

1st time we begin telling the story, and, 1st mention of matsah:

Hold up the small half of the broken matsah. It represents “not having enough”.

Four Questions:

Fill the second cup, and remove the seder plate, before the questions.

2nd beginning of the story:

Stories about telling the story:

This is the bread of poverty / oppression / *Ha lachma `anya* that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone hungry, he should come and eat. Anyone needing, she should come and make Pesach. Now – here. Next year – in the land of Israel. Now, here – slaves/ *`av `dei*. Next year – freed people.

Ha lachma `anya di achalu avhatana b`ar`a d`mitsrayim. Kol dikhfin yeytei v`yeikhol. Kol dits`rikh yeytei v`yifsach. Hash`ta hakha, l`shanah haba`ah b`ar`a d`Yisra`el. Hash`ta `avdei, l`shanah haba`ah b`nei chorin.

What makes this night different than all other nights, that in all other nights we don`t dip once but this night two times? (Why is it) that in all other nights we eat *chamets* or *matsah* and this night it`s all *matsah*? (Why is it) that in all other nights we eat the rest of the vegetables, and this night *maror*? (Why is it) that in all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, and on this night all of us reclining?

Slaves we were to Pharaoh in Egypt, and YHVH our God brought us out from there with a strong hand and a stretched out arm. Were it not for the Holy One bringing our ancestors out from Egypt, still would we and our children and our children`s children be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

And even if all of us are wise, and all of us understanding, and all of us knowing the Torah, it would be a *mitsvah* for us to be telling about the going out from Egypt. And all who increase telling the story of going out from Egypt – behold this is cherished/praised.

A story about Rebbe Eliezer and Rebbe Yehoshua and Rebbe Elazar ben Azaryah and Rebbe Akiva and Rebbe Tarfon – they were all reclining/*m`subin* in Bnei Brak. And they were telling about going out from Egypt all that night – until their students came and said to them: Our rebbes! It`s reached time of reading the *Sh`ma* of the morning-prayer/ *Shacharit*!

This matsah is the matsah of slavery.

Why would anyone want to share this meal of poverty and degradation?

Stage directions: Whenever we are telling the story, we uncover the broken matsah. When we pause to praise God, we lift the cup, and cover the *matsah*.

Remove the seder plate, as if to say, what can you remember?

Two of the things mentioned in the questions are signs of wealth (dipping and reclining), and two are signs of poverty (matsah and maror). Part of the question is, why do we do such contradictory things?

What other questions can you come up with?

What stories about seders do you have about seders you`ve participated in? You can share them here in addition to the rabbinic stories, or in place of them.

Said Elazar ben Azaryah: Here, I am like a seventy-year old, and yet I never merited that the going out from Egypt should be said in the night – until Ben Zoma drashed her: As it is said: *In order that you will remember the day of your going out from the land of Egypt all the days of your life. Days of your life* – (that includes) the days. *All the days of your life* – (that would include even) the nights. And the sages say: *days of your life* – this world. *All the days* – to bring in the days of *Mashiach*/Messiah.

Praise – lift the cup Blessed be the *Makom*, the Place. Blessed be. Blessed be the One who gave Torah to his people Israel. Blessed be.

Four children: The Torah spoke corresponding to four children: one wise, one wicked, one innocent, and one that doesn't know to ask.

Chakham: A wise one/ *chakham*, what does he say? *What are the testimonies and statutes and just laws which YHVH our God commanded you-all?* And even so should you be saying to him, according to the laws of the Pesach offering: they don't *mafiir*/add after the Pesach any *afikoman*.

Rasha: A wicked one/ *rasha*, what does she say? *What is this service/servitude to you-all?* To you all and not to him. And just as he has brought himself out of the whole – he has denied at the root. And even you, knock his teeth/ *hek'heh et shinav*, and be saying to him: *Because of this YHVH acted for me in my going out from Egypt / Ba'avur zeh `asah li YHVH b'tseiti mimitsrayim*. For me and not for him. If he was there, he wasn't redeemed.

