

The **Attached** *לדרכה בו*
Haggadah

LEV & ROSENBLUM EDITION



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נרצה

לדבקה בו

The
Attached
Haggadah

RABBI YAKOV DANISHEFSKY

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This Haggadah is dedicated to:

My parents

who showed me a story of Judaism and Hashem that is pure,
wholesome, and beautiful.

My Rebbe,

Rav Moshe Weinberger, shlita,

who showed me the story within the story.

The Rebbe,

Rav Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern, shlita,

who showed me the story beyond the story.

And to

Dana,

with whom I am living the story.

Congregation Aish Kodesh
of Woodmere

351 Midwood Road
Woodmere, N. Y. 11598
516 - 569-2660

RABBI MOSHE WEINBERGER



קהילת אש קודש דוודמיר

הרב משה וויינבערגער
מרא דאתרא

ב"ה

י"ב טבת תשפ"ו

The Haggadah Shel Pesach has accompanied us through our long years of golus. And yet, more than ever, as we stand on the cusp of our final redemption, it demands to be heard anew. בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים. The Baal HaTanya urges us to see ourselves with the eyes of the גאולה, redemption, each and every day of our lives.

In his remarkable commentary, my dear talmid HaRav Yakov Danishefsky, שליט"א, unlocks the ancient words of the Haggadah as a living inner narrative, a journey of consciousness, memory, struggle and spiritual growth. As a serious talmid chochom, a student of Pnimius HaTorah, Reb Yakov is able to engage us in the avodah of יציאת מצרים with sensitivity, depth, and psychological insight. His reflections invite us to engage the Seder not merely as a ritual of recitation, but as a space for honest self-encounter, healing, and renewal. Every word in this commentary is grounded in the depths of Torah and enriched by a profound understanding of the inner life of the human being.

I believe that "The Attached Haggadah" will treat us to a delicious taste of the sweetness of the redemption that is עומד אחר כתלינו.

בי"ב טבת תשפ"ו
אוריאל וויינבערגער



Kehillas Beis David
Ropshitz Pilzno
Anshei 'Ohev Shalom V'Rodef Shalom'

Rabbi Yehoshua Gerzi
5/2 Rechov Tevria
Ramat Shilo – Ramat Beit Shemesh
Eretz Yisrael

With great respect and heartfelt appreciation,

To whom this may concern,

Rabbi Yakov Danishefsky,

I would like to begin by sharing something deeply moving that appears at the opening of this beautiful Haggadah — and I repeat your words here exactly as you wrote them:*

“Most of what you will read here was written between 5:30 and 7:00 a.m., sitting in the back of Yeshivas Brisk in Chicago after the vasikin minyan, over the course of a few months. These were weeks when vasikin was particularly early, and I was half-asleep while writing. I share this because the process itself taught me something important. In those hours, I unintentionally accessed a more authentic form of creativity. I was too tired to track down sources or polish footnotes. Instead, I surrendered to an experiment: to simply sit with the words of the Haggadah and allow them to collide with the world inside of me — my thoughts, feelings, learning, and lived experience.”

When reading this, these words contain so much of the soul of your book.

There is a fundamental question we should ask ourselves: In life, what do I attach myself to? What in life draws my energy, my attention, my devotion? Why do I attach to it? Does this attachment nourish me, or does it diminish me? Does it elevate my life, or does it limit it?

Your opening answers these questions not through theory but through lived example. Your process reveals an attachment to growth, to inner refinement, to creative thought, and to improving the lives of others. This orientation — toward becoming better and helping others become better — carries enormous spiritual weight. It reflects a rare and precious form of attachment, one that generates life, clarity, and blessing.

This simple disclosure of how and when the work emerged reveals a profound spiritual truth: a person's choices, so much of the time, speak louder than declarations of intention. The quiet decision to sit, to write, to listen inwardly while the world still slept — this alone teaches. Many people accomplish much; few share the inner conditions that allowed that accomplishment to unfold. You chose transparency. You

* This excerpt appeared in an earlier draft of this *Haggadah*, which was subsequently edited, but is happily shared here in the context of this *haskamah*.

chose honesty. You allowed the reader to meet not only your ideas but your process.

That choice reflects a deep theme that flows through both this book and your earlier work on attachment. Within our community, many voices express this same living principle in different language:

- We always relate to our relationships in the present moment.
- The quality of our attachments shapes the quality of our life.
- Relationships never freeze; they remain open to renewal and growth.

Beneath all of these expressions lives one fundamental insight: We do not meet the world as it stands — we meet the world as we relate to it. We respond not to reality itself, but to our interpretation of reality.

This realization grants enormous power. Each human being carries this power constantly. Every perception, every emotional response, every act of meaning-making shapes the life that unfolds. The question never concerns whether we possess this power. The question concerns how we choose to use it.

Your description of those early hours in Brisk reveals that choice in its most authentic form. Fatigue removed performance. Stillness removed pretense. Presence allowed truth to surface. What emerged did not come from technique; it flowed from sincerity. That background speaks volumes about you as a person a healer and as a teacher.

