowest possible social condition, that God establishes himself as the master of history. But it is a means to an end, not the end itself.

When the author of the *Maggid* maps *parshat habikurim* on to the complete exodus narrative in *Shemot* he is doing much more than just creating a helpful aid. He is transforming the story from a liberation history into a deocentric epic, by directing you to tell the entire narrative as found in *Shemot*, not just the parts that might appeal to a secular Zionist.⁴⁰ In particular, he is finding a way to include chapters 3 through 6 which happen

⁴⁰ It should be said that an honest reading of the exodus story as presented in *Shemot* is a challenging experience for more than just secular Zionists, and renders untenable (to say the very least) a great deal of mainstream orthodox theodicy.

A related question is whether, leaving aside the discomfort most moderns must feel about the true nature of the book of *Shemot*, it is really correct to tell the story of the exodus on *Seder* night specifically as a story about God rather than a story about Israel. *Shemot* 13:8, it seems to me, indicates the latter approach, as would *Hazal's* choice of *parshat habikurim* as the base text. On the other hand, the symbolism of the *Pesah* offering eaten on *Seder* night is tied specifically to מצת בכורית – that is to say the penultimate revelation of God's power – while the seven-day festival of *matzot* is tied to redemption of Israel. More than that I do not wish to comment. The job of this explanation is to explain what the *Maggid* is, not what it should be.

ואת לחצנו

זה הדחק. כמה שנאמר: ...וגם ראיתי את הלחץ אשר מצרים לחצים אתם

After introducing the story of Moshe's life with Pharaoh's decree against the male babies, the *Haggadah* directs us to the revelation at the burning bush, from which the verse quoted is taken. The linguistic link established by the shared root [ל ח צ] is easy to discern, but there is a minor question about the introductory comment. דחק is simply a translation of the biblical term לחץ into Rabbinic Hebrew.³⁸ It is common enough to find explanations of obscure words in biblical exegesis, but it is not clear why the author of the *Maggid* thought it necessary to bother here. I do not have a good answer to this question.

ויוציאנו יי ממצרים

לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי השליח אלא הקב"ה הוא בכבודו ובעצמו (שנאמר: ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים אני יי.) [ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה] – אני ולא מלאך. "והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים" – אני ולא שרף. "ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים" – אני ולא שליח. "אני יי" – אני הוא ולא אחר.³⁹

As we saw earlier, this is one of three parts of the *Maggid* that the author inherited as part of a basic framework from earlier *haggadot*. Unlike the comment on ארמי אבד אבי, however, he works this one seamlessly as a crucial element into his new structure. The previous comment directed the reader to the revelation at the burning bush. If we continue reading, we find one of the most interesting and most commented upon passages in the entire Torah.

יֵאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הַנֶּה אֲנֹכִי בְּאֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מַה־שְּׁמוֹ מָה אֵמַר אֲלֵהֶם: ... וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֲלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פֶּה־תֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יַצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם זֶה־שְּׁמִי לְעֹלָם וְזֶה זְכוּרִי לְדֹר דֹּר:

... behold, I (will) come to the children of Israel and say the God of your fathers sent me to you, and they will say, "What is his name?" What shall I say to them? ... And God said further to Moshe, 'thus shall you say to the children of Israel, "HASHHEM the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzhak, the God of Ya'akov, sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial from generation to generation. (Shemot 3: 13-15)

³⁸ Ironically, לחץ is a common word in modern Hebrew while דחק is not, so the *Maggid* when read today is effectively translating a well-known word into an obscure one.

³⁹ In the version of Rav Sa'adya Gaon, the comment stops before the round brackets. The version of *Rambam* and the one attributed to *Natronai Gaon* include the verse in the round brackets, while the version of *Rav Amram Gaon* includes the further elaboration in the square brackets. The shorter version seems the most appropriate to the *Maggid's* purpose of directing the reader to *Shemot* 3:13-15.

adapted it to fit into his way of telling the exodus story. This comment must therefore be regarded, along with the three comments we have already specified, as part of the initial framework upon which the author built his structure. This explains the fact that, in a rather literal sense, it does not quite fit in with his usual method of telling the story as found in *Shemot*.

ואת עמלנו

אלו הבנים. כמה שנאמר: כל הבן הילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל הבת תחיון

For most readers of the *Haggadah*, this looks like another example of the *Maggid* randomly jumping around the exodus story. We have already, seen, however, that this is not the case. After finishing the story of enslavement, suffering and turning to God of the children of Israel, it now begins the story of Moshe with Pharaoh's command to murder the firstborn Hebrew males.

However, there is an apparent problem at the technical level. There is no linguistic link between the fragment and the verse pointed. In very general terms, one can see the semantic relevance of עמל ('travail') to this episode, but no more so than for לחץ or ענוי. The reason for this is that this is not an original comment of the author, but lifted word for word from *Sifrei*.³⁶ Though it fits perfectly into the general system of our *Maggid*, it stands out from a formal perspective. The fact that the author did not add anything to create more of a link between fragment and verse is further evidence of his unwillingness to alter sources he incorporated unless absolutely necessary.³⁷

At this juncture, I wish to make a general point. Some readers may have decided by this stage that one or two of my explanations of how the *Maggid* works are somewhat forced. This is not wrong, but the forcing is inherent in the text itself, not my explanations. I hope that I have shown that our *Maggid* is not a randomly arranged list of obscure allusions punctuated by the odd lucid remark, but a sophisticated tool to expound *parshat habik'kurim*, which testifies to the breadth of knowledge and intellectual powers of its author. However, identifying our *Maggid* as a project of great elegance and ingenuity is not to say it is one that was perfectly executed. Something like the opposite is the case. A corollary of recognizing the correct way to read to read our *Maggid* is acknowledging that it is an experiment that, in some respects, did not quite come off, since, had it done, there would be no need for anyone to explain how it works a millennium later.

³⁶ The original source even includes the rare formula כמה שנאמר and is perhaps the original model for the formula used throughout the *Maggid*. Another possibility is that the version found in *Sifrei* was 'corrected' by scribes familiar with the *Haggadah*. In either case, it seems that our author's immediate source for this formula was the earlier Babylonian *haggada's* comment on וירא את עניו, see above.

³⁷ There is a separate question of how to interpret the logic of the *d'rasha* in its original context in *Sifrei*. I have no good answer to this question and will not suggest one since it is not strictly relevant.

The use of this *d'rasha* in the *Maggid* strengthens the link between the fragment and the verse cited. On the side of the fragment, the connection is formed by the root [ע נ ה]. In context, this verb has its most common meaning of affliction or suffering, but it is also used frequently to denote sexual activity, not necessarily of the unpleasant variety. In Rabbinic discourse the two roots are combined to connote the *absence* of conjugal activity, which is a form of affliction. The allusion to sexual activity found in the verse from *Shemot* comes from its closing words 'and God knew'. On the literal level, this can be taken as implying knowing something that others cannot see, that is to say something behind closed doors. On the linguistic level, the 'biblical sense' of the verb 'to know' is so well known as to be proverbial.

However, we still have not got any closer to explaining the function this comment has in the scheme our *Maggid*, namely mapping out the story in *Shemot* in order to facilitate oral storytelling. I believe the answer is found by looking back to the previous part of the story. There, the Torah tells us that God heard the cry of the children of Israel and remembered the promise he had made to their forefathers. One might ask, however, what He was doing with this promise in the preceding decades? We are not, presumably, supposed to think that he literally forgot it. One answer is that it needed to be activated by prayer, although this assumes that the children of Israel had hitherto remained silent. Another popular explanation is that the appointed time had been reached, though, if this were the case, God's seeing the suffering of the children of Israel would be irrelevant. I believe that the author of our *Maggid* is suggesting a third explanation, and in so doing making a second insertion into the exodus story. God's promise to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt could be activated at any time of his choosing *so long as the children of Israel existed*. However, if the oppression had started to achieve its goal of impeding reproductive activities, causing the Hebrews' numbers to dwindle, then this would effectively force God into acting to fulfil his promise. If so, it would be necessary to include this detail in the story.

It is also possible that the author of our *Maggid* is alluding to the midrashic tradition according to which either Moshe's father or the children of Israel in general chose to abstain from reproduction in response to Pharaoh's decree against the male babies. In that case, the *Maggid* is providing a neat way to segue from the story of the Children of Israel to the story of Moshe in general, which begins with Pharaoh's decree.³⁵

A further point to bear in mind is that this comment minus the words *זו פרישות דרך ארץ* is found in the short Babylonian *Maggid* we saw earlier. The author of our *Maggid* included that comment, the significance of which in its original context is not very clear, and

³⁵ Kulp (p.227) writes that the order of *d'rashot* is 'artificial': 'where did the boys come from if there was already sexual separation?'. Looked at from the purely logical standpoint, this objection is moot: there is no contradiction between a declining birth-rate and the existence of baby boys. However, even if we take the author to be referring to the midrashic tradition implying a complete cessation of reproduction, the progression is clear enough: this happened *because* of the decree. Obviously, moving from the story of the children of Israel to the story of Moshe involves going back in time somewhat; this is a way to do it.

first is the story of the children of Israel being enslaved, crying out to God, and their prayer being answered. The second is the story of Moshe being rescued by Pharaoh's daughter from among the bulrushes, raised at Pharaoh's court and fleeing to Midian. The author of our *Maggid* chose to tell the first story in its entirety before moving on to the birth of Moshe.³³ This has clear advantages from the perspective of oral storytelling.