Tam: An innocent one/ *tam*, what does he say? *What's this? And you will say unto him, by a strong hand YHVH brought us out from Egypt, from the house of slaves.*

She'eino Yodei`a: And one who doesn't know to ask/ *she'eino yode`a lish'ol?* You/At (feminine) open for her, as it is says: *And you will tell to your child in that day, Because of this YHVH acted for me in my going out from Egypt / Ba'avur zeh....*

El'azar ben Azaryah is not talking about the seder but about why we mention leaving Egypt in every evening service. Every night...

What is the connection between the night and the Messiah?

The "wise one" receives information, not meaning, not revelation. At least the "wicked one" takes a position. The response is similarly disembodied: not "we don't mafiir", but "they don't..."

"Knock his teeth" – this is what Adam and Eve felt when they ate the fruit from the tree of knowing.

The first time we mention the verse "Ba'avur zeh", it's to exclude someone else. Lesson for the teacher: not learned.

The children go up in levels of purity, presence, openness.

The second time we mention the verse "Ba'avur zeh" – "You open." Open what? Open yourself. And, become feminine. The beginning of redemption is including the other.

When should we tell the story?

3rd Ba`avur zeh:

Could it be (that you will tell) from the new moon? Study would say: *in that day* – only in that day. Could it be from while it is yet day? Study would say: *Because of this* / *Ba`avur zeh* – because of this I wouldn't be saying, except in the time that there is *matsah* and *maror* facing you.

3rd beginning of the story:

From beginning, our ancestors were servants of alien service/ idolaters, and now, the *Makom* /Place drew us near to service of the One/ *la`avodato*, as it is said: *And Yehoshua said to all the people, so said YHVH, Israel's God – over beyond the River your ancestors were settled from forever, Terach, father of Avraham and father of Nachor, and they served other Gods, and I took your father, Avraham, over beyond the River, and I made him walk through all the land of K`na'an, and I multiplied his seed and I gave Yitshak to him and to Yitshak I gave Yaakov, and Eisav. And to Eisav I gave Mount Se'ir to inherit it, and Yaakov and his children went down Egypt.*

Praise – lift the cup

Blessed be the One who keeps his promise to Israel. Blessed be, for the Holy One reckoned the end, to do like the One said to Avraham our father at the covenant of the halves, as it is said: *And He said to Avraham, knowing you must know, that you seed will be a stranger in a land not for them, and they will serve them and they will harm them / impoverish them four hundred year. And also that nation that they will serve, judge I will, and after that they will go out with great substance.*

And she (the promise) is what stood up for our ancestors and for us, for it wasn't one alone who stood over us to finish us, but in each and every generation they stand over us to finish us. And the Holy One rescues us from their hand.

Storytime – Put down the cup and uncover the matsah

Go out and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Yaakov our father. For Pharaoh did not decree except against the males, and Lavan sought to uproot all, as it is said: *Arami oved avi/ An Aramean is destroying my father / An Aramean, who wanders, is my father...*

The third time we mention the verse "Ba`avur zeh" is to become fully engaged with the present: what is facing you? Why? And therefore: who are you, right now? Where are you coming from, where are you going?

We start from degradation, and end in praise. Beginning with idol worship

The fourth beginning is hidden by this drash, which patently ignores the contextual meaning of the verse. Why is the haggadah so cagey about finally beginning the story?

4th beginning of
the story.
1st verse:

*An Aramean, who wanders, is my father, and he went
down Egyptward, and he dwelled-as-a-stranger there in
few numbers, and he became there a nation, great,
mighty and many.*

*and he went down Egyptward – forced according to / by
mouth of the Word / `al pi hadibur*

*and he dwelled-as-a-stranger/ vayagar there – teaching
that our father Yaakov didn't go down to become
sunk/drowned in Egypt, only to dwell-as-a-stranger there,
as it is said: And they said unto Pharaoh, to dwell-as-a-
stranger/ lagur in the land have we come, for there is no
pasture for the sheep which belong to your servants, for
the famine is heavy in the land of K'na'an. And now may
it be, that your servants will settle in the land of Goshen.*