Your reflections on the Haggadah resonate deeply with the human experience. They touch longing, struggle, hope, memory, growth, and return. They speak to the inner life of every reader who has ever asked what freedom truly means. Thank you for offering those mornings after Shacharit to this work. Those hours now breathe through these pages and will continue to breathe through the lives they touch.

May you continue moving from strength to strength. May your words awaken hearts. May the goodness that rises from this work circulate outward — into homes, into conversations, into decisions, into acts of kindness. May the energy this book generates participate in shaping a world that shines with greater beauty, depth, and wonder.

With gratitude and blessing, May your path remain illuminated, and may your work continue revealing the hidden light within the ordinary moments of life.

Yehoshua Gerzi, written here in Eretz Yisrael

2 Shevat 5786, the yahrtzeit of my forbearer, Rebbe Meshulam Zusha of Anapoli



We offer this dedication with profound gratitude and humility, as two loyal and devoted תלמידים whose lives have been forever shaped by the fearless leadership and soulful guidance of our Reb Yakov. Through his writings, teachings, and classes, he has gifted us far more than knowledge — he has given us clarity, direction, and a living Torah. With rare precision and heart, he distills the infinite depth of Torah into the most delicious, accessible, and inspiring truths — teachings that do not remain on the page or in the mind, but penetrate the soul and guide how one actually lives. His words awaken courage, honesty, and responsibility.

Nowhere is Reb Yakov's approach to Torah more evident than in the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, which this Haggadah reveals not only as our distant history but as the eternal blueprint for every challenge, constriction, and inner exile we face. With remarkable depth, he uncovers the פנימיות of our sacred past and shows how the journey from bondage to freedom is meant to be lived again and again in the present.

This dedication accompanies the publishing of Reb Yakov's Haggadah — a work he humbly describes as a stream of consciousness and personal experience, offered as an invitation for others to enter and share in. True to who he is, it becomes not merely a text but an encounter: a doorway into presence, truth, and a deeper connection with the Creator.

May all readers be blessed with the mindfulness to experience inner strength and peace, and merit the Geulah - B'Mehera B'Yameinu.

With deep love, gratitude, and full hearts,

***Aveeshi & Tami Lev and Family
Yitzy & Emmie Rosenblum and Family***

Dedicated in loving memory of Bernice Baboushkin

ברי"ע דבורה בת אשר הכהן

A woman who faced the vicissitudes of life
with grace and perseverance, to build a rich and vibrant life.

Possessing a dynamic spirit, finding joy and expression
both actively on the golf course
and creatively through needlepoint and sculpting.

She deeply cherished her children and grandchildren.

A beautiful woman is who deeply missed.

***May this dedication be
an aliyah for her neshama.***

לעילוי נשמת יעקב יוסף בן נתן נטע

שיחי'ו זעכוס פאר אונדערע פאמיליע,

אסתר רייזל בת פערעל
חיים יצחק משה בן איטה
עליזה בת אסתר רייזל
נאווה בת עליזה
קלונימוס קלמן בן בילא
יעקב יוסף בן נאווה
חנה בת נאווה
חיה רוזא בת נאווה
פסח בן נאווה
שירה ליבה בת נאווה

אברהם בן עליזה
יוכבד בת עליזה
נתן נטע בן שרה
חנה רחל בת יוכבד
יעקב יוסף בן יוכבד
פייגה בת יוכבד
ישראל מאיר בן עליזה
מרים אפרת בת עליזה
מנחם צבי בן רחל
נתן אלעזר בן מרים אפרת

Elisa and Chaim Mermelstein



In honor of

Moishe and Avital Gottesman

&

Aryeh and Elisheva Polstein

May their mesirat nefesh to move to Eretz Yisrael
inspire the Chicago chevra to come home

Tirtza and Danny Vize

מכל מלמדי השכלתי
ומבני יותר מכולם

In honor of our son,

Yakov ג'י,

With tremendous pride



Thank you to Rabbi Danishefsky for all you do for the Chicago
community and Klal Yisrael.

We'd like to dedicate to our children
for their continued growth today and in the years ahead.

Jon and Yael Erlich



In honor of

Meira, Kevi, and Lili

learning Attached!

Keep it up!

Moshe and Liz Freedman



To a friend we deeply admire and hold close.
Your light, your strength, and the way you lift others
never go unnoticed. Keep the flame burning
and continue lighting up the world — it needs exactly what you bring.

Moishe and Avital Gottesman

In appreciation of Rabbi Danishefsky and his deep Torah devotion in learning and disseminating Torah values. And In honor of our children. In the merit of the machashava learned in Rabbi Danishefsky's Sefer, may it be a merit of Bracha and Good Mazel for our children and for all of Klal Yisrael. May we merit to witness the final and complete Geulah!

Chaim & Leora Grinspan



In honor of our grandparents:

Tibor and Sara Hartman

Wilfred and Lois Lefkovich

Reuven and Rivka Brank

Rav Yisrael Chaim and Rivka Freedman

David and Chaya Tova Hartman



Dedicated in honor of KFT

Mark and Penina Hartman



In honor of

Rabbi Danishefsky,

for the healing of the soul, returning to our true freedom!

Keep spreading the light and helping people
feel more connected to Hashem!

Aaron & Malka Stefansky

Yossi and Zahava Berger
Noam and Daniella Domsky
Corey and Mimi Fuchs
Daniel and Amy Gibber
Jonathan Gibber
Sam and Liz Neumark
Efraim and Brittany Prero
Michael and Avigail Rom
Ari and Shana Shabbat
Jon and Ilana Uretsky
Akiva and Chani Ungar
Ahron and Megan Wulkan

L'iluy nishmas

Avraham ben Yitzchak

L'iluy nishmas

Bayla Yenta bas R' Yisroel

L'iluy nishmas

Cittel bas Shmuel Leib

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Mah Nishtanah Haggadah Zu: Why Use This Haggadah?

Pesach is not only a holiday; it is a journey. The *Seder* night is not meant to be a lecture or a performance, but an immersion — a lived drama of personally and collectively leaving bondage. It is a night of movement — from silence to song, from bitterness to sweetness, from tears to laughter, from servitude to freedom. The *Haggadah* is our script, but it is not a script to be recited. It is a script to be experienced.

And yet, for some, the *Seder* can feel promising and then disappointing. Children dutifully recite questions from their binders. The gestures — leaning, covering, uncovering, pouring — are performed, but often don't deliver the feelings they are "supposed" to. We speak about freedom but we may not actually taste it.

This, however, is not a failure of the *Haggadah*. It is a mistake in our approach.

There is a world of difference between forcing ourselves into the *Seder* versus entering into dialogue with the *Seder*. Forcing ourselves into the *Seder* means arriving with a script already written — knowing in advance what each step is supposed to mean, how we are supposed to feel, and which insights we are supposed to walk away with. Placing ourselves in dialogue with the *Seder* means arriving as we actually are — excited or not excited, tired, curious, distracted, joyful, restless, cynical, or searching — and allowing the *Seder* to meet us there, to speak to us, and to work on us.

There is a profound difference between saying, "This is the part where I should feel free," and saying, "I don't feel free right now, but I will bring that feeling into the act of leaning and see what happens." The second way is honest. The second way is alive with tension. And that is where the journey begins.

In other words, instead of saying, "I can't lean because I don't connect with it," or "I must lean and feel free when I lean," this

approach says: “What does it mean to lean when I’m feeling checked-out?” or “What happens when I take my checked-out feeling and bring it into the experience of leaning?” Such an experience honors both one’s self and halachah because it preserves the authenticity of both. It gives importance to both the subjective and the objective, the internal and the external. And it believes that something powerful can emerge when we engage them in conversation with each other. Sometimes, the internal and the external will coincide and seamlessly align with one another. At other times, they will conflict and contradict each other. When this happens, it may feel less than ideal, but this is where creativity, insight, and transformation are born.

The *Haggadah* tells us: “In every generation, a person must see themselves as if they are leaving Mitzrayim.” This seeing is not about pretending and it is not about straining to manufacture an emotion that doesn’t arise. It is about imagination, presence, and entering the story from wherever you are and letting the story carry you. You don’t begin with point B. You begin with point A — the truth of this moment, in this year, in this life — and take a leap of trust into the *Seder* to see where it takes you.

In truth, this is the deepest freedom of all: the freedom to be authentic. To sit at the *Seder* table as the weary parent, the distracted teen, the burnt-out host, the skeptical adult, the searching soul, or the excited enthusiast — and to know that you are wanted. This is *Yetzias Mitzrayim*: the belief that I don’t have to exile myself from myself in order to walk out of Mitzrayim.

This idea is reflected in the finale of the *Seder*: *Nirtzah* — Wanted. At the culmination of the night, after all the cups of wine and all the retellings, what remains is this: Hashem wants you. Not the perfect version you wish you could be, but the hardworking version of raw authenticity that you are. He doesn’t want the mass-produced product we sometimes try to churn out through the *Seder*. He wants you. The trying version of you. That is enough. That is what He wants.

This approach — treating the *Seder* as an honest dialogue between our inner world and the *Haggadah* — is the heart of what makes this

commentary unique. As you read, don't treat these pages as answers, but as prompts, openings. Let each piece stir your thoughts, memories, and emotions, and bring them into conversation with the words of the *Haggadah*. That is how this work is meant to be used.

This *Haggadah* is not a collection of questions and answers, inspirational insights, or linguistic analyses. Instead, it is an attempt to open worlds: worlds of inner experience, oceans of contemplation, and at times, even the whirlwinds of confusion that real spiritual work often brings.

This work is a fusion of Torah, Chazal, Chassidus, psychology, and the lived experience of being human — living in and leaving Mitzrayim, carrying wounds, searching for healing, and yearning for connection. It is meant to be layered: sometimes raw, sometimes hopeful, sometimes challenging. But above all, it is meant as an invitation to be real.

The commentary in this *Haggadah* emerged from my own experience of the dialogical approach described above. For this reason, I chose not to include sources or footnotes. Instead of tracking down references, I surrendered to a different kind of process: sitting with the words of the *Haggadah* and allowing them to collide with the world inside me — my thoughts, feelings, learning, and lived experience. When I allowed the text and my inner life to meet one another honestly, something began to unfold.