וישמע יי את קלנו

כמה שנאמר: וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכר אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב

The link between the fragment and the verse pointed to is established both by the content and the shared root [שמע] 'to hear'. Again, the comment is entirely original to the author.

וירא את ענינו

זו פרישות דרך ארץ. כמה שנאמר: וירא אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים

The link between the fragment and the verse pointed to is established by the shared root [ראה] 'to see'. Sticking with the normal formula, however, would create a redundancy, since there is no real difference, from a narrative perspective, in God 'hearing' the cry of the children of Israel and 'seeing' their suffering. The author of the *Maggid* therefore adds in an extra linking comment which we find in the Talmud *Bavli* (*Yoma* 74:b).

ונילף מענוי דמצרים דכתיב וירא את ענינו ואמרין זו פרישות דרך ארץ

Let us learn it [i.e. the meaning of the Torah's command to afflict oneself on Yom Kippur] from the affliction of Egypt. As it is written: 'And he saw our affliction' and we say about this: this is the interruption of conjugal activity.

The *Gemara* cites an interpretation of the fragment from *parshat habikkurim* as referring specifically to the inability of the Hebrews in Egypt to maintain normal marital intimacy. It is clearly citing some earlier source, which the author of our *Maggid* might possibly have had access to.³⁴

³³ This leaves the question of how one should categorize *Shemot* 1:15-22, in which Pharaoh orders the murder of the male babies. On linguistic grounds it seems more correct to include it with the first narrative describing the travails of the children of Israel. However, this section is also an essential prologue to the Moshe story, explaining why he was placed among the bulrushes by his mother. Since only the second consideration is really relevant when telling the story orally, the author of our *Maggid* includes it with the Moshe narrative.

³⁴ Some claim that the *Gemara* is actually quoting the *Haggadah*. It is not impossible that it is quoting an earlier *haggadah*, though we have no record of it (nor do we know that written *haggadot* even existed this early). There seems to me no compelling reason to assume that the author of the *Maggid* took the phrase from anywhere other than the *Gemara*.

All that needs to be explained here is the link between the fragment and the verse cited since the root [ר ע] is not present in the verse and it does not describe the Egyptians actually doing anything bad to the children of Israel. The answer is that the phrase וירעו אתנו, translated as ‘they did bad to us’, strictly speaking (at least when taken out of context) means ‘and they caused us to be bad’ because of the absence of the ל prefix. The *Maggid* seizes upon this reading, but renders it as ‘and they considered us to be bad’ or perhaps, ‘and they caused us to be bad *in their eyes*’. This is the basis of the semantic link with the verse in which the new Pharaoh expresses his distrust of the children Israel on the grounds that they might be ‘be added on to our enemies’.

ויענונו

כמה שנאמר: וישימו עליו שרי מסים למען ענתו בסבלתם ויבן ערי מסכנות לפרעה את פתם ואת רעמסס

This section is even easier to understand. The link is established by both the content and the shared root [ע נ ה] ‘to oppress’.

ויתנו עלינו עבדה קשה

כמה שנאמר: ויעבדו מצרים את בני ישראל בפרך

Here the link is only semantic, with קשה being linked to a synonym from an unrelated root בפרך. The author of the *Maggid* is taking us sequentially through the story, from initial enslavement to the imposition of oppressive labour and then to the imposition of even harder work as a response to the failure to stem the Hebrew birth-rate.

ונצאק אל יי אלהינו

כמה שנאמר: ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבדה.

Like the previous five comments this one is original to the author and characteristic of his style.³² The link between the fragment and the verse being pointed to is established by the shared content, namely the children of Israel crying out to God. It is further strengthened by the connection between the root [צ ע ק] in the fragment and [ז ע ק] in the verse, since these are nearly equivalent, both meaning ‘to cry out’.

The potential for confusion that arises here is that the *Maggid*, after closely following the order of verses in the opening chapter of *Shemot* jumps suddenly to the end of the second chapter. The reason for this becomes clear when we observe that the first three chapters of *Shemot* actually contain two separate storylines which join up at the burning bush. The

³² Safrai and Safrai (pp. 135-6) observe that these comments appear in מדרש תנאים, a reconstructed source built up in some respects following a dubious methodology. I believe that it is not longer controversial to state that these comments are not *tannaitic* in origin.

them two mitzvyot, the blood of the Pesah and the blood of circumcision to occupy themselves with in order that they could be redeemed, as it says: 'I passed over you and I saw you wallowing in your blood.' (Yehezqel 16:6)

The broader purpose of this passage is to explain the purpose of the first *Pesah* offering. It can't have been commemorative since the event *Pesah* commemorates had not yet happened and if it were merely about making a sign on the house of every Hebrew, then there were presumably other ways of doing it. The answer given is that the purpose of the *Pesah* was to accumulate merit by fulfilling a divine command, which is why certain aspects had to be brought forward.

Many commentators correctly worked out that the *Maggid's* comment was based on this passage and it was to make this allusion clearer that the extra verse from *Yehezqel* was added in the 16th century. However, they missed the point. This is absolutely not the right stage in the *Maggid* to start talking about the *Pesah* offering, which only happens at the end of the story. Instead, we should look not at the conclusion of the *midrash*, but at its supporting premise. In the earliest version of the *Maggid*, that found in the *Seder* of Rav Amram Gaon, only the first three or four words of each verse introduced by **כמה שנאמר** are quoted, but in the comment on **ורב** we also find the last two words, 'naked and bare'. This strongly suggests that it is these two words, which in the *midrash* are taken to refer to the Israel's lack of merit, to which we must pay attention.

The midrashic tradition affirms that the children of Israel in Egypt fell to a low spiritual and moral state, a claim which, though absent from *Shemot*, is found in chapter 20 of *Yehezqel*. This belief also has a strong, almost indisputable theological basis. True though it is that the period of slavery and oppression in Egypt was foreordained as part of a masterplan, it cannot be that generations of Jews had to endure this suffering unless they did something to deserve it. One could argue that telling the story of the exodus without including the apostasy of the children of Israel in Egypt would be to make an implied complaint against God's justice in overseeing human affairs. This, at any rate, seems to have been the view of our author who permitted himself his first of two departures from mapping *parshat habikkurim* strictly to the story as it is told in *Shemot* and instead directs us to include, at the end of the first part of the story, a reference to our forefather's moral decline.

וירעו אתנו המצרים

כמה שנאמר: הבה נתחכמה לו, פן ירבה והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על שנאינו ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ.

The *Maggid's* treatment of the first verse of *parshat habikkurim* is the one that requires by far and away the most discussion. As we move into the main body of the story in *Shemot*, however, things become much clearer. The comment here is original to the author and follows his general formula throughout. The reference given is to the next part of the story, namely the enslavement of the children of Israel at Pharaoh's order.

obscene material being solemnly recited at the head of the table. In fact, the second verse cited, verse six, simply should not be there at all. It is a late addition, probably made by the *qabbalist*, Yitzhaq Luria, or one of his disciples, in order to tilt the text to a particular interpretation, one that we shall see is not totally off the mark.

While the comment is, like the one that precedes it, original to the author, it is much more complex in nature and draws on (at least) two midrashic sources, both of them found in *Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael*. The first of them is as follows:

וחמושים עלו בני ישראל אחד מחמש ויש אומרים אחד מחמישים ויש אומרים
אחד מחמש מאות עלו. רבי נהוראי אומר העבודה ולא אחד מחמש מאות עלו
שנאמר רבבה כצמח נתתיך וכתוב ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו שהיתה אשה אחת
יולדת ששה בנים בכרס אחת ואתה אומר אחד מאות עלו ואימתי מתו בשלושה
ימי אפלה...

'And the children of Israel went up hamushim'. One fifth. And some say one fiftieth. And some say one five-hundredth. Rabi Nehorai says: By gum, not even one five-hundredth went up, as it says 'I made you increase like the plants of the field' (Yehezqel 16:7). And it is written: 'And the children of Israel were fruitful and swarmed', one woman would give birth to six sons in one womb. You say that one five-hundredth went up, when did the rest die? During the three days of thick darkness.

This is the source for a famous aggadic trope according to which only a small fraction of the children of Israel were sufficiently meritorious to leave Egypt and the rest died during the ninth plague. From this source the author of our *Maggid* drew the idea of linking the fragment **רב** in *parshat habikkurim* to the verse in *Yehezqel* starting **רבבה**. This verse is part of a passage allegorically describing the early period of Israel's history in terms of God raising an orphan girl. However, this source only describes in exaggerated terms the speedy growth of the children of Israel which is what was already referred to in the comment on the previous fragment **גדול עצום**. To understand what the author is getting at, we need to turn to our second source:

מפני מה הקדים לקיחתו של פסח לשחיטו ד' ימים היה רבי מתיה בן חרש אומר
ואעבור עליך ואראך ועתך עת דודים הגיע שבועתו שנשבע הקב"ה לאברהם
שיגאל את בניו ולא היה בידם מצות שיעסקו בהם כדי שיגאלו שנאמר שדים
נכונו ושערך צמח ואת ערום ועריה וגומר ערום מכל מצות נתן להם הקב"ה שתי
מצות דם פסח ודם מילה שיתעסקו בהם כדי שיגאלו שנאמר ואעבור עליך ואראך
מתבוססת בדמך

Why did the Pesah offering have to be taken four days before it was slaughtered? Rabi Mathya son of Harash would say: 'And I passed over you and I saw you and behold you had grown breasts' (Yehezqel 16:8). The time had come for the oath which the Holy One Blessed be He had sworn to Avraham that he would redeem his sons, and they did not have in their hands any mitzvot to occupy themselves with in order that they should [merit to be] redeemed. As it says 'your breasts were formed and your hair grown, but you were still naked and bare etc.' (Yehezqel 16:7). 'Naked' of mitzvot. The Holy One Blessed be He gave to

ויהי שם לגוי מלמד שהיו ישראל מצוינים שם

The comment on this fragment is taken word for word from *Sifrei*. It is hard to see how it fits into the author's system, since there is nothing in the story in between the previous comment (directing us to *Shemot* 1:1-5) and the next one (directing us to *Shemot* 1:7), and no verse is quoted to help us. In my opinion, the most likely explanation is that shortly after the *Maggid* was compiled, someone observed that the previous two comments were taken from *Sifrei* and set out to fix the text by copying this one over too, in this case completely unaltered. There should only be a comment on the fragment **ויהי שם לגוי גדול עצום**. This is consistent with the reality that the proper way of understanding the *Maggid* was lost early in the process of its popularization.

גדול עצום

כמה שנאמר: ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם

This is the first comment that is entirely original to our *Maggid's* author and a perfect example of the type (i) comment as we defined it above.³¹ The fragment is linked to a verse in *Shemot* through the phrase **כמה שנאמר** and the connection is easy to understand on both the semantic and linguistic level. Just as the fragment talks about Yisrael's descendants becoming numerous, so does the verse it points to, and a further link is established by the presence of the root [ע צ מ] in both the fragment and the verse. The father is thereby directed to discuss the remarkable growth of the children of Israel after Ya'aqov's death.

ורב

כמה שנאמר: רבבה כצמח השדה נתתיך ותרבי ותגרלי ותבאי בעדי עדיים שדים נכנו ושערך צמח ואת ערם ועריה

It is probably the case that no part of the *Maggid* has done as much as this one to make it appear strange and bewildering in the eyes of its readers. The first step to remedying this issue is to establish the proper text.

In modern *Haggadot*, we find quoted two verses from *Yehezqel* chapter 16. Despite being consecutive, they are quoted in the wrong order, so that the description of a female baby writhing in its placental blood appears *after* its description of her as a young woman with comely hair and full breasts. I do not believe that I am the only one who, as a teenager, glanced over at the translation and felt rather embarrassed contemplating this apparently

³¹ Safrai and Safrai (p. 133) point out that the same comment is found in *Midrash haGadol* and suggest it may be from a Tannaitic midrash. However, this gets things completely the wrong way round. *Midrash haGadol* (a remarkable 14th century compilation of numerous sources, many of which are now lost) uses our *Maggid* as source-text and 'improves' it in various ways. There is no evidence for any prior source for this comment and no reason to think one exists, since in its style and structure it exemplifies the unique style of our *Maggid* which is entirely atypical of *midrash*.

What we can say with certainty is this. The comment in its original form, either in *Sifrei* or earlier *haggadot*, is undoubtedly similar in its message to the one we just looked at, emphasizing as it does the importance of living in the land of Israel. Some trace of this message no doubt remains in our *Maggid* for those receptive to it, but the main function of the comment is not polemical. Instead, the goal is to direct the father to tell the next part of the story. After narrating how Ya'aqov and his sons went down to Egypt, his next task is to relate how they settled in the land of Goshen as an appropriate place to rear livestock.

במתי מעט

כמה שנאמר בשבעים נפש ירדו אבתיך מצרימה ועתה שמך יי אלהיך ככוכבי השמים לרב

At the opening of the book of *Shemot*, Ya'aqov and his seventy descendants are counted. The odd part of this comment is that we are not directed there, but to *Devarim*, where the same figure is given by Moshe retrospectively. The reason for this is that the author of our *Maggid*, as we have already seen, was not working from a blank slate. Once again, his comment is found both in some earlier *haggadot*, as well as *Sifrei*, where we read the following.

יכול באוכלוסים הרבה תלמוד לומר במתי מעט כענין שנאמר בשבעים נפש ירדו
אבותיך מצרימה

One might have thought [he went down] with a great multitude, therefore it says 'A few men', as it says 'with seventy souls your father went down to Egypt'

This comment had already been modified by an earlier *haggadah* author (see Appendix iii – *haggadah* iv) who removed the opening hypothetical as well as the extra linking word (כענין שנאמר in place of שנאמר). Except for adding the word כמה, the author of our *Maggid* absorbed this comment unchanged despite the proof text pointing to *Devarim* 10:22 rather than opening part of *Shemot* in which Ya'aqov's tribe is counted, since these texts are equivalent in meaning. Once again, we see his concern to leave the original wording of his sources in place where there is only limited room for confusion.

There has been a small debate about whether it is correct to include the end of the verse, 'and now *HASHEM* your God has placed you like the stars of the heavens for multitude', since this is not relevant to the fragment במתי מעט. In *Sifrei*, it is true, the end of the verse is not cited, and it is also omitted from a minority of Geonic and medieval versions. However, in the earlier *haggadah* that was probably the author's intermediate source it is included. Further, it seems to me that if we understand the method of our *Maggid*, the question isn't really relevant. The verse quoted itself is not supposed to be the focus of attention, what is important is the section of the story the *Maggid* points you to. In this case, as elsewhere, the author's desire to retain the wording of earlier sources led to a potential for confusion, but it is a potential that can only be realized when one is not aware of what the *Maggid* is trying to do.

The opening words of the gospel of John express what was at one stage, unfortunately, a widespread view within the Jewish people before finally being suppressed by the Rabbis of Mishnaic and early Talmudic period:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

The *logos* was considered to have played an especially important role in the supreme revelation of divine power, the exodus from Egypt, and it is precisely the intervention of any such entity that is denied in the comment **לא על ידי דבור**. The juxtaposition of the comment stating that Ya'akov went down to Egypt **על פי הדבור** seems to me a deliberate attempt to de-personify and de-mythologize the *logos*, to turn it back from 'The Word of God' into the 'word of God'. In the exodus story, *logos* did not *do* anything (**לא על ידי**), it did not even say something, it was merely said (**על פי הדבור**).

ויגר שם

מלמד שלא ירד [יעקב אבינו] להשתקע [במצרים] אלא לגור שם שנאמר: ויאמרו אל פרעה לגור בארץ באנו כי אין מרעה לצאן אשר לעבדיך כי כבוד הרעב בארץ כנען. ועתה ישבו נא עבדיך בארץ גשן

The formula **מלמד שלא ירד להשתקע אלא לגור שם** has relatively recently been found in a *haggadah* from the Cairo Genizah, which contains both Babylonian and Land of Israel elements in a way that makes it hard to categorize and which is hard to date exactly (see Appendix iii – *haggadah* iv). This *haggadah* also has an additional gloss on the side adding *Bereishit* 47:4, the same one we find quoted in our *Maggid*. In *Sifrei* we also find the following comment.

מלמד שלא ירד להשתקע אלא לגור שם *שמא תאמר שירד ליטול כתר מלכות
תלמוד לומר לגור שם

*This teaches that he did not go down to settle permanently, but [merely] to dwell there. *Lest you say he went down to take a royal crown, therefore it says 'to dwell there'.*

The exact chain of transmission is hard to pin down. It may be that the comment originated in *Sifrei*, was adapted and incorporated into some *haggadot* and from there adopted by the author of our *Maggid*. The manuscript evidence, however, indicates a slightly more complicated story. Looking at this extract from *Sifrei*, we see that it seems to repeat itself, first in simple language and then in a slightly more flowery form. It appears that the second comment (beginning at the asterisk) is original to *Sifrei* and the first part – which is absent from some manuscripts – was added by later scribes, probably familiar with it from the *Haggadah*. The author of our *Maggid* may have got the idea of including the verse *Bereishit* 47:4 from an existing tradition or, as seems to me more likely, it was his innovation, in which case the gloss on the *haggadah* from the Cario Genizah reflects the growing influence of our *Maggid* after its publication in authoritative Geonic texts.

particularly important for the early medieval community in the Land of Israel, struggling for its very existence in the face of Byzantine oppression.

The comment was adopted by the author of our *Maggid* because it fits in perfectly with his system. Even without citing a verse, it is clear that we are being directed to Ya'aqov's revelation from God before entering Egypt:

ויסע ישׂראל וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיָּבֹא בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁבַע וַיִּזְבַּח זְבָחִים לַאלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַרְאֵת הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֶל־תִּירָא
מִרְדֵּה מִצְרַיִם כִּי־לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׁימָךְ שָׁם:

And Yisrael journeyed, and all that he had, and he came to Be'er Sheva, and he slaughtered sacrifices to the God of his father Yitzhaq. And God said to Yisrael in visions of the night and He said, 'Ya'aqov, Ya'aqov,' and he said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'I am the God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for a great nation I shall make of you there.' (Bereishit 46:1-3).

There are two issues left to resolve. The first is why the author breaks from his normal style and dispenses with the formula of **כמה שנאמר** followed by a citation. I believe that the answer is that in using his sources and stitching them together in a new way, he adopted the principle of changing the original wording as little as possible and. We will see many further examples of this practice. The second issue is whether it is really plausible to claim that Ya'aqov was forced to go down to Egypt by God's command, since he was already on the way when he received the revelation. The answer to this, I believe, is that the phrase can be read with an implied comma. Ya'aqov was forced to go down to Egypt by the famine conditions *and* did so in accordance with direct revelation.

We can also make a brief historical remark at this stage. As mentioned, in its original context in *haggadot* from the Land of Israel, this comment has an obvious polemic edge. It may, however, have a second one too. In some early *haggadot*, the comment on **ויציאנו יי ממצרים** excluding the intervention of any divine or quasi divine entities other than God Himself, has an extra clause **לא על ידי דיבר** meaning 'not by means of the *logos* ("word")'. Belief in the *logos* as an active and separate element within God was a common belief among Hellenized Jews, the most famous of whom was Philo of Alexandria, and eventually became central to Christian theology. I do not believe that the insertion of **על פי הדיבר** a few lines before **לא על ידי דיבר** was coincidental.

In *logos* theology, the 'word of God' (or *memra* in Aramaic) was conceived of as an active and creative force, both separate and yet also part of God, which, while inferior to God Himself, is, from the perspective of human beings, perhaps, ultimately more relevant.³⁰

³⁰ The best place to look for more information is chapter 5 of (Boyarin, 2004), though I am wary about recommending it since the author is a rather nasty kind of heretic and writes with the goal of advocating the Neo-Frankist synthesis of Satmar politics and Foucauldian theology [sic!] that he dubs 'diasporic Judaism'. To give him his due credit, however, he is admirably frank about what he was doing and the discerning reader can separate the very important material he presents from the counter-intuitive spin he puts on it.

central part of the evening. Its function is liturgical, so to speak, ensuring that *parshat habikkurim* does not enter the evening awkwardly unannounced, but as part of an unfolding order of service.

This is the role that it played in the various different *haggadot* we have, both from Bavel and the land of Israel. It plays the exact same role in our *Maggid*. The question is whether it does anything more. As we have said, and as we shall see in unfolding detail, the method of the author of the *Maggid* was to divide *parshat habikkurim* and the narrative from *Shemot* into corresponding sections and link them. Does the comment on ארמי אבר אבי fit into this scheme? If it does, then it is instructing the father to pick up the story with Ya'aqov's return from Aram. This is not in itself far-fetched; if Ya'aqov's status as an Aramean is taken as a reference to his two-decade stay in Aram, then any kind of explanation of *parshat habikkurim* would have to mention this, if only briefly.²⁸ There are difficulties, however. In between Ya'aqov's return and going to Egypt there is lot of narrative material in the Torah that one would have to skip, including his reconciliation with Esau and the unseemly events surrounding Dinah, none of which are relevant to the evening's theme.

It is important at this stage to bear in mind two things. The first is that, as we saw above, this section is part of a basic framework the author inherited from earlier *haggadot*. It may be disappointing to find that it fits somewhat awkwardly into his system, but that should not be discounted as a possibility. The second is that this section is fundamentally different from every other part of the *Maggid*. The format throughout is to quote a fragment from *parshat habikkurim* then to make some of comment, usually citing a verse and introducing it with כמה שנאמר. This section does the opposite. This may be an indication that what was an introductory passage in earlier *haggadot* is intended to remain as such in our *Maggid*, nothing more. More than that we cannot say, except to remark that this section has undoubtedly functioned as a piece of misdirection at the opening of the *Maggid*, bearing much of the responsibility for sending its readers up interpretative blind alleys.

וירד מצרימה אנוס על פי הדב[ן]ר

The *Maggid's* comment, 'forced, according to the utterance', is found in all known *haggadot* from the Land of Israel (though with דיבר or even דבר instead of דבור).²⁹ It was originally inserted into the exposition of *parshat habikkurim*, presumably, to emphasize that leaving the Land of Israel is not an option a Jew can simply choose to take, but something that may be done only under specified and pressing circumstances. This message, unfortunately, is one that needs to be emphasized in every generation, but was

²⁸ See footnote 22.

²⁹ It is my belief that these should be vocalized the same.

well as Lavan. The goal seems to have been to draw exemplary moral and immoral archetypes for use in instruction, so Lavan became the archetypal *ramai* ('cheat') used to illustrate a certain form of bad behaviour to generations of Jewish students. The second context is that the term 'Aramean' was sometimes used as a casual and broadly derogatory term for non-Jews, similar to the way *goy* (in essence a neutral description) is used in Yiddish.²⁵ This perhaps reflects tensions with Syrians that would have become quite acute after the Bar Kokhba revolt, when the land of Israel became a junior part of a large Roman Province with Syria as its political and economic centre. Lavan may have played a similar role to Esau, who was famously used in the midrashic tradition as a target upon which to vent frustrations with the Roman empire and later Christian powers.²⁶

The second question is easy to answer when we look to the passage that is found, with some variation in wording, immediately preceding it in every extant *haggadah*:

וְהָיָא שְׁעֵמְדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ. וְשָׂלָא אֶחָד בְּלִבְדָּ עֵמֵד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ, אֶלְאָ שְׁבִכְלָל
דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ, וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם.

And it is that [promise – the covenant between the parts] which has stood for our fathers and for us. For not only one stood up against us to destroy us, but in every generation, they stand against us to destroy us but the Holy One Blessed Be He saves us from their hand.

Kulp (2009, p. 222) characterizes this as teaching that 'the story of the Exodus is timeless'. Others of a less sympathetic disposition may find here a more than usually reductive rendition of the 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history'. In any case, the first function of the phrase *arami oved avi* in the *Haggadah* is to act as a proof text for this idea: it was not only from Pharaoh that a previous generation was saved, but also from Lavan. The use of the rare phrase *צא ולמד* ('go and learn') as an introduction serves to indicate that the *d'rasha* about Lavan is a proof for what has come before.²⁷

In this manner, *parshat habikkurim* is introduced in the *Haggadah* as a comment, not as a thing commented on. The section beginning *צא ולמד* therefore serves a dual purpose: it provides support for the theological statement beforehand and introduces the exposition of *parshat habikkurim*. In other words, it is there to link the preliminary remarks with the

²⁵ See Mishnah *Megilla* 4:9; B *B'rachot* 8b; B *Pesahim* 112b.

²⁶ Levi Finkelstein famously ascribed the comment on *arami oved avi* to the pro-Ptolemaic, anti-Seleucid politics of a pre-Hasmonean author. Every author of an academic *Haggadah* likes to take a shot at this famous, but quite impossible theory. However, in denying any political motivation behind this midrash, at least in its original context, I am inclined to think they have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

²⁷ The version that made its way into the *haggadah* tradition also contains an additional claim not found in any other extant source, namely that Lavan was worse than Pharaoh since he sought to wipe out both the males and females. It is not clear what the basis for this claim and it may simply have been borrowed from a source talking about something else (Kulp, pp. 222-3). The fact that our only sources for this idea are found in *haggadot* does not necessarily mean it was invented specifically for that purpose.

order in which these *d'rashot* are placed and the use of the phrase 'it considers',²² it is reasonable to assume that we are to understand that the first comment follows the basic, literal meaning of the verse²³ and that the second is an allusion or hint contained within it. To use an anachronistic classification: the first is *p'sbat* and the second is *d'rash*.²⁴

Three questions present themselves. The first is why the *d'rasha* was made in the first place, the second is why it was included in all early medieval *haggadot* and the third is what new use, if any, it was put to by the author of our *Maggid*.

Regarding the first question it is necessary to bear in mind two contexts. One is the tendency among Hazal's exegetes to depict characters that the Torah portrays as complex and ambiguous as being either wholly good or wholly wicked. Anyone familiar with the commentary of *Rashi* – whose comments are almost all culled from earlier sources – will be aware of this phenomenon, which can be seen in the treatment of Esau and Bil'am as

the second part of the comment. It is possible that parts of the *d'rasha* were compiled from separate sources, in which case it may be that the verb [א ב ד] in the second part is being used in a different sense to mean wander, that is, to stay temporarily.

²² The phrase is elsewhere used to connote a message derived from a verse that is not in any respect its literal meaning. See *Pirkei Avot* 3:8.

רבי דוסתאי ברבי ינאי משום רבי מאיר אומר, כל השוכה דבר אחד ממשנתו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו, שנאמר (דברים ד) רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך.

²³ It is a dogma among *Haggadah* scholars that the intended understanding here is not 'My father was a wandering Aramean', but a third understanding according to which ארמי denotes a geographical location, rendering the phrase something like 'My father went down to Aram'. This seems initially plausible when you compare the language of the *Sifrei* to Greek and Aramaic translations of the verse, but it falls apart on closer inspection. The י suffix is used countless times in biblical Hebrew to denote an individual's membership of a tribe or ethnic group, his place of origin or residence, or to mark him out as having a particular characteristic. It can also be used in a genitive sense, particularly in archaic Hebrew and in names (גבריאל = mighty man of God). There are no examples of it being used in the sense of travelling to a place. Conversely, the ה suffix is used liberally throughout the Torah in exactly this sense, including two words later in the same verse. To claim that *Hazal* read the word ארמי as 'to Aram' is to claim that they struggled with basic Hebrew grammar. It is one thing to claim this of the contemporary common man, or even later *Amoraim*, for whom Hebrew had already become a liturgical language mediated through the prism of Aramaic translation (See *Bavli B'rachot* 38:1 and *Succah* 39:1), it is quite another in relation to the *Tanaim* for whom Hebrew was the language of study and instruction and who have bequeathed to us thousands of pages of text in cogent, lucid Hebrew. The correct explanation is as follows. If we identify the subject of the verse as Ya'aqov, then the question becomes how can he be described as an 'Aramean'. One obvious answer is that he was an 'Aramean' in a borrowed sense because he lived there for two decades, analogous to the way we might describe a Jew as being 'American' or 'French'. The ancient translations of the phrase as 'My father went down to Aram' are to be understood as part of the genre of explanatory translations, and the comment in *Sifrei* is based on this understanding, which is actually identical to that of *Ibn Ezra*, *Sforno*, and *Hizquni*. *Rashbam*, who understands the subject of the phrase to be Avraham, interprets the term in an ethnic sense (*Ramban* on *Bereishit* 12:1 provides justification for describing the *avot* as Arameans).

²⁴ In *Hazal's* terminology, דרש was used to refer to any form of exegesis, from that which followed closely the plain meaning of a verse all the way to that which was quite fanciful. The formal division between פשוט and דרש was made by later commentators and systematizers trying to make sense of the vast array of exegesis *Hazal* had left at their disposal.

צא ולמד מה בקש לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב אבינו. שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים ולבן בקש לעקור את הכל.

שנאמר ארמי אבד אבי

There is near-universal agreement among biblical scholars that the correct understanding of this phrase is ‘My father was a wandering Aramean’, though whether it refers to Avraham, Ya’aqov, or to an archetype of the patriarchs in general, is a question regarding which reasonable people will continue to disagree.¹⁹ It is, however, commonly believed that the interpretation ‘according to Hazal’ is ‘An Aramean was trying to destroy my father’, the *Haggadah* being the proof. Some go so far as to condemn those who side with *Ibn Ezra*, *Rashbam* and others as demonstrating impiety. It is easy enough to show that this is not the case. This is the commentary on the verse found in *Sifrei*.²⁰

מלמד שלא ירד אבינו יעקב לארם אלא על מנת לאבד ומעלה על לבן הארמי כילו
איבדו

This teaches that our father Ya’aqov did not go down to Aram except to wander/perish and it considers Lavan the Aramean as if he destroyed him.

We clearly see here two distinct understandings of the verse. According to the first, the subject of the phrase is Ya’aqov²¹ and according to the second it is Lavan. Given the

¹⁹ A minority view is ‘my father was a perishing (or starving!) Aramean. See (Gerald Janzen, 1994). What all these views have in common is that ‘ארמי’ is considered to be the same person as ‘אבי’ and the subject of the verb ‘אבד’. Mitchell First makes a strong case that the author/compiler of the Mishnah also understood the verse this way (First, 2012), which I think is correct

²⁰ At this point, it is perhaps necessary to briefly describe the *Midrash Halacha*, since a rough working knowledge is essential to understanding the rest of this introduction and there are many Jews, even those who have mastered hundreds of pages of *Gemara* who have not much more than vague awareness of its existence.

The term *Midrash Halacha* refers to the earliest written collections of Rabbinic exegesis which date from roughly the same era as the compilation of the Mishnah, that is around 200 CE. They are called halachic midrash because their primary purpose is legal exegesis, in contradistinction to later collections which are primarily homiletic, or perhaps even literary, in nature. This is a retrospective term created by academic scholars and does *not* mean that all the material they contain is halachic; rather exegesis of different types is liberally mixed together. However, it does mean that they completely ignore sections of the Torah with little or no halachic significance. For that reason, there is no collection on *Bereishit* and the only book which is covered in its entirety is *Vayiqra*. The four collections that survived are: on *Shemot* – *Mechilta d’Rabi Yishmael*; on *Vayiqra* – *Sifra*; on *Bemidbar* – *Sifrei*; on *Devarim* – *Sifrei*. However, these were not the only compilations that once existed. Some, such as *Mechilta d’Rabi Shimon Ben Yohai* and *Sifra Zuta* have been recovered, whole or in part, by researchers over the past century. It is not easy, and in some cases impossible, to buy a printed edition of these works, though one can find much of them in *Midrash haGadol*, a rediscovered 14th century anthology, which is more widely available.

The basic purpose of *Midrash Halacha* is to demonstrate how legal rulings found in the Mishnah, Tosefta and elsewhere are derived from the biblical text. It is now generally believed that they were compiled after the Mishnah, perhaps by even more than a century, but the underlying oral process of exegesis and legal systemization to which both the Mishnah and *midrashim* testify would have occurred concurrently over many centuries

²¹ What exactly it is trying to convey is a slightly different matter. It would seem odd to say that Ya’aqov went to Aram in order to be destroyed (or to destroy?), though that is how the verb is used in

against such beliefs.¹⁷ The second is that many biblical passages can be read as suggesting that God *did* make use of intermediaries during the exodus. The most striking among these is the references to **הַמְשַׁחֵת** (the destroyer) who was not allowed by God to go into the houses of Jews who had smeared blood on the lintel and doorposts of their house.¹⁸ It is for this reason that the original source for this *d'rasha*, found in *Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael* (*Pisha* 13) includes a proof-text derived specifically from the plague of the firstborn. This proof-text is included in some early *haggadot* and also incorporated by the author of our *Maggid*.

The *d'rasha* which uses some simple arithmetic to derive the number 10 from the words beginning from **בִּיד חִזְקָה**, is included for an equally obvious though rather different reason. If we imagine a father explaining the verse of *parshat habikkurim*, we can assume that, whatever his level of knowledge or rhetorical skill, he would have no trouble elucidating the basic meaning of phrases like 'And he went down to Egypt', 'And they placed upon us hard work', or 'And *HASHEM* heard our voice'. However, when he came to the last line he would have had much more difficulty. One can say in general what 'a strong hand' or 'great terror' means and relate this to the various miraculous acts performed by God prior to the exodus. However, to say anything more specific, to precisely differentiate one from the other, presents a much more difficult proposition. The nature of language such as this is that it evokes more than it can ever be made precisely to say. The purpose of including a simple *d'rasha* explaining – one might say explaining away – this list of near-synonyms as referring to the ten plagues in their entirety resolves this very practical problem. When the father reaches this point in expounding *parshat habikkurim*, he knows exactly what he has to talk about, namely the ten plagues.

If the original insertion of these two *d'rashot* into the *haggadah* liturgy is reasonably easy to explain, the third one, which forms the first part of the framework built upon by the author of our *Maggid*, requires greater discussion and represents a suitable jumping off point for looking in detail at each element of the *Maggid* we use today.

and we would have no idea were it not for some being rediscovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls and others being preserved by fringe branches of the Christian Church. Subsequently, a rather different challenge to Rabbinic orthodoxy arose in the form of Qaraism, which denied the legitimacy of *halacha* based on oral tradition and Rabbinic legal exegesis. Medieval commentators caught up in the battle against Qaraism conceptualized earlier sectarian groups, such as the Tzadokites, as being proto-Qaraites. For this reason, the meaning of early Rabbinic polemic against mystical and insufficiently monotheistic groups was substantially forgotten.

¹⁷ Some of the more striking examples include: (i) Mishnah *B'rachot* 5:3 and *Megillah* 4:9 require that a *Shlich Tzibur* who says *Modim* twice must be silenced; (ii) Mishnah *Megillah* 4:10 forbids the use of the *Mercava* section of *Yehezqel* from being used as a haftarah (iii) The Talmud *Bavli Shabbat* 13b reports that the Rabbis considered suppressing *Yehezqel* in its entirety.

¹⁸ See *Shemot* 12:23. Other examples include *Bemidbar* 20: 16 ('And he heard our voice and he sent a *malach*'; *Shemot* 23:20-22 ('Behold I am sending an *malach* before you...beware of him and listen to his voice...'); *Tehillim* 78:48 ('He would send against them... bad *malachim*').

The answer, presumably, is that they contain certain themes or claims that the author of the *haggadah* in question believed were sufficiently important that they should be included at every *Seder*, regardless of the intelligence of the son or the breadth of knowledge of the father.

A number of these early *haggadot* have been recovered, in whole or in part, since the discovery of the Cairo Genizah and researchers have been able to group them into identifiable traditions. They all provide the same sparse level of commentary and must all have been used by readers in the same, original, way. There is quite a deal of variety in the midrashic comments included in the different *haggadot*, but there are three elements that were, as far as we know, universal:

- (1) An introductory comment based on ארמי אבד אבי referring to Lavan trying to destroy ‘the whole’.
- (2) A comment on ויוציאנו יי ממצרים to the effect that God did not make use of any intermediary during the exodus.
- (3) A simple arithmetic explanation of the words ביד חזקה onwards, explaining that they refer to the ten plagues.

While the exact wording differs from one *Haggadah* to another, the basic phraseology is remarkably consistent, indicating a relatively high level of antiquity for these texts. All three elements, along with others that appear in different *haggadot*, were adopted centuries later by the author of our *Maggid* and fitted into his system of mapping *parshat habikkurim* to the account of the exodus in *Shemot*. When analyzing these three comments in particular, it is important to keep two separate questions in mind. The first is what those who originally included these comments in older *haggadot* had in mind when doing so. The second is what role they play in the *Maggid* we use. The second question, we will deal with when we look at each individual element of the *Maggid* in order. The first question, we shall deal with briefly here.

The comment on ויוציאנו is easily explicable in the light of two facts. The first is that during the early Rabbinic period and beforehand there was a widespread belief among parts of the Jewish people in the critical importance of various intermediaries between man and God, and even that some of these intermediaries partook in some way or another of divinity.¹⁶ A major focus of the Rabbis during this period was polemicizing

¹⁶ The version of this *d'rasha* in many early *haggadot* includes an extra exclusion, לא על ידי דיבר, which would appear to be a reference to the belief in the *logos* (‘The Word’) a common belief among Jews under the influence of Hellenic concepts during the late Second-Temple period, Philo being only the most famous example. Many of those who held such conceptions found their way into the Christian community and their beliefs eventually crystallized into the doctrine that (*Halilah*) God is composed of three elements, each of which pre-existed the universe and one of which (‘the Word’) was incarnated as a human. Within the Jewish community, these views were effectively suppressed and strict monotheism became synonymous with Jewish identity. Works such as the Books of Jubilees or the Book of Enoch, which are full of mystical angelology, and had been regarded by many Jews as having the authority of scripture, were so successfully suppressed that Jews forgot what they said

(3) Some of the comments are part of a very basic framework the author of the *Maggid* inherited from earlier *haggadot*, taking on a new meaning as part of his system.

It is those in the third category which require the greatest deal of explanation and which, to be frank, do most to destabilize the quite remarkable intellectual project of the *Maggid's* author. It is, therefore, to these that we shall turn first, which requires us to look a little at our *Maggid's* prehistory.

Let's start by looking at the equivalent section from an earlier Babylonian *haggadah*:¹⁴

ולבן בקש לעקר את הכל שנ' ארמי אבד אבי.
 וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול ועצום.
 וירא את ענינו כמה שנ' וירא אלקים את בני ישראל וידע אלקים.
 ויוציאנו יי ממצרים לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף לא על ידי
 שליח אלא הקב"ה.
 ביד חזקה שתים בזרוע נטויה שתים [במורא גדול שתים] באותות
 שתים ובמפתים שנים אילו עשר מכות שהביא המקום ב"ה על
 המצרים במצרים ואלו הן דם צפדעה כנים ערוב דבר שחין ברד ארבה
 חושך מכת בכורות.
 רבי יהודה היה נותן בהם סימנים דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב.

The most obvious feature of this *Maggid*, from our vantage point, is how short it is. The more impatient *Seder* participant may perhaps find himself pondering whether to use this text as the basis for next year's service, but this thought would be misplaced for more than just reasons of traditional piety. It is quite inconceivable that this text was ever supposed to be simply read out as it is written.¹⁵ Apart from the sparseness of the commentary, the careful reader will have noticed that this *Maggid* only quotes a little more than half of the words of the *parshat habikkurim* passage itself!

Instead, it seems obvious that this text was used by those following the original practice of orally expounding *parshat habikkurim*, the text of which they must have been presumed to know off by heart. The question then becomes why are *any* comments included at all?

¹⁴ The manuscript from which it is copied was written around the beginning of the 11th century CE, long after the *Maggid* we use today had become standard. The actual text must be much earlier, but how much so is difficult to say.

¹⁵ The assumption that this and similar *maggids* were intended to be read off the page, despite the absence of any positive evidence and its inherent implausibility, is, as far as I know, shared by all *Haggadah* scholars. Its origin is a disconcertingly blistering attack made by Rav Natronai Gaon towards the end of the 9th century C.E. on a *haggadah* with a similarly scanty commentary from the Land of Israel, subsequently quoted in the enormously influential *Seder of Rav Amram Gaon* at the beginning of his section on the *Pesah* liturgy. Rav Natronai attacked the *haggadah* as being the work of Qaraites determined to violate *halacha* and read the Torah unmediated by authoritative hermeneutic techniques or the guidance of *Hazal*. For centuries, his attack was taken at face value until the *haggadah* he was commenting on, or one very similar, was discovered in the Cairo Genizah. Since (with the greatest possible respect) we now know that every other assumption he made about this *haggadah* was wrong, it is high time we retired this one.

The composition of the *Maggid*

We are now ready to look in detail at how the *Maggid* was put together to create a comprehensive map between the synopsis of the exodus contained in *parshat habikkurim* and the full account contained in the book of *Shemot*. At this stage, though, it is necessary to sound a sort of warning. The whole purpose of understanding the *Maggid* correctly is so that it should *not* be the focus of attention on *Seder* night. Looking in detail at how the *Maggid* is put together is useful as a technical exercise and for developing an appreciation of the intellectual powers of its author. Some understanding of how it works is necessary simply to use it properly and to dispel misconceptions about how it is supposed to be used. That done, however, on *Pesah*, the *Maggid* should get back behind the scenes, so to speak, and go back to serving its purpose as a tool to help us think and talk about *yetziat mitzrayim*. If users of this *Haggadah* spend their *Seder* night talking about the *Maggid*, then it cannot have been said to be a success.

With that said, we can move on with our task. As above, the structure of the *Maggid* is very simple. It divides up the verses in *parshat habikkurim* into tiny chunks, then maps them on to a section of the exodus story as told in *Shemot*. When you put all these chunks in order, you have a complete map of *yetziat mitzrayim* from beginning to end, that can then be used as a base to expand and contract the story as appropriate on each individual *Seder* night. The ‘interesting’ part of the *Maggid*, and that which has generated such a disastrous level of confusion, is the method by which the author linked the tiny chunks of text A to the much larger ones of text B. These links fall into three categories:

(1) Where there exists an obvious thematic and/or linguistic link between the element of *parshat habikkurim* and the section of *Shemot*, the *Maggid* simply links them using the phrase **כמה שנאמר**, a hard to translate formula found only very rarely in *Hazalic* literature, amounting to something along the lines of ‘like what as it is said’.¹³

(2) Where no such natural link exists, the *Maggid* will generate one using midrashic exegesis, often cut and pasted from an earlier source. Read on their own, these comments can be quite baffling. Once one realizes that they are not intended to explain or allude to anything, but simply to create a connection to a section of *Shemot*, then interpretative problems that have survived for a millennium dissolve away.

It should be noted at this point that some of the comments in the *Maggid* fall somewhere in between the above two camps.

¹³ The *haggadot* of Rav Amram Gaon, an anonymous Geonic manuscript sometimes attributed to Rav Natronai Gaon, and *Rambam* use **כמו שנאמר** which is easier to construe. The version of Rav Sa’adya Gaon simply uses **שנאמר**. Whatever the correct term, the function is the same, and I shall use **כמה שנאמר** since that is what most readers will be familiar with and one can make a reasonable case that it the correct version.

wrong angle. In the case of the *Maggid*, the solution is quite simple: the method of commenting on the verse beginning וירעו by the author of the *Maggid* is, in essential matters, and despite appearance to the contrary, exactly the same one he uses throughout the work.

What I mean by that is as follows. The purpose of our *Maggid* is to tell the exodus story in its proper order by linking each successive element in *parshat habikkurim* to a section of the primary account in *Shemot*. By turning the verses beginning with ‘A wandering Aramean’ into a map of the Torah’s full account of *yetziat mitzrayim*, it provides you with a tool for telling the story without missing anything out, but with the flexibility to lengthen or shorten, emphasize or pass over, in accord with the needs of your audience. Once one realizes this, the perplexing list above suddenly becomes entirely clear:

Plague and Sword	Moshe tells Pharaoh that the Hebrews must be allowed to travel into the wilderness lest God ‘strike us with the plague or with the sword. ’ Pharaoh responds by intensifying their burden (<i>Shemot</i> 5:3)
<i>Giluy Shechina</i>	In response to Moshe’s complaint, God tells Moshe that he has not yet been known by ‘my name <i>HASHEM</i> ’ and that this name will now be revealed (<i>Shemot</i> 6:2)
Staff	Aharon throws down his staff at Pharaoh’s court and turns it into a crocodile. (<i>Shemot</i> 7: 10)
Blood	Moshe and Aharon meet Pharaoh at the river and turn it into blood. (<i>Shemot</i> 7:20)

To put matters extremely simply, the author divided up *parshat habikkurim* into 23 parts, divided up the story in *Shemot* into 23 parts and provided a way of linking the two together, directly where possible, indirectly where necessary.

In the absence of a clear understanding of how the *Maggid* is supposed to work, readers were forced to make a virtue of necessity and explain the many apparently opaque and confusing features of the text as positive qualities. For example, the *Maggid* when read off the page famously makes no mention of Moshe whatsoever. This has variously been explained as teaching a theological message about the role of human action in history, as an attempt to prevent the quasi deification of Moshe, or as a way of combatting hypothetical Qaraite services in which Moshe is presumed to have been central. The truth is, however, that there is no good reason when telling the exodus story to omit entirely its most important human character. When we read the *Maggid* in the correct fashion, however, the problem, like so many others, simply doesn’t arise. The *Maggid* takes you through the exodus story step by step, dividing up the story into consecutive parts and directing you to relate each part in turn. When using the *Maggid* to relate the exodus story on *Seder* night, Moshe is expected to play the exact same role in the story as he does in the Torah itself.

that the *Maggid* is an esoteric text full of mysteries. This claim is not falsifiable by any but supernatural means, but one can simply point out that, if it is true, the use of *Maggid* by ordinary Jews not privy to its secrets should be discontinued post-haste. The second is some variant on the claim that ‘midrash isn’t supposed to make sense’. Without wanting to comment gratuitously on the religious mindset of those who engage in this sort of ‘apologetic’, we can say that even if this were true in general, it cannot be true of the *Seder* night. The requirement to expound the exodus story using *parshat habikkurim* as a base and in a way that the child in front of you can understand, is a halachic obligation and that obligation cannot be fulfilled by repeating parrot-like what one acknowledges to be a string of opaque comments arranged higgledy-piggledy.

But if the *Maggid* as generally viewed appears to be an attempt to do the impossible executed badly, that is not the end of the story. The first chink of light emerges when, it is recognized that while many parts of the *Maggid* are bafflingly obscure, there are some that are so clear that they practically interpret themselves:

And the Egyptians did bad to us Like that which says, ‘Come let us outsmart him, lest he multiply and when war shall happen he too will be added to our enemies and he will fight against us and go up from the land.’ (*Shemot* 1:10)

וַיִּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם כִּמְהָ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה כִּי תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֶף גַּם הוּא עַל שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְנִלְחַם-בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ.

And afflicted us Like that which says, ‘And they placed upon it [the people] taskmasters in order to afflict it, and it built storage cities for Pharaoh: Pitom and Rameses’ (*Shemot* 1:11)

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ. כִּמְהָ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיִּשְׂמִימוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם. וַיִּבְנוּ עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת לְפָרְעֹה. אֶת-פִּתּוֹם וְאֶת-רַעַמְסֵס.

And placed upon us hard work Like that which says, ‘And the Egyptians worked the children of Israel with harshness.’ (*Shemot* 1:13)

וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה. כִּמְהָ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָרָד.

Unfortunately, by this stage, many *Seder* participants are so bewildered by the talk of a lady with fully grown breasts rolling around in blood that they have given up trying to understand what is going on. Millions, though, when they reach this section, must have wondered why the entire *Maggid* couldn’t be so admirably clear. Here, each element of the verse in *parshat habikkurim* is linked to a verse in the primary account of *yetziat mitzrayim* in *Shemot* and they are done so **in order**. There is no demand here for strained interpretations, everything just makes perfect sense. For one brief part of the exodus story, that of the initial enslavement and oppression of the children of Israel, the tale is told in a way that is easy to understand and communicate. It is not, then, that the author of the *Maggid* was incapable of expounding the *Maggid* in a clear and ordered fashion it’s just that, most of the time, he thought it better to strew around random, indecipherable allusions.¹²

Except, of course, he didn’t. If a text (if anything for that matter) looks mis-executed to this sort of degree, it is worth considering whether you have been looking at it from the

¹² For clarity’s sake, we should say that this is not exactly the view of contemporary academic scholarship, which sees our *Maggid* as the result of a process of many different writers injecting their own additions without any overall plan. That is to say, the *Maggid* we have is not the result of a bad author, it’s the result of there being no author.

intelligence of the son. The standardization of the *Shemoneh Esrei* can be said to have the benefits of ensuring that each individual can pray elegantly and in conformity with halachic requirements, even admitting the inevitable cost in terms of *kavanah* and engagement. The standardization of the *Maggid* unavoidably undermines the whole enterprise because the goal is communication, not with God, but with another human being.

That would be the case if the *Maggid* were in every respect perfectly lucid and added up to a riveting account – for those of a given level of intelligence – of the exodus story. The actual text we have in front of us, however, meets neither condition. Look at the following section of the *Maggid*:

With a strong hand This is the plague, since it says, ‘Behold the hand of *HASHEM* is on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the cattle and on the flock, a very heavy plague.’

And with an outstretched arm This is the sword, like that which says, ‘And his sword drawn in his hand outstretched over Jerusalem.’

And with great terror This is *Giluy Shechina*, like that which says, ‘Or has God assayed to come to take for Himself a nation from the midst of a nation with trials, with signs, and with wonders, and with war, and with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm and with great terrors, according to all which *HASHEM* your God has done for you in Egypt before your eyes.’

And with signs This is the staff, like that which says, ‘And this staff take in your hand, with which you shall do the wonders.’

And with wonders This is the blood, like that which says, ‘And I shall place wonders in the heavens and the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke’.

בְּיַד חֲזָקָה זֶה הַדָּבָר, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הִנֵּה יַד־ה' הוֹיָה
בְּמִקְנֵה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה, בַּסּוּסִים, בַּחֲמֹרִים, בַּגְּמְלִים,
בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן, דָּבָר כָּבֵד מְאֹד.

וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה זֶה הַחֶרֶב, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְחָרְבוּ
שְׂלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ, נְטוּיָה עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

וּבְמִוְרָא גְדוֹל זֶה גְלוּי שְׂכִינָה. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, או
הִנֵּסָה אֱלֹהִים לְבוֹא לְקַחַת לוֹ גוֹי מִקְרֵב גוֹי כְּמִסַּת
בְּאֵתָת וּבְמִוְפְתִים וּבְמִלְחָמָה וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע
נְטוּיָה וּבְמִוְרָאִים גְּדוֹלִים כָּל־כָּל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְכֶם ה'
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיךָ.

וּבְאֵתוֹת זֶה הַמַּטֵּה, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְאֵת הַמַּטֵּה הַזֶּה
תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ, אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה־בּוֹ אֵת הָאֵתוֹת.

וּבְמִלְפְתֵיכֶם זֶה הַדָּם, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְנָתַתִּי מוֹפְתִים
בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ.

If we leave out the prooftexts and list the ‘explanations’ in order we get the following:

Plague → Sword → *Giluy Shechina* → Staff → Blood

Who would dare to claim that this, on the face of it, is a reasonable way of telling the exodus story? And yet, this is, quite literally, what the *Maggid* has to say on the verse beginning וַיֹּצֵאנוּ (‘And He brought us out’). Questions abound about what looks disconcertingly like a randomly thrown together list. Why is the fourth plague singled out at the beginning and the first plague mentioned at the end? What is the point of mentioning the staff? What *Giluy Shechina* (revelation of the divine presence) is being referred to? Most obviously of all, where does ‘the sword’ make any appearance in the story of *yetziat mitsrayim*.¹¹

In my experience, most observant Jews are vaguely aware of the problem, but will only acknowledge it when pushed and then respond in one of two ways. The first is to claim

¹¹ In part 1 of my essay ‘Occam’s Sword: A different way of reading the *Maggid*’, I discuss the various attempts made to identify ‘the sword’ within the traditional explanatory framework.

necessary that the father be allowed substantial latitude to tell the story in the most appropriate way for his audience.

The question then becomes why any framework was provided at all: why not allow each father complete freedom to tell the story in any way he sees fit? The question might seem odd to the modern Jew who has got used to following a set text even for the most private and personal petitions, but it is worth asking anyway. If *Hazzal* saw fit to specify, up to a point, how the story should be told then there must be a reason. It is not, though, a hard question to answer. The greater the latitude allowed to each father, the greater the chance that, not to put too fine a point on it, he will make a hash of it. The use of a short synopsis of the exodus story places a limit on the discretion of the father, ensuring he covers the main themes of the exodus and gives them their due weight.⁹

So much, then, for the *Seder* service as described in the Mishnah. There is nothing in the *Gemara* that alters this format, however, the *Seder* service that we use, and that which has been in use for a millennium, looks rather different. The father no longer expounds the verses of *parshat habikkurim*, instead he reads an exposition that is found in the same form in all of the thousands of different editions of the *Haggadah* used around the world. This is not to say that the act of *darshanut* (expounding) is absent, at least in the more learned household, but the object of explanation has shifted from *parshat habikkurim* itself to the commentary upon it. What apparently has happened is that a standardized way of expounding *parshat habikkurim* was introduced and accepted, replacing the former latitude to expound the verses with a fixed commentary, known – along with some preliminary material – as the *Maggid*.¹⁰

That is, at least, our guiding assumption, but a little reflection shows it is quite untenable. There is no getting around the conclusion that the introduction of a fixed text – *any* fixed text – eradicates the possibility of expounding *parshat habikkurim* according to the

⁹ There is a secondary question of why the passage *Devarim* 25:6-9 passage in particular was chosen. There are two other passages that could serve the same purpose: *Bemidbar*: 20:15-16 and *Devarim* 6:21-24. First, when answering such a question, it is necessary to remember that *one* of the options had to be chosen; even if the choice was random *parshat habikkurim* would still have a 1/3 chance of winning. Secondly, one can observe that *parshat habikkurim* has features that the other two passages do not. *Bemidbar* 20:15-6 includes nothing about God's punishment of the Egyptians and *Devarim* 6:21-24 picks up the story in the middle after the children of Israel are already enslaved. A further reason is that *parshat habikkurim* was the most well-known of the passages since it was used by those presenting their first fruits in the Temple. It is true that the *Seder* ritual as described in the Mishnah is probably of Post-Temple origin, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that the passage retained a certain prestige thereafter, especially as it one of only two examples of a liturgical text found in the Torah, the other being *viduy hama'asrot* which appears just afterwards. Finally, it can be seen simply by comparing the three passages that *parshat habikkurim* is the most elegant, with a sonorous repetition of near-synonyms that makes for easy memorization.

¹⁰ The most explicit statement to the effect that one must read the entire *Maggid* as written is found in *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*: 'and he reads the whole *Haggadah* as it is written' (*Mitzvah* 144), but a similar, if less emphatic, statement is found in the *Tur* and *Shulhan Aruch* (OH 473:[7]). The Artscroll *Mahzor* makes the rather astounding claim that *all* of the participants at the *Seder* are required to recite the *Maggid*!

My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and he dwelt there, few of number, and became there a great nation, mighty and numerous. And the Egyptians did bad to us, and they afflicted us, and they placed upon us hard work. And we cried out to HASHEM the God of our fathers, and HASHEM heard our voice, and he saw our affliction and our travail. And HASHEM brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and great terror and signs and wonders.

This passage is a brief synopsis of *yetziat mitzrayim*, delivered in poetic language and covering all the major points from the entry to Egypt until the final exodus. The job of the father at this stage of the *Seder* is to expound (*doresh*) the verses so as to fulfil his obligation to recount the foundational event of the Jewish people.⁸

It is necessary at this stage to clarify why such a method of expounding the exodus story was chosen. Alternative options would have ranged from simply allowing the father to tell the story in any manner he chose to providing a fixed liturgy containing sections from the Torah and other books of the *Tanach* as well as midrashic explanations and embellishments. Part of the answer is that this was *Hazal's* default format for liturgy. Many Jews today believe that when saying the *Shemone Esrei*, for example, they are obligated to use a specific order of words every day, three times a day. However, in reality, *Hazal* specified only the subject matter of the *b'rachot*, leaving the precise wording to the choice of each individual or community. The closest we get to a set liturgy is the mandatory inclusion of certain phrases and formulas to be inserted on special occasions. Only short *b'rachot* were given a fixed text. Variety on a set theme was not an exception for *Hazal*, it was closer to being a rule.

There is a further reason, however, why this format was so particularly appropriate for the *Seder* night. The Mishnah states that the father must tell the story 'according to the intelligence of the son'; it is not enough to tell a story, the story has to be understood, and it has to engage. Given the potential differences in intelligence – from the slow 5-year old to the 12-year old prodigy – among children present at a *Seder*, let alone the adult participants, even the most perfectly composed text could not fulfil this criterion. A perfectly pitched account of the exodus story for one child would be far too complicated for another and tedious for a third. In order for the ends of the *Seder* to be achieved, it is

evidence of this in extant *haggadot* including those from the land of Israel. That still leaves a gap of around 600 years in which the change could have taken place, but we can say with reasonable certainty that our *Maggid*, composed in Bavel in the 8th or 9th century, never included the extra verse.

⁸ The exact status of this obligation is a matter of dispute. *Rambam*, *Sefer haHinuch*, *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*, and *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, all include this obligation as one of the 613 *mitzvot* and this was accepted by subsequent authorities. However, the lists of the *Ba'al Halachot Gedolot* and Rav Sa'adya Gaon do not include such a mitzvah and it is also absent from a poem on the theme by Ibn Gabirol. Presumably, however, they would agree that the father is supposed to tell his son about the exodus on this night, since the Torah explicitly says so. The question is whether talking about the exodus is a mitzvah in itself or merely the intended result of other mitzvot of the evening, as it is, for example, at a *pidyon hamor*. The dispute is about the nature of the Torah's legal system rather than what one should be doing on the eve of the 15th of Nissan.

pertinent questions then the father prompts him by pointing out the various ways this meal is different from other evening meals during the year.³ While the general practice at festive meals was to have one course including the dipping of lettuce, on this night there were two.⁴ On other nights, both leavened and unleavened bread were eaten, but on this night only unleavened. On other nights, meat cooked in a variety of ways would be served, but on this night, it was all roasted.⁵ The father then teaches ‘according to the intelligence of the son’, beginning with disgrace and ending with praise⁶ and expounds the passage beginning with ‘My father was a wandering Aramean’.

The passage in question is the liturgy that owners of land are required by the Torah to say on presenting the first fruits of each year’s crop at the Temple. It is found in *Devarim* 26:5-8 (I shall hereafter refer to it as *parshat habikkurim*):

אָרְמִי אֶבֶד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִמָּה וַיִּגְרַשׁ שָׁם בְּמַתִּי מֵעֵץ וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל
עָצוּם וָרֹב: וַיִּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה: וַנִּצְעַק
אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת־קִלְנוּ וַיִּרְא אֶת־עַנְיָנוּ וְאֶת־עַמְלָנוּ
וְאֶת־לִחְצָנוּ: וַיּוֹצֵאנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה וּבְמַרְא גָּדֹל
וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבְמִפְתִּים:⁷

appetizer course. Rav Sa’adya Gaon, who knew of only one course consisting of a single vegetable, also ruled that a *b’racha ahrona* should be recited as does *Rambam* in one of his responsa.

³ This is plainly the meaning of the Mishnah and is interpreted as such by *Rambam (Hilchot Hametz uMatzah 8:2)*, though he rules that they should be said as a matter of course regardless of the intelligence of the son. However, the practice of having the son (and in some households, all the sons and even daughters) read a modified version as questions has become universal, despite the grammatical impossibility of construing them this way and the rather obvious fact that nowhere in the entire *Haggadah* is there anything resembling an answer.

⁴ This practice was specific, apparently, to Mediterranean civilization and so the *Talmud Bavli* amends the text to the one used today.

⁵ Generally, this is taken to refer to the time of the Temple when the *Pesah* sacrifice was eaten. However, the previous *halacha (Pesahim 10:3)* has already made clear that the chapter is referring, unless it specifies otherwise, to practice after the destruction of the Temple. As an earlier *halacha (Pesahim 4:4)* indicates, many Jewish communities had the practice of eating roast meat on *Seder* night as a commemoration of the *Pesah*. One notes that, according to the correct text of the Mishnah, there are three statements referring to *maror*, *matzah*, and *Pesah* respectively, the three things which Raban Gamliel specified must be discussed.

⁶ This clause is the subject of a dispute in the *Talmud Bavli Pesahim 116b*. As recorded there, Rav holds that the ‘disgrace’ is that our forefathers were idolaters and Rava (according to accurate texts) holds that it refers to our later forefathers being slaves. Both of these views are included in the text of our *Haggadah*. I agree with the view of Mitchell First (First, 2012) that this clause is meant to be read with the next one, so that ‘disgrace’ is ‘My father was a wandering Aramean’ and I believe that the *Mahloqet* in the *Bavli* is to be interpreted in this light. I explain my views on this subject at length in the essay ‘What is disgrace? A new interpretation of *Pesahim 116:a*’.

⁷ It should be observed that this is not, in fact, the end of the passage, which continues ‘And He brought us to this place and gave to us this good land...’. Some claim, based on the Mishnah, that the *Maggid* should continue until the end of the next verse and therefore include the entrance to the land of Israel as the conclusion of the story, but that this was dropped to reflect the needs of Jews living in exile who could not say ‘and He brought us to this place’. This is plausible enough, but there is no

A complete guide to the *Maggid*

The starting point for understanding the *Maggid* is the fourth *halacha* in the last chapter of Mishnah *Pesahim*:

מזגו לו כוס שני וכן הבן שואל. אם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו מה נשתנה
 הלילה הזה מכל הלילות שבכל הלילות אנו מטבילים פעם אחת הלילה הזה
 שתי פעמים. שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה כולו מצה.
 שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים בשר צלי שלוק ומבושל הלילה הזה כולו צלי. לפי
 דעתו שלבן אביו מלמדו. מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח ודורשים מארמי אובד
 אבי עד שהוא שגומר כל הפרשה.¹

They pour for him the first cup and here the son asks. If the son lacks intelligence his father teaches him: 'How different is this night from all other nights? For on all other nights we dip once, on this night twice. On all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, on this night all of it is unleavened. On all other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed or boiled, on this night all of it is roasted. According to the intelligence of the son his father teaches him. He begins with disgrace and ends with praise and they expound 'my father was a wandering Aramean' until he completes the whole passage.

Following *qiddush* and an appetizer course consisting of lettuce and other foods with dips,² the son asks the father questions. If the son is not developed enough to ask

¹ Many readers will notice that the text of this *halacha* is substantially different from the one they are familiar with from standard editions of the Mishnah. In fact, the entire chapter as it appears in standard editions is one of the most corrupt in the entire Mishnah. While most of the time the standard editions are not inaccurate to this degree, this should serve as a wakeup call as to the necessity of providing accurate editions of all the basic texts of *Torah she b'al peh*, so as to ensure that time spent studying Torah is in fact spent studying Torah and not scribal errors or the anxieties of the papal censor.

² Later authorities, based on the practice of Rav Aha the son of Rava recorded in the *Talmud Bavli* (*Pesahim* 115a), rule that one should only use lettuce if no other vegetables are available, so as to avoid the question of whether to say the *b'racha* over *maror* at this stage or only later when it is again brought out for the main meal. It is probable that the Mishnah itself does not envision any *b'racha* being said on the *maror* other than *borei p'ri hadamah*. [The principle that a *b'racha* must be said over every *mitzvah* is taught in the *Tosefta* (*B'rachot* 6:9) and can be traced back at least as far as Rabi Yehuda (*B Sutta* 46b), but the Mishna makes no explicit reference to any *b'racha* over *mitzvot* and it seems that the principle only became generally accepted during the transition between the Tannaitic and Amoraic period, following which it became the occasion of many disputes among the Amoraim, such as this one (*B Sutta* 45b-46a, *Pesahim* 7a-b). See (Henshke, 2012) for a detailed discussion.] In any case, the Mishnah is quite explicit that lettuce should be eaten during the appetizer as well as during the main course. This is the basis for the *mah nishtanah* statement about dipping twice, which refers not to two dipping courses (which would not have been uncommon), but two dipping courses consisting of lettuce. From early medieval *haggadot* used in the land of Israel it is clear that there were many components of the appetizer course, including fruit, rice, and pastries [!]. The *Tosefta* (*Pesahim* 10:5) refers to a course consisting of offal meats. The practice of eating less than an olive-sized portion of a vegetable arose as a way of avoiding uncertainty over whether to say a *b'racha aharona* on this course or to wait to fulfil one's obligation at *birkat hamazon* (since one does not, in any case, have to say a *b'racha aharona* on an amount smaller than an olive). From early-medieval Land of Israel *haggadot* it is clear that the original practice was to say a *b'racha aharona* after each section of the

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וְכֹל הַמֵּאֲרִיךְ בְּדִבְרֵיהֶם שְׂאֵרְעוּ
וְשִׁהְיוּ הֵרִי זֶה מְשִׁבָּח

(משנה תורה הלכות חמץ ומצה ז:א)

A comprehensive guide to the *Maggid*, the principles and process of its composition, and how to use it at the *Seder*.

Gavriel Nablieli, Yerushalayim, 5778