*in few numbers – like what is said: With seventy soul
your ancestors went down Egyptward, and now YHVH
your God has set you like stars of the sky for multitude.*

*and he became there a nation – teaching that Israel were
distinguished/distinct/ m'tsuyanim there.*

*great, mighty – as it is said: And Israel's children bore
fruit and multiplied/ v'yirbu and grew mighty, very very
so, and the land filled with them.*

*and many/ rav – like what is said: swelling/increasing/
r'vavah, like the growth of the field, I made you, and you
increased/ tarbi and grew great and came into such
charms – your breasts firmed up, and your hair grew,
and you were naked and bare. And I passed over you and
I saw you, squatting in your bloods, and I said to you, in
your bloods live! and I said to you, in your bloods live!*

2nd verse:

*And they eviled us / did evil to us / made us out to be evil
and they oppressed/humiliated us, and they put on us
heavy service.*

*The Aramean who wandered is
understood to be Yaakov, who
wandered into Padan-Aram to get his
wives, his children, and his wealth,
and then, after sojourning in Israel,
wandered down into Egypt.*

*“Distinct” – they didn't (completely)
assimilate.*

*“Your hair” means the growth of
puberty. “Squatting in your blood”
means the first menstruation. But
midrash says that bloods means two:
the blood of circumcision and the
blood of the lamb on the doorposts.*

And they eviled us/ v'yarei`u – as it is said: Come, we will be wise with him lest he will increase, and it will be, when war meets, and he will be added on top of our haters, and he will go up from the land.

and impoverished/oppressed/humiliated us/ v'ya`anunu – like what is said: and they put over him officers of the burdens, in order to oppress him/ `anoto with their burdens and he built store cities for Pharaoh, Pitom, and Ra`amses.

and they put on us heavy service – as it is said: And Egypt made Israel serve b'farekh/ with force.

3rd verse:

And we cried out unto YHVH God of our ancestors, and YHVH heard our voice and saw our oppression/ humiliation, and our laboring, and our being squeezed.

And we cried out unto YHVH God of our ancestors – like what is said: And it was in those many days, and the king of Egypt died, and Israel's children were tortured from the servitude/service/ `avodah, and they screamed, and their pleading rose up unto Elohim from/because of the service.

and YHVH heard our voice – like what is said: And Elohim heard their anguish, and Elohim remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitshak, and with Yaakov.

and saw our oppression/humiliation/ `onyeinu – this is the separation of the way of the land, like what is said: And Elohim saw Israel's children, and Elohim knew.

and our laboring/ `amaleinu – these are the sons (that the women were in labor to give birth to), like what is said: Any son born, you will throw him Nileward, and any daughter you will keep living.

and our being squeezed/ lachatseinu – this is the pressure/ had'chak, like what is said: And also I saw the pressure/ halachatz with which Egypt is oppressing them.

“They eviled us” – they saw us as evil

“B'farekh” – Chasidic midrash reads this as “b'peh rakh”, literally, with a soft mouth – deceiving with gentleness.

“Separation of the way of the land” – abstinence, for the men said, why should we make love when our sons will be killed. But the women seduced them, saying to them, if you act so, you kill them all.

“Squeezed” – they were not allowed to build bigger dwellings when their families grew. And if you pay attention you will understand how many ways this applies today.

4th verse:

And the One brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand and with a stretched out arm and with great fearsomeness and with signs and with wonders.

1st mention of the plagues:

*And the One brought us out from Egypt – not by the hand of a messenger angel and not by the hand of a burning angel, and not by the hand of an emissary, but the Holy One blessed be in His glory by Himself, for it says: *And I will pass over through the land of Egypt in this night, and I will strike down all first-born in the land of Egypt, from human to beast, and I will make judgments against the gods of Egypt – I am YHVH.**

And I will pass over through the land of Egypt in this night – I and not a messenger/angel.

and I will strike down all first-born in the land of Egypt – I and not a burning angel.

and I will make judgments against the gods of Egypt – I and not an emissary.

I am YHVH – I am the One, and no other.

2nd mention of the plagues:

*with a strong hand – this is the pestilence/dever, like what is said: *Here, the hand of YHVH is-coming-to-be/hoyah/HVYH upon your herd in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the cattle and on the flocks, a very heavy pestilence.**

*and with a stretched out arm – this is the sword, like what is said: *And His sword drawn in His hand, stretched out over Jerusalem.**

*and with great fearsomeness – this is the revelation of the Shekhinah/God's presence, like what is said: *Or did Elohim make miracle, to come to take a nation from within a nation, with acts, with signs, and with wonders and with such great fearsomeness, according to all that YHVH your God did for you in Egypt, before your eyes?**

*and with signs – this is the staff, like what is said: *And this staff you will take in your hand, that you will do with it the signs.**

The revelation of Shekhinah here, the revelation of the Holy One below. What's the difference? In Kabbalah, it is the two aspects of God, masculine and feminine, united, that bring redemption.

This is the only mention of Moshe in the seder.

3rd mention of the plagues:

and with wonders – this is the blood, like what is said: *And I will put my wonders in the skies and in the land, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.*

4th mention of the plagues:

Another word: *and with a strong hand* – two, *and with a stretched-out arm* – two, *and with great fearsomeness* – two, *and with signs* – two, *and with wonders* – two.

We count them and list them:

These are the ten blows (plagues) that the Holy One brought on the Egyptians in Egypt, and these were:

Spill a drop of wine, or remove a drop with your little finger for each plague.

Blood – *Dam*, Frogs – *Ts'fardeya*, Lice – *Kinim*, Mixture – *Arov*, Pestilence – *Dever*, Boils – *Sh'chin*, Hail – *Barad*, Locusts – *Arbeh*, Darkness – *Choshekh*, Striking down the Firstborn – *Makat B'khorot*.

R' Yehudah would make word-signs / *simanim* out of them: *Datsakh, Adash, B'achav*.

Multiplying the plagues:

R' Yosi the Galilean says: From where would you say (interpret) that the Egyptians in Egypt were struck with ten, and on the sea they were struck with fifty blows? In Egypt what does it say? *And the sorcerers said unto Pharaoh: It is the finger of God.* And on the sea what does it say? *And Israel saw the great hand which YHVH acted with (against) Egypt, and the people feared YHVH, and they believed in YHVH and in Moshe His servant.* How many strikes with a finger? Ten strikes. From now say: In Egypt they were struck with ten blows, and on the sea they were struck with fifty blows.

R Eli'ezer says: From where would you say that for each and every blow which the Holy One brought on the Egyptians in Egypt there were four blows? For it is said: *And against them were sent His burning anger, and passion and fury and trouble, from the emissaries of evils.* *His burning anger* – one, *Passion* – two, *and fury* – three, *and trouble* – four. From now say: In Egypt they were struck with forty blows, and on the sea they were struck with two hundred blows.

R' Akiva says: From where would you say (interpret) that for each and every blow which the Holy One brought on the Egyptians in Egypt there were five blows?

The leader in a Sefardi seder will pour out some wine for each plague into a bowl. Almost the whole rest of the cup is poured out at the intonation of Makat b'khorot.

Why do the rabbis do these mathematical tricks with the plagues? Are they trying to outdo each other? Convince themselves of God's power?

For it is said: *And against them were sent His burning anger, and passion and fury and trouble, from the emissaries of evils. His burning anger – one, passion – two, and fury – three, and trouble – four, from the emissaries of evils – five.* From now say: In Egypt they were struck with fifty blows, and on the sea they were struck with two hundred and fifty blows.

Dayeinu

How many goodly elevations/ *ma`alot* by the Place (have come) upon us!