Sometimes that encounter began with fireworks. There was synchrony in the flow and exchange of ideas. The words of the *Haggadah* and my inner world opened each other up, giving rise to new insights and perspectives. It was a surreal experience. At other times, it began in silence. The words of the *Haggadah* and my inner state did not speak to each other at all. My experiment, then, was simply to sit with that silence and see what might emerge. And there were also times when the meeting began in conflict — when the *Haggadah* and my inner state encountered each other with resistance or opposition. It was specifically by honoring and making space for all three of these experiences — flow, silence, and conflict — that something authentic came to life.

What you are reading is the result of that process — the ideas that rose to the surface when the objective words of the *Haggadah* encountered the fluid reality of my human experience.

To be clear, this approach does not advocate for glorifying ignorance or for a lackadaisical approach to interpreting Jewish texts. There is, of course, profound importance to the traditional methodologies that work rigorously through earlier sources and demand proof texts for new ideas. I am not suggesting to reject that approach, but to complement it with another form of engagement. Furthermore, I do not view these two approaches as contradictory. On the contrary, the more a person learns Torah through its classical sources and interpretations, the more those ideas live inside them — shaping their inner world, intuition, and way of thinking, even when they are not consciously recalling a specific text. When Torah lives within a person's psyche, it allows for a richer, fuller, and more multidimensional experience of the approach this *Haggadah* is inviting.

Lastly, one of the core features of this way of engaging is the understanding that each encounter with a text or mitzvah is genuinely new. The world inside of me may be different this year than it was last year; it may even be different now than it was an hour ago. As a result, the meaning I discover in the words before me will naturally differ as well — in the moment, in the past, and again in the future. It is said that the writings describing the Arizal's explanations of the inner meanings of *davening* and mitzvos reflected his understanding on a given day, and that on another day, those explanations might have been different. The engagement was alive, and so was the Torah that emerged from it.

In that light, my hope is not that you walk away with my conclusions. My hope is to offer a *form*, a way of approaching Torah and mitzvos. I am inviting you to take this stance — of honest, internal dialogue — and use it to arrive at your own conclusions. I urge you to try engaging the fixed content of Torah not from a distance, but from within the shifting truth of your inner world, not only in the *Haggadah*, but in all of Jewish living.

Too often, Jewish life gets flattened into one of two extremes: pure subjectivity or rigid objectivity. Some discard the authority and authenticity of Torah in favor of their feelings alone. Others turn mitzvos and texts into something so programmed that there is no room left for the human experience. Both miss something vital.

The Judaism of this *Haggadah* — the Judaism I believe in — is a Judaism of dialogue: a living conversation between your inner world and the objective practices and texts of our tradition. When you allow that conversation to unfold honestly, something remarkable emerges.

That is my hope for you as you read. May this *Haggadah* draw you not only into the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, but into the story of your own inner exodus.

As you move through the *Seder*, allow the words, rituals, silences, and tensions to meet you where you actually are. Notice when there is resonance, when there is quiet, and when there is friction. Stay present through all of it. If you do, you may find that the *Haggadah* begins to speak back — and that a living conversation, uniquely yours, will begin to unfold.

A Haggadah for Our Generation — The Final Watch of the Night

The section above lays out the unique approach this *Haggadah* takes to the *Seder* and to Jewish life. What follows shows why that approach speaks so deeply to our generation. It offers an understanding of the broader Torah framework behind the stance of inner honesty and dialogue that this work invites.

This *Haggadah* is written for our generation — the one that lives closer to its inner world than any before it. The one that feels more, notices more, and is often overwhelmed by more. We are the generation whose struggles are less about physical survival and more about emotional and spiritual coherence (this has changed somewhat since October 7, but is still largely true). Our questions are not only halachic or philosophical, but deeply human: How do I live with my mind? With my marriage? With my children? With my fears? With Hashem?

Many explanations are offered as to why our world has shifted inward: social media, technology, exposure, pressure, affluence, processed food, the pace of modern life. Each holds some truth, but none of them are the cause. They are only the *keilim*, the vessels. There is only one cause: *ratzon Hashem*, the will of G-d. This is what Hashem wants the world to look like right now. This is the terrain He chose for us to inhabit. Once we understand that, everything changes. Our struggles are no longer unfortunate byproducts of modernity; instead, they are sacred callings and responsibilities. What once seemed *b'di'eved*, a deviation from the ideal, becomes *l'chatchilah*, the very purpose of our generation's *avodah*. Our inner world is not getting in the way. It is the way.

That shift — from *b'di'eved* to *l'chatchilah* — is the quiet revolution of our time. When something is *b'di'eved*, we tolerate it. We say, “It’s not supposed to be this way, but we’ll manage.” We speak of mental health, emotional pain, and relationship work as if they are distractions from real *avodas Hashem*, obstacles we must clear before returning to holiness. But when we recognize this inner work as Hashem’s chosen arena for our generation, it becomes transformed. It is no longer “the unfortunate mess we have to fix,” but the very way Hashem wants to be served today. Our emotions, our relationships, our self-awareness are Torah itself, refracted through the light of today.

Every generation in Jewish history has been assigned a different aspect of the *tzelem Elokim*, the Divine image, to refine. The *sefarim hakedoshim* describe history as one continuous emergence of the *komah sheleimah*, the complete human form of *Klal Yisrael*. Each era is tasked with perfecting a particular limb or organ in that great spiritual body. There were generations that repaired the intellect through philosophy, others that focused on the precision of halachic action, and still others that cultivated communal discipline or mystical revelation. Each of those eras had a precise calculation driving it; each was the form Hashem’s *ratzon* took in that moment.

And now, the light has turned toward the heart. The Torah in our time is strongly reflected in the *lev*. It is the same eternal painting —

as not even one of its strokes or colors can ever be changed, *chas v'shalom* — but it has been reframed, illuminated through new lighting that reveals its innermost colors. And Hashem Himself is the One who adjusted the light.

The Gemara speaks of the three *mishmaros halaylah*, watches of the night, and says that the final watch — the last moment before dawn — is defined as *ishah mesaperes im ba'alah*, a wife speaking with her husband. The night is our journey through the darkness of exile. It has been a very long night. And at the end of this very, very long night, moments before dawn, when the light of redemption begins to rise, there is one last *avodah*: the husband listening to his wife. The man listening to the woman. The masculine listening to the feminine. This describes an inner relationship: the meeting of our own inner masculine and feminine voices, the encounter between the part of us that acts and the part that feels, between our strength and our vulnerability.

For thousands of years, our *avodah* was dominated by the masculine pole — intellectual, action-oriented, outward. But at the end of the night, *ishah mesaperes im ba'alah* — the feminine speaks more loudly and the masculine must listen. Our feelings, sensitivities, insecurities, and relational needs are surfacing more readily.

Chazal say: בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממרים — *In each and every generation, a person must see themselves as having left Mitzrayim*. This means that every generation needs its own *Haggadah*.

This *Haggadah* is written uniquely for our generation — the *mishmar acharon* that is ready to enter its inner world more deeply than ever before. It is a *Haggadah* for those who feel more, experience more, and feel unfulfilled with a *Seder* of intellectual analysis or drive-by rituals. This is a *Haggadah* for people who understand that our tears, our joys, our therapy, our questions, our marriages, our sleepless nights, and our personal victories are not distractions from Torah but its current manifestation.

By turning to our inner world, we are not fixing an unfortunate situation; we are answering a calling. This is not the tragic side effect of modern life. This is the Torah of *mishmar acharon*, the last watch

before dawn, when the voice of the heart becomes the language of *avodah*. And if we listen, if we let that voice speak, we may yet find ourselves whispering the first words of morning: “*Modeh Ani*.” The night is ending. The heart is speaking. The day is about to break. Let it be soon.

The Inner Child at the Seder (and You)

Before beginning the *Haggadah*, I'd like to offer a brief introduction to one of its central themes. Throughout these pages, we will often use the language of the "inner child" and the idea that each of us contains multiple "parts" of ourselves. For some, this may feel familiar. For others, it may be entirely new. In truth, it names something every human being experiences, whether or not we've ever put it into words.

Picture a babushka doll — a single figure made up of many nested selves. When we look at the outermost doll, it seems complete and unified. But inside it sits another self, and inside that, another, and another. Each layer is real. Each layer is a chapter of our story that we once lived. And each layer continues to echo inside us in some way.

In healthy development, many of these inner layers integrate naturally. They mature, soften, and become woven into the fabric of who we are. However, not all parts integrate on their own. Some remain frozen in time. Some were overwhelmed, unheard, or left carrying burdens they couldn't make sense of. These parts didn't disappear. In fact, they often surface later in life as emotional triggers, negative beliefs about one's self or the world, or repetitive patterns of problematic behaviors.

This is why we sometimes react in ways that surprise even ourselves.

The anxious part that anticipates rejection may be thirteen.

The defensive part may be nine.

The ashamed part may be five.

The overwhelmed part may still be the child who wasn't ready for what life demanded.

The "adult self" reading this *Haggadah* is only the outermost doll. Many of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors originate from the layers within — parts that once protected us, interpreted the world, or tried to keep us safe. These parts still speak, still fear, still despair, and still need to be brought out of their Mitzrayim.

Perhaps this is hinted to in a beautiful observation of the Rambam: In Hebrew, the word for “life” — *chayim* — is always written in the plural. Why? Because in life, we are never truly singular. A human being is always a plurality — a collection of selves, integrated and unintegrated, with each one still alive within us. Only Hashem is fully One, indivisible, and without parts. Only about Hashem do we find “life” in the singular.

We, by contrast, are lives within a life.

A babushka doll with many layers.

Chayim.

And so, this *Haggadah* is written with that inner plurality in mind. The *Seder* is a night geared toward every layer of the self, every age, every voice, every forgotten part. Tonight, the goal is to allow even the unintegrated parts — the ones still stuck in their own narrow places — to take a step toward freedom.

Facing each layer of the babushka doll — each part of ourselves — is at the heart of the journey we are about to embark on.

May every layer within us — old and young, integrated and unintegrated, proud and hurting, confused and hopeful — feel seen, held, acknowledged, and appreciated, and ultimately, gently guided toward redemption.

Chodesh Nissan: The Month of Dreaming Beyond the Bounds

In the Beis Hamikdash, two *korbanos* — the *tamid shel shachar* and the *tamid shel bein ha'arbayim* — were brought every single day, without exception. Shabbos or weekday, Yom Kippur or Pesach, rain or shine, the first *korban* of the day was always the morning *tamid*, and the last was always the *tamid* of the afternoon. These were the anchors of the *avodah*, the unchanging frame on which everything else was built.

Everything else — whether it was the *korbanos* of the day, the *mussaf* of Shabbos and Yom Tov, the personal *nedarim* and *nedavos* of individuals inspired to offer something to Hashem, or the *korbanos* brought after illness, birth, or *aveiros* — had to happen between these two anchors. No *korban* could precede the *tamid shel shachar*, and none could follow the *tamid shel bein ha'arbayim*. All the emotion, inspiration, creativity, and color of Jewish life had to live within the framework of consistency.

This structure teaches a profound lesson: In *avodas Hashem*, inspiration must be rooted in reliability. All the extra beauty, meaning, and connection we seek — the powerful highs and moving moments — can only come to life within the context of regularity, structure, and commitment. You can only build a palace if you've laid a foundation.

But then comes Pesach. The *korban Pesach* defies the entire system. It is the only *korban* brought after the *tamid shel bein ha'arbayim*. It is, quite literally, outside the bounds. And that tells us something crucial about this time of year: Pesach is the one moment when we are allowed to transcend boundaries. It is the time when Hashem gives us permission to leap. To skip over. To dream.

This is what the word “Pesach” means — to pass over, to jump, to defy gravity. Pesach is not about staying within our limits. It's about entering a different kind of space — a space where we're invited to imagine something bigger, something deeper, something impossible.

The *Seder* night is the most radical mitzvah in that way. It is perhaps the only mitzvah that is fulfilled specifically in the middle of the night, at the time we are usually asleep, dreaming. Perhaps this is because the *Seder* is meant to be a dream — a conscious dream. We are meant to dream while awake.

Because this is what believing in *geulah* really means. It means knowing that the reality in front of us isn't the only version of reality. That what looks like the end is never the end. That what feels fixed and final can, at any moment, flip.

This is why, on the night of the *Seder*, we are meant to dream: What kind of person can I be? What kind of home can I build? What kind of *tefillah* might I someday *daven*? How can my difficulties be healed, possibly even transformed?

And yet, dreams come with pain. Anyone who has ever dreamed knows the heartbreak of broken promises to ourselves. Relationships we were determined to fix still remain shattered. Shelves of *sefarim* we were inspired to learn sit unopened. Grand intentions to change never amounted to anything beyond intentions. How many times can we dream without giving up?

But the plot thickens when we realize that life without dreams is even more painful than the pain of unfulfilled dreams. So what do we do if we can't dream but we also can't stop dreaming?

Here enters *birchas ha'ilanos* and saves us. This is a *brachah* we ideally say during the month of Nissan when we see the budding of the fruit trees. The halachah is to say this *brachah* when we see the first signs of growth — not the fruit, just the buds. In this *brachah*, we bless Hashem for creating nothing lacking in His world — *shelo chisar b'olamo klum* — and for giving us trees and beauty to enjoy.

The Zohar writes that in Nissan, the souls of *tzaddikim* return to this world, nestled in the budding trees. What does that mean? Perhaps it means that all our past dreams — all those small inner *tzaddikim* we gave life to in moments of longing — are not lost. Maybe they're not failures, but seeds. And when we see the budding of the tree, we remember that nothing is ever really gone. Every dream that didn't come true still mattered, still left its imprint.

Birchas ha'ilanos teaches us that the value of dreaming is not only in the actualization of a dream. It is also, and perhaps even more so, in the dream itself. To dream is to remain alive in an otherwise bleak reality. To dream is to believe, breathe, and stay engaged. The value of the dream is the dream itself.

Hashem does not ask us to fulfill all of our dreams. What He asks is, “*Tzipisa l'yeshuah?* Did you yearn for redemption? Did you keep dreaming?”

This is why Dasan and Aviram were part of the one-fifth of the Jewish people who were redeemed from Mitzrayim, despite being the least likely candidates to be saved. They were taken out because they never stopped believing that redemption could come.

Nissan is the month of miracles; “*nes*” is in the name itself. It’s the month when Hashem didn’t just change the rules of nature; He taught us that the realm of possibility is bigger than what we see and even bigger than what we can imagine.

Chazal debate whether the world was created in Tishrei or Nissan. The commentaries explain that both are true. Tishrei is the creation of the physical world — order, nature, the predictable cycles of seven. But Nissan is the creation of the miraculous world — the birth of *Klal Yisrael*, and the opening of the eighth dimension, where more is possible. That is why the eighth day of the Mishkan’s inauguration, described in *Parashas Shemini*, took place on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Nissan is the month of “eight” — of transcendence, of Divine light breaking through the ordinary.

Dreaming is hard and many people have given up dreaming. Certainly, at this moment, there is much darkness and there is reason for pessimism. This is why we so desperately need the month of Nissan and the night of conscious dreaming.

This *Haggadah* is meant to help you dream. Perhaps it will help you reawaken old dreams or even help you find new ones. Either way, my hope is that when *geulah* comes, we will look back and say, “*Hayinu k’cholmim* — We were like dreamers.” Some of our dreams may have come to fruition; most of them probably did not. But we kept on dreaming nonetheless.

Chametz and Matzah

Chametz, we are taught, expresses the ways we carry ourselves taller than we should. Matzah is unleavened; it has not risen the way *chametz* does. It stays low, flat, simple. It is in this “taller self,” the inflated self, that we fall into so many of our temptations. Physical indulgence, ego-driven pursuits, anger, insensitivity to others, disregard for the will of Hashem — all of these rest upon the same pivot point: *chametz* versus matzah, the too-tall self versus the self in service.

But what does it actually mean to be “too tall”?

It does not mean lying to ourselves about who we are. If a person is musically talented, intellectually gifted, naturally empathetic, or has worked hard to accomplish something meaningful, they are not meant to pretend otherwise. Knowing your strengths is not *chametz*. Denying them is not humility.

Chametz-thinking, rather, has three specific components:

1. **Source: Where my qualities come from.** “My qualities are self-generated. I made myself this way. I can take the credit.”
2. **Meaning: What my qualities mean about me.** “My qualities make me fundamentally more special, more valuable, more deserving than others.”
3. **Purpose: What my qualities are for.** “These qualities are mine to use for my own interests, needs, and desires.”

Matzah-thinking contains the same awareness of who I am and what I possess — but understands their **source**, **meaning**, and **purpose** differently.

In matzah-thinking, these three aspects speak an entirely different language:

1. **Source: Where my qualities come from.** “My qualities are gifts from Hashem. More than gifts, they are manifestations of Him. My strength, my wisdom, my empathy are not self-made achievements — they are Divine expressions flowing through me. I am a vessel for these qualities, not their creator.”

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2. Meaning: What my qualities mean about me. “My qualities make me unique, not superior. No one else can bring this particular expression of the Divine into the world the way I can — but every other person carries their own irreplaceable expression. Talent does not make me above; it makes me distinct.”

3. Purpose: What my qualities are for. “My qualities are not here for me. They belong to the One who placed them within me. My job is to channel them in the direction He intends, not toward my own ego or desires.”

This matzah mindset is what Chassidus calls *bitul* — not self-negation, but self-elevation. *Bitul* means removing the ego while still fully experiencing the gifts of self. We still feel our talents, our strengths, our accomplishments — but we feel them as G-dly, not self-made.

This is why *bitul* does not require pretending we are not good at anything or minimizing what we’ve done. Putting ourselves down actually comes from a subtle form of ego. We are telling ourselves: “If I really did have these strengths, then they would be mine... and then I would be more valuable... and then I would deserve to use them for myself.” *Bitul* strips away that entire framework and offers an entirely new perspective: “My strengths surprise me. They amaze me — because I did not create them. Even the capacity to work on myself is a Divine gift. I am simply fortunate enough to be the vessel through which these G-dly qualities appear, just as every other person is in his or her own way.”

And what about those who seem to have fewer gifts than I do? Am I not “better” than them?

In the mindset of *bitul*, this question dissolves. The value of a quality is not in the amount of light it carries, nor in how impressive it appears. Its value is in fulfilling the Divine intention for which it was given. One person may carry one hundred measures of Divine expression, and another may carry one. But the hundred and the one are equally precious — because each is exactly what Hashem intended for that soul to express.

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Pesach is the week in which Hashem resets our *bitul*. *Chametz* is not prohibited all year long. In fact, we serve Hashem all year long with our *chametz* — our full height, our full personality, our creativity and charisma and strength. If we do not express the G-d-given qualities within ourselves, there is a dimension of Divine revelation missing from the world.

We need our *chametz*-selves.

But, first, we need our *chametz* to emerge from within matzah. I, on my own, am flat. Empty. Nothing. Yet through me flows everything that I am — every talent, every strength, every gift — because Hashem chose to express Himself in exactly this way, through exactly this vessel.

In this sense, it is through being matzah that we become *chametz*. And this is why the halachah states that kosher matzah must be made from ingredients that have the ability to become *chametz*. Because the purpose of the matzah mindset is not to lay flat forever. It is to express ourselves as *chametz* from within the matzah — to embody our qualities of self to the fullest, but with the awareness that they are not mine, but His.

For many of us, this matzah-*chametz* sense of self is hard to access. Some of us struggle with a diminished sense of self. We carry a negative self-image — a belief that we do not contain G-dly qualities, that we are not capable of meaning, that we are unfit for love or belonging. These beliefs are not matzah. They may appear flat, but they contain no possibility of rising. They are not humility; they are emptiness. Something that can never become *chametz* can never be matzah either.

Others among us struggle in the opposite direction. We carry a sense of superiority. Almost always subconsciously, without even realizing it, we hold ourselves higher than others. Because of our *frumkeit*, intelligence, wealth, cultural standing, or accomplishments, we feel taller, more valuable, a little more deserving than others. This is the *chametz* the Torah warns us about on Pesach.

In both cases — whether we feel lower than we should or higher than we should — there is a disconnect from our true self and a disconnect

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from Hashem. The story of the *Haggadah* is the story of returning to the healthy experience of matzah: discovering the true humility that contains the potential to rise, and allowing the self to meet its Source. Eventually, this leads to the healthy and holy experience of *chametz*: the self that re-emerges as elevated but not haughty, as *chametz* that is rooted in matzah and therefore knows its true Source and purpose.

בדיקת חמץ

On the eve of the fourteenth of Nissan, a search for chametz is conducted. When the fourteenth of Nissan falls out on Shabbos, the search is conducted on Thursday — the thirteenth of Nissan. The search is performed at the beginning of the night. One may not begin eating or doing any form of labor from a half hour before nightfall until after the search.

Before searching for chametz, some say the following:

הַרְיֵנוּ מוֹכֵן וּמוֹזְמֵן לְכָל מַצּוֹת עֲשָׂה וְלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁל בְּדִיקַת חָמֵץ (לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קִדּוּשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשִׁבְיִנְתִּיהָ עַל יְדֵי תְּחִוּא מְמִיר וְנִעְלָם בְּשֵׁם בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְיִתִּי נֹעַם אֲרָנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֶׂה יְרֵינוּ בּוֹנֵנָה עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֶׂה יְרֵינוּ בּוֹנֵנָה:)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל
בִּיעוּר חָמֵץ:

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Bedikas Chametz

Chametz, as explained above, refers to all the ways in which we disconnect ourselves from our true Source and purpose. *Bedikas chametz* is the attempt to search through all the areas of our lives — both outside and inside — where *chametz* may be lurking. The Gemara tells us that this search must be done with a candle, not with a larger flame or torch, for four reasons. Each of these reasons is a guide for how to do the inner work that *bedikas chametz* invites us to explore:

1. It Enters Holes and Cracks

The first reason is that a candle, unlike a torch, can reach into the cracks and crevices where *chametz* hides. This teaches us two essential principles in our inner searching.

THE SEARCH FOR CHAMETZ

On the eve of the fourteenth of Nissan, a search for chametz is conducted. When the fourteenth of Nissan falls out on Shabbos, the search is conducted on Thursday — the thirteenth of Nissan. The search is performed at the beginning of the night. One may not begin eating or doing any form of labor from a half hour before nightfall until after the search.

Before searching for chametz, some say the following:

Behold, I am prepared and ready to fulfill the positive and negative commandments of the searching for *chametz*. (For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and His Divine Presence, through the hidden and concealed One, in the name of all Israel. And may the pleasantness of Hashem, our God, be upon us, and establish our handiwork upon us; may He establish our handiwork.)

Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the elimination of *chametz*.



First, don't expect your *chametz* to reveal itself at first glance. Yes, you may easily notice certain areas of your life that need work, but those are often the surface layers. The real *chametz* lives deeper — in the crevices of our character, in the patterns we ignore, in the stories we don't want to admit. Whatever part of yourself you are most reluctant to examine is likely the part most in need of attention.

Second, you cannot reveal all your *chametz* at once. Don't shine a massive light and expect to expose everything in one sweeping moment. Real change happens slowly, crack by crack, crumb by crumb. A candle teaches us to illuminate one small area at a time.

Upon completing the search, the following nullification of the chametz is recited. Some have the minhag to repeat it three times. If one does not understand the Aramaic passage, he may recite the nullification in any language he understands. In addition, one should be careful to properly dispose of any remaining chametz following the search.

כָּרְ חַמֵּינָא וְחַמֵּינָא דְאִיכָא בְרִשְׁוֹתֵי,
 דְלֹא חֲמִיתִיהּ, וְדְלֹא בְעֵרְתִיהּ,
 וְדְלֹא יִדְעָנָא לִיְהִי, לְכַפֵּיטֵר וְלְחַוֵּי חֶפְקֵךָ
 בְּעֵפְרָא דְאַרְעָא:

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2. Its Light Projects Forward

The second reason is that the light of a candle projects forward, while the light of a torch projects backward. The search for *chametz* is not an exercise in punishing ourselves for the past. It is an opportunity to illuminate the future.

When we search within ourselves, the candle teaches us to do so with optimism. We are not searching for evidence that we are a failure; we are searching for evidence that growth is possible. The candle's forward-facing glow reminds us that every piece of *chametz* we discover opens a doorway to something greater.

3. It Does Not Invoke Fear

The third reason is that if we search with a torch, we will be afraid of starting a fire, whereas a candle does not frighten us. For many people, *cheshbon hanefesh* — the work of taking inner stock — carries a sense of dread. The Gemara is telling us that the inner search for *chametz* does not need to be scary. It can be done with calm presence and gentle honesty. If we approach ourselves with harshness, intensity, or pressure to be perfect, we will freeze, shut down, or avoid the work entirely. The candle