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In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

UNDERSTANDING MAGGID - A biblical Perspective
[revised 5766]
Expression of Gratitude
or
Recogniton of Destiny

Should Passover be understood as our 'holiday of freedom' - when we thank God for taking us out of slavery?

Certainly, the popular song of that we sing towards the beginning of the Seder "avadim hayinu... ata benei chorin" - 'We were once slaves, but now we are free' - seems to state exactly that point.

However, if you *read* your Haggada carefully, you'll notice that those words never appear (in that combination). And if you *study* the Haggada, you'll notice that it states quite the opposite, i.e. that we remain 'servants', but we simply have a new 'boss'!

In the following 'Guide for Maggid', we attempt to arrive at a better understanding of how and why we tell the story of the Exodus. Hopefully, it will ask help make your Seder a little more interesting.

THE SOURCE FOR MAGGID in Parshat Bo

Ask almost anyone, and they'll tell you that the 'source pasuk' for Maggid is: "ve-higadta le-bincha..." (see Shmot13:8). However, that pasuk itself is not so easy to translate.

Let's begin our study by taking a careful look at that pasuk within its context in Parshat Bo, as Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to remember what just happened on the day they left Egypt:

"And Moshe told the people - Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the House of Slavery, for God has taken you out with a strong hand...

[Then, when you come to the land of Israel...]

Eat matza for seven days... and don't see any chametz...
(see Shmot 13:3-7)

Followed by-

"ve-HIGGADETA le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor" -

And you must TELL your son on that day, saying:

BA'AVUR ZEH -

for the sake of this -

ASA Hashem li BE-TZEITI mi-MITZRAYIM -

God did for me [?] when he took me out of Egypt"

(see Shmot 13:8).

Even though we all know this last pasuk by heart, it is not so easy to translate. [Try it yourself, and you'll immediately notice the difficulty.]

Let's begin with the meaning of the word 'zeh' [this]. Based on its context (see 13:6-7), 'zeh' most probably refers to the matzot that we eat, for the previous psukim describe the mitzva to eat matza for seven days. Hence, this pasuk implies that we must tell our children: 'for the sake of this matza - God did for me [these miracles ?] - when I left Egypt'.

Indeed, this commandment instructs us to 'remember' this day by telling something to our children, however, it is not very clear what the Torah wants us to explain.

There are two possible directions of interpretation. Either we must explain to our children:

- **Why God took us out of Egypt** - i.e. to eat matza! -

Or,

- **Why we eat matza** - because God took us out of Egypt!

Even though we are most familiar with the latter reason, the first interpretation seems to be the simple meaning of the pasuk. As you'd expect, the classical commentators argue in this regard.

Ramban (on 13:8) explains (as most of us understand this pasuk), that we eat matza to remember HOW God took us out of Egypt. However Rashi (and Ibn Ezra) disagree!

In his commentary, Ibn Ezra explains (as 'simple pshat' implies) - that God took us out of Egypt IN ORDER that we can eat matza! In other words, Ibn Ezra claims that God intentionally placed Bnei Yisrael in slavery in order to redeem them - to give them a reason to keep His mitzvot.

Rashi provides a very similar explanation, but widens its scope by stating that God took us out of Egypt in order that we would keep ALL of His mitzvot, such as pesach matza & maror.

[Chizkuni offers a similar explanation, with a slightly different twist - i.e. in the ZCHUT (in merit) for our readiness to perform the mitzvot of pesach matza & maror for all generations - God redeemed us from Egypt.]

According to Rashi and Ibn Ezra's understanding of this pasuk, the primary mitzvah at the Seder should be not only to explain to our children **what** happened, but also **why** it happened.

In our study of Maggid, we will show how this specific point emerges as a primary theme - but first must consider where that story - that we are commanded to tell over - should begin.

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

Let's contemplate for a moment where would be the best (or most logical) point to start the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim from. One could entertain several possibilities.

The simplest and most obvious approach would be to begin with Bnei Yisrael's enslavement in Egypt. In fact, this is precisely where Sefer Shmot begins!

On the other hand, one could start a bit earlier with the story of Yosef and his brothers, for that would explain how Bnei Yisrael first came to settle down in Egypt. However, if we continue with that logic, we could go back another generation to the story of Yaakov, or even back to story of Avraham Avinu. [Or maybe even back to the story of Creation!]