If the One brought us out from Egypt, and did not do judgments with them – It is enough for us! *Dayeinu!*

If the One did judgments with them and did not do so with their gods – *Dayeinu!*

If the One did with their gods and did not kill their firstborn – *Dayeinu!*

If the One killed their firstborn and did not give us their wealth/*mamon* – *Dayeinu!*

If the One gave us their wealth and did not split the sea for us – *Dayeinu!*

If the One split the sea for us and did not make us pass through on dry land – *Dayeinu!*

If the One made us pass through on dry land and did not drown our oppressors in its midst – *Dayeinu!*

If the One drowned our oppressors in its midst and did not stop our needing in the wilderness/desert forty years – *Dayeinu!*

If the One stopped our needing in the wilderness/desert forty years and did not feed us manna – *Dayeinu!*

If the One fed us manna and did not give us Shabbat – *Dayeinu!*

If the One gave us Shabbat and did not bring us near before Mt. Sinai – *Dayeinu!*

If the One brought us near before Mt. Sinai and did not give us the Torah – *Dayeinu!*

If the One gave us the Torah and did not make us enter the land of Israel – *Dayeinu!*

If the One made us enter the land of Israel and did not build for us the chosen House (Temple) – *Dayeinu!*

Beyond each one, how very much more so, is goodness doubled and redoubled by the Place for us...

*Would any of these really be enough?
Would we say, having come to the sea
but not crossed, at least we witnessed
the revelation of God's power? Or is
it that we should recognize the
miracle at each step?*

For the One brought us out from Egypt, and did judgments with them and did with their gods, and killed their firstborn and gave us their wealth, and split the sea for us and made us pass through on dry land, and drowned our oppressors in its midst, and stopped our needing in the wilderness/desert forty years and fed us manna, and gave us Shabbat, and brought us near before Mt. Sinai and gave us the Torah, and made us enter the land of Israel and built for us the chosen House (Temple) to atone for our sins.

Rabban Gamliel would say: Anyone who did not say these three things on Pesach has not gone out from the hand/grip of their obligation, and these are: *Pesach*, *Matsah*, and *Maror*.

Pesach: *Pesach* that our ancestors ate in the time when the sanctifying House (Temple) was standing, because of what? Because the Holy One *pasached/* skipped over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, as it is said: *And you all will say: a sacrifice of Pesach it is for YHVH, who skipped/ pasach-ed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt in His plaguing Egypt, and our houses the One rescued. And the people revered and bowed down.*

This verse comes before any of the plagues, when the people first learn that God is going to redeem them. They are still, as it were, innocent of the plagues and terror which they will soon witness.

Matsah: This *matsah* that we are eating, because of what? Because their dough did not stop to rise/become *chamets* before/until there was revealed over them the King of the king of kings, the Holy One, blessed be, who redeemed them, as it is said: *And they baked the dough which they brought out from Egypt, cakes of matsot, for it didn't rise/ become chamets, for they were driven from Egypt, and they couldn't linger/hesitate, and also provisions/hunt they didn't make for themselves.*

The matsah of leaving Egypt. This is the first step in the transformation of matsah from symbol of slavery to a symbol of freedom.

Maror: This *maror* that we are eating, because of what? Because the Egyptians made bitter the lives of our ancestors in Egypt, as it is said: *And they made bitter their lives with stiff/hard servitude/service/`avodah, with mortar and bricks and with all `avodah in the field, all their `avodah with which they served them b'farekh/ with force.*

4th Ba'avur zeh:

In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as if they went out from Egypt, as it is said: *And you will tell to your child in that day, Because of this YHVH acted for me in my going out from Egypt / Ba'avur zeh `asah li YHVH b'tseiti mimitsrayim.* Not only our ancestor alone did the Holy One redeem, blessed be. Rather, even us the One redeemed with them, as it is said: *And us He brought from there, in order to bring us, to give to us the land that was sworn to our ancestors.*

Lift the cup:

Therefore are we obligated to give thanks, to praise, to extol, to beautify, to exalt, to adorn, to bless, to raise up, and to be jubilant to the One who did for our ancestors and for us all these miracles, who brought us out from slavery/ `avdut to freedom/ cherut, from agony to joy, from mourning to holyday/good day, from thick darkness to great light, from servitude to redemption. And (so) we will day before the One a new song, *Hal'luyah!* Praise *Yah!*

Here we say the first two Psalms of Hallel, and then bless:

Hal'luyah! Hal'lu `avdei YHVH/Adonai, hal'lu et sheim Adonai. Y'hi sheim Adonai m'vorakh mei`atah v`ad `olam. Mimizraach mishemesh `ad m'vo'o m'hulal sheim Adonai. Ram `al kol goyim Adonai, `al hashamayim k'vodo. Mi kardonai Eloheynu hamagbihi lashevet. Hamashpili lir'ot bashamayim uva'arets? M'kimi mei`afar dal, mei`ashpot yari evyon, l'hoshivi `im n'divim, `im n'divi `amo. Moshivi `akeret habayit, eim habanim s'meikhah. Hal'luyah!

B'tseit Yisrael mimistrayim beit Yaakov mei`am lo`ez Haytah Y'hudah l'kodsho, Yisra'el memsh'lotav Hayam ra'ah v'yanos, hayarden yisov l'achor Heharim rak'du k'eilim, g'va'ot kiv'nei tson Mah l'kha hayam ki tanus, hayarden tisov l'achor Heharim tirk'du k'eilim, g'va'ot kiv'nei tson Milifnei Adon chuli arets, milif'ney Eloah Yaakov Hahofkhi hatsur agam mayim, chalamish l'ma'yno mayim

Here is the climax of the seder, and the final time we mention "Ba'avur zeh" – when we hopefully understand the lesson: We must not include ourselves by excluding others. And we cannot exclude others if we truly become part of the story. That can only happen when we are telling a story about the past. Here, we become present in the story, like the child, witnessing, experiencing. God-willing lesson learned.

And only at this point can we know truly what is our obligation, what it means to give thanks.

Rachtzah *Barukh atah YHVH/Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha`olam asher kid'shanu b'mitsvotav v'tsivanu `al n'tilat yadayim.*
Blessed be You, YHVH our God ruler of all space and time, who made us holy through commandments, and commanded us about uplifting hands.

Motsi *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha`olam hamotsi lechem min ha'arets*
Blessed be You...who brings out bread from the land.

Matsah *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha`olam asher kid'shanu b'mitsvotav v'tsivanu `al akhilat matsah.*
Recline and eat Blessed be You...who commanded us about eating *matsah*.

Maror *Barukh atah Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha`olam asher kid'shanu b'mitsvotav v'tsivanu `al akhilat maror*
Don't recline – it's the taste of slavery! Blessed be You...who commanded us about eating *maror*.
Maror gets dipped in charoset

Koreikh A remembrance of the *Mikdash/ Holy/Sanctifying Place*, according to Hillel. So did Hillel in the time that the sanctifying House/ *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple) was standing. He would sandwich *matsah* and *maror* together (with the Pesach lamb) to make stand what is said: *On matsot and bitters you will eat it.*

3rd mention of matsah

Shulkhan Orekh *Enjoy the meal, sing, discuss, make it a symposium on freedom – freedom then and freedom now. How can we bring freedom into this world? How can we release people who are enslaved? How are we still enslaved?*
Serve the meal

Afikoman This time we eat *matsah* either without words
4th mention/use of matsah (*Ashkenazim*), with we say (*Sefardim*), “A remembrance of the Pesach sacrifice, that was eaten full.”

Everyone gets some of the broken piece of matsah – the bread of slavery and some of the top piece – the bread of leaving Egypt.

The charoset is there to lessen the bitterness or burning, or, to remember the apple/ tapuach, where the Israelite women seduced the men and where they gave birth, or to remember the mud used to make bricks, or to remember the blood.

Koreikh is the matsah of the Temple, the redemption of the past, which didn't last. It is sweet and bitter, and so we eat it with maror, and with charoset. Everyone should get some of the bottom matsah for the sandwich

The afikoman is the fourth matsah, the hidden one, the missing half, the bigger half that completes what is broken. It is the matsah of redemption and “we don't know what we will serve Hashem with until we come there” – so we have no words to explain it. It is the matsah that we will eat in the days and nights of Mashiach – which we let ourselves eat and savor even now.