This dilemma appears to be the underlying reason behind the Talmudic dispute between Rav and Shmuel. Let's explain:

THE MISHNA in Mesechet PESACHIM

The Mishna in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim sets some guidelines concerning how to fulfill this obligation 'to tell the story', including one that deals with its format:

"matchilim bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" -

- We begin our story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise.

In the Gemara's subsequent discussion (see Pesachim 116a), we find two opinions concerning what this opening comment should be:

- **Rav** - "Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." - At first, our ancestors were idol worshipers..."
- **Shmuel** - "Avadim hayinu..." - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt..."

At the simplest level, it seems that Rav & Shmuel argue concerning what is considered a more derogatory statement- i.e. the fact that we were once slaves, or the fact that we once idol worshipers. However, this dispute may also relate to a more fundamental question - concerning **where** the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim actually begins - from our slavery in Egypt (Shmuel), or from the time of our forefathers (Rav).

In our study of Maggid, we will show how we actually quote both of these opinions, but not as the starting point of the story, but rather as important statements of purpose.

So where does the story begin?

We will now begin our detailed study MAGGID not only to answer that question, but also in an attempt to better understand HOW we fulfill this mitzva of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" when we read the Haggada.

HOW WE [DON'T] TELL THE STORY IN MAGGID

Even though the primary obligation of the Seder evening is to 'tell the story' of Yetziat Mitzrayim, when we read Maggid at the Seder, it is not very clear where that story actually begins (or ends). To determine when, where, and how we actually fulfill this mitzva, we will examine Maggid - one paragraph at a time.

As we study each paragraph, we will ask ourselves: is this part of the story?

If it is, then we can determine how we tell the story.

If it's not, then we must explain why this paragraph is included in Maggid nonetheless.

'HA LACHMA ANYA'

The opening paragraph of MAGGID - 'ha lachma anya..' is definitely not the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, but rather a quick explanation to the guests about the MATZA on the table. Let's explain why:

In the opening sentence, the leader of the Seder explains how this 'special bread' on the table is what our forefathers ate in Egypt; then he quotes what our forefathers said to one another in Egypt as they prepared to partake in the first Korban Pesach.

"kol dichfin..." - reflects how they invited one another to join a common group to eat the korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:3-6);

"hashta hacha..." reflects their expression of hope that by next year they would no longer be slaves in Egypt, but rather a free people living in the land of Israel.

As we will explain later on, this quote of what our forefathers said to one another in preparation for the very first 'seder' in Jewish History is thematically very important, for at the end of Maggid, we will express our need to feel as though 'we were there' ("bchor dor v'dor...")!

Nonetheless, this section is not the story itself – however, it forms a very meaningful introduction.

[See Further Iyun Section for a discussion of the meaning of "lechem oni". Re: how the matza eaten with the 'korban Pesach' had nothing to do with being in a rush, but rather reflected a 'poor man's bread' ["lechem oni"], see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo regarding 'two reasons for matza'.]

MAH NISHTANA

Similarly, the 'ma nishtana' is not part of the story. Rather, we want the children to ask questions to ensure that they will take interest in the story that we are about to tell.

As our obligation to tell this story is based on the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-BINCHA" - and you must tell your children... (see Shmot 13:8), it makes sense that we try to capture their attention before we tell the story. However, as you have surely noticed, this section contains only questions, but no answers.

It should also be noted that these 'four questions' are really one question; i.e. – the **one** question is: 'Why is this night different?' Afterward, the child brings four examples/questions explaining why this night has been different so far.

It is for this reason that we never answer these 'four questions'; Rather, Maggid continues with the answer to the 'one question' – of why this night is special.

'AVADIM HAYINU'

At first glance, the next paragraph: 'avadim hayinu...' seems to begin the story. [In fact, it appears that we have followed Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a) that we should begin the story with 'avadim hayinu'.]

However, if you take a minute to carefully read this entire paragraph, you'll immediately notice that this paragraph does NOT begin the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Instead, the 'avadim hayinu' section makes two very important statements, which provide the answer to the 'one question' of WHY this night is so special. Hence we explain:

- **WHY** we are obligated to tell this story – for had it not been for this story of how God saved us from Egypt, we would still be slaves till this day;

And, then we explain:

- **WHO** is obligated to tell this story - i.e. 've-afilu kulanu

chachamim..' - and even if we [who gather] are all very wise and learned and know the entire Torah, it remains incumbent upon us to tell that story; and the more we elaborate upon it, the better!

From this paragraph, it appears that before we actually tell the story, the Haggada prefers to first discuss some fundamentals relating to the nature of our obligation!

The first statement deals with a fundamental question regarding **why** this story is meaningful to all future generations, even though we will be discussing an event that took place thousands of years earlier.

The second statement comes to counter a possible misunderstanding, based on the source-text of "ve-higgadeta **le-bincha...**" - that this mitzva applies **only** to teaching **children** [i.e. those who never heard this story]. Therefore, before we tell the story, the Haggada must remind us that **everyone** is obligated to discuss the story - even 'know it alls'.

[See Further Iyun section for a more detailed discussion of how to understand this section in light of Devarim 6:20-25.]

MA'ASEH BE-R. ELIEZER...

To prove this second point of the 'avadim hayinu' paragraph (that even 'know it alls' are obligated to tell the story), the next paragraph in MAGGID quotes a story of five great Torah scholars (in fact Tannaim) who gathered for the Seder in Bnei Brak. Even though they certainly knew the story; nonetheless they spent the entire evening (until dawn the next morning) discussing it.

[This reflects a classic format for a Rabbinic statement. First the Rabbis state the obligation [in our case, that everyone is obligated to tell the story - even 'know it alls'] - afterward they support that ruling by quoting a story [in our case, the story of the five scholars who spent the entire evening discussing the story of the Exodus, even though they surely knew it.]

Even though the Haggada does not quote their entire conversation of that evening, the next paragraph does quote one specific discussion. Let's explain why:

AMAR RABBI ELIEZER BEN AZARYA...

The specific discussion that we quote concerns the Biblical source for our **daily** obligation to '**mention**' the story of the Exodus (see Devarim 16:3). In Hebrew, this obligation is commonly referred to as "**zechira**" [to passively remember], in contrast to our 'once a year' obligation at the Seder of "**sippur**" - to actively **tell** the story of the Exodus.

Most likely, the Haggada chose to quote this specific discussion as it relates to the obvious connection between these two mitzvot ("zechira" & "sippur").

One could suggest that the story we tell at the Seder ("sippur") serves as the reference point for our daily mention ("zechira") of the Exodus - when we recite the third 'parshia' of keriyat shema (see Bamidbar 15:41), every morning and evening. To mention this story on a daily basis only becomes meaningful if we first 'tell the story' in full (at least once a year).

Notice however, that we are still discussing the nature of our obligation - but the story itself has not yet begun!

THE FOUR SONS

The next section of MAGGID - beginning with 'baruch ha-Makom', discusses the Four Sons. Here again, we do not find the actual story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, rather another aspect of 'defining our obligation', as this section discusses **HOW** we should tell the story.

This section reflects the statement in the Mishna: "'Ifi da'ato shel ha-ben, aviv melamdo" - based on the level of the child, the parent should teach [the story]. [See Pesachim 116a.]

Based on this dictum, the Haggada quotes a Mechilta, which offers **four** examples of **how** to tell the story to different types of children - each example based on a pasuk in Chumash (where the father answers his son).

The opening statement of this section: 'baruch ha-Makom...' serves as a 'mini' "birkat ha-Torah" [a blessing recited before Torah study], as we are about to engage in the study of a Mechilta - the Midrash on Sefer Shmot. The quote itself begins with "keneged arba banim dibra Torah..."

[For a deeper understanding of this Mechilta, see the TSC shiur on 'The Four Sons' - tanach.org/special/4sons.doc]

This section certainly teaches us HOW to be a 'dynamic' teacher as we tell this story, and adapt it to the level of our audience. However, note once again that the story has yet to begun!

"YACHOL ME-ROSH CHODESH"

In the next section, beginning with: 'yachol me-rosh chodesh...' we discuss yet another aspect of our 'obligation to tell the story' - this time concerning **WHEN** we are obligated. Here, the Haggada quotes an analytical discourse which arrives at the conclusion that the story must be told on evening of the Seder.

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet! [To appreciate the "hava amina" for why one might think that our obligation to 'tell the story' may begin on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, simply review Shmot 12:14 - noting how the phrase "ha'yom ha'zeh" may be refer to either "rosh chodesh" - based on 12:1-2; or to the day that the korban Pesach was offered - i.e. the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, based on 12:6 [and hence "yachol m'b'od yom"].

The drasha concludes instead that the mitzvah can only be fulfilled on the **evening** of the 15th, based on the phrase "ba'yom ha'hu" in Shmot 13:8, in its context to 13:5-7.]

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[At most Seders, probably at least an hour has gone by, but we haven't even begun to tell the story!]

"MI-TCHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA..."

After defining the various aspects of our obligation, it appears that MAGGID finally begins telling the story with the paragraph that begins with "mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." (apparently following Rav's opinion in Pesachim 116a).

If so, it would seem that we actually begin the story with the story of our forefathers [the Avot] and how Avraham grew up within a family of idol worshipers.

However, if you read this paragraph carefully, you'll notice it isn't a story at all. Instead, the Haggada is making a very important **statement**, and then proves that statement with a text-proof from Yehoshua chapter 24.

To appreciate what's going on, let's take a closer look at this statement and its proof.

The Statement:

"Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara.hayu.avoteinu, ve-achshav kirvanu ha-Makom le-**avodato**"

At first, our forefathers were servants to strange gods - but now, God has brought us closer to Him - **[in order] to serve Him!**

The Proof:

"And Yehoshua said to the people: 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt in the past - beyond the River, even Terach - the father of Avraham, and the father of Nachor - and they **served** other gods.

And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Yitzchak.

And I gave unto Yitchak Yaakov and Esav; and I gave Esav mount Seir, to possess it; and Yaakov and his children went down into Egypt" (Yehoshua 24:2-4).

This statement should not surprise us, for once again we find the Haggada emphasizing the point (discussed above) that God chose the people of Israel for a purpose - i.e. to **serve** Him!

However, if you study the quoted text-proof, you'll notice that it only proves the first half of our statement, i.e. that we were once idol worshipers, but it doesn't prove the second half - that God brought us close in order to serve Him.

RE-AFFIRMING BRIT SINAI in Sefer Yehoshua

The solution to this problem is very simple. To show how this quote from Yehoshua proves the second point as well, we simply need to read the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. In that chapter, after teaching a short 'history lesson' (see 24:2-13), Yehoshua challenges the people saying:

"Now - fear the LORD, and **serve Him** in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and **serve ye the LORD.**

And if it seem evil unto you to **serve the LORD**, choose you this day **whom you will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD**" (Yehoshua 24:14-15).

The entire reason why Yehoshua gathered the people in Shchem and reviewed their history was in order to challenge them with this goal - i.e. their willingness to truly serve God. After all, as Yehoshua explains, it was for this very reason that God chose Avraham Avinu. Thus the proof on the second half of the opening statement comes from the continuation of that chapter!

Note as well how the chapter continues, emphasizing over and over again this same theme:

"And the people answered: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for the LORD our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and that did those great signs in our sight...

therefore we also will **serve the LORD**; for He is our God.'

And Yehoshua said unto the people: '**You cannot serve the LORD**; for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins....

And the people said: 'Nay; but **we will serve the LORD.**'

And Joshua said unto the people: 'You are witnesses that **you have chosen God to serve Him.** - And they said: 'We are witnesses.'--

And the people said unto Yehoshua: '**The LORD our God will we serve**, and unto His voice will we hearken.'

So Yehoshua made a **covenant** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem."

[See Yehoshua 24:16-25!]

Hence, the proof for the entire statement of 'mi-tchila...' is found in the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. Most probably, when this section was first composed, the Haggada assumed that its readers were well versed in Tanach, and knew the continuation of that chapter.

[Note as well how psukim that we do quote from Yehoshua (see 24:2-4) form a beautiful summary of Sefer Breishit, as they focus on the key stages of the 'bechira' process.

Should you be looking for something novel to do at your Seder, you could have the participants read from this section. Note as well that Yehoshua 24:5-7 is an excellent (albeit short) review of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.]

This background can help us appreciate how this statement of 'mi-tchila' sets the stage for the story that we are about to tell - for it explains why God originally chose Avraham - i.e. to become the forefather of a nation that will serve Him. The next paragraph of MAGGID will explain its connection to the story that we are about to begin.

"BARUCH SHOMER HAVTACHATO"

In the next paragraph we find yet another 'statement' (and not a story) followed by a proof-text, that relates once again to God's original choice of our forefathers. We will now show how this section explains why the story must begin with Avraham.

Statement:

"Baruch shomer havtachato... - Blessed is He who keeps His promise [of redemption] to Am Yisrael, for God had calculated the end [time for redemption] as He had promised Avraham Avinu at brit bein ha-btarim. As God stated:

Proof:

'Know very well that your offspring will be strangers in a foreign land which will oppress and enslave them for four hundred years. But that nation who will oppress them I will judge, and afterward they will go out with great wealth"
[See Breishit 15:13-18].

In this statement, we thank God for keeping His promise to Avraham Avinu, at "brit bein ha-btarim", to ultimately redeem Bnei Yisrael from their affliction, after some four hundred years.

At first glance, this statement sounds like yet another expression of gratitude. However, when considering its position in Maggid, one could suggest a very different reason for its mention specifically at this point.

Recall how the previous paragraph explained that God had chosen our forefathers to establish a nation to **serve** Him. In order to become that nation, God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu – i.e. "brit bein ha-btarim" - which forecasted the need for Avraham's offspring to first undergo suffrage in 'a land not theirs' in order to become that nation.

In other words, this historical process of slavery, followed by a miraculous redemption, was to serve as a 'training experience' that would facilitate the formation of that nation.

Hence, this paragraph explains why the story of the Exodus must begin with "brit bein ha-btarim" - for our slavery in Egypt was not accidental, rather it was part of God's master plan. In a certain sense, God put us into Egypt - in order to take us out!

As we thank God for fulfilling His promise to Avraham, we are in essence thanking God for His covenant and its purpose, not just for taking us out of Egypt.

Before we tell the story of WHAT happened - we must first explain WHY it happened.

This point is proven in the next paragraph:

"VE-HEE SHE-AMDA"

Now we find yet another important statement, connecting those events of the past with today:

"ve-HEE she-amda la-avoteinu **ve-LANU** "

- And it is THIS [COVENANT, i.e. brit bein ha-btarim] which stood for our fathers, AND for us as well.

For not only once [during our history] were we in danger of destruction; but in EVERY generation we are endangered, but God comes to save us [for the sake of His covenant]."

The word 'HEE' in this statement obviously refers to the promise ['havtacha'] of brit bein ha-btarim (mentioned in the previous paragraph). This statement is so important that our custom is to raise the cup of wine before reciting this proclamation!

Here we explain that "brit bein ha-btarim" was not merely a 'one-time coupon' promising one major redemption, but rather it defined an eternal relationship between God and His people. The events of Yetziat Mitzrayim are only the initial stage of this everlasting relationship. Therefore, anytime in our history, whenever we are in distress - God will ultimately come to redeem us; for the purpose of **why** were chosen [i.e. to serve God] remains eternal.

This provides us with a deeper understanding of why every generation must tell-over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. At the

Seder, we are not simply thanking God for the 'event' but rather for the entire 'process'. Yetziat Mitzrayim was not simply a 'one-time' act of redemption. Rather, it was a critical stage in an ongoing historical process in which God desires that Am Yisrael become His special nation.

As this purpose is eternal, so too the need to remind ourselves on a yearly basis of the key events through which that process began.

This understanding explains why redemption requires spiritual readiness, for in every generation Bnei Yisrael must show their willingness to be faithful to that covenant.

[In our TSC shiur on Parshat Bo, we explained how this concept explains the symbolism of why we must rid ourselves of chametz, prior to and during the time when we thank God for Yetziat Mitzrayim.

This may also explain why we invite Eliyahu ha-navi, when we begin the final section of the Haggada, where we express our hope for our future redemption. According to the final psukim of Sefer Mal'achi (the Haftara for Shabbat ha-Gadol!), Eliyahu will come to help the nation perform proper 'teshuvah' - to become worthy for redemption.]

At most Seder's - surely, over an hour has passed; yet we still haven't told the story!]

"TZEY U-LMAD" / "ARAMI OVED AVI"

With this thematic background complete, the Haggada is finally ready to tell the story (for those who are still awake). However, as you may have noticed, we do not tell the story in a straightforward manner.

Take a careful look at the next section of MAGGID, noting how the Haggada takes four psukim from Devarim 26:5-8, and quotes them one word (or phrase) at a time. Each quote is followed by a proof of that phrase, usually from either the story of the Exodus in Sefer Shmot or from a pasuk in Sefer Tehillim.

[To verify this, be sure to first review Devarim 26:1-9 before you continue.]

This section begins with "tzey u-lmad: ma bikesh Lavan...." which is simply a drasha of the opening phrase 'arami oved avi', and then continues all the way until the 'makkot' -the Ten Plagues. In a nutshell, this section constitutes a rather elaborate Midrash on four psukim from 'mikra bikkurim' (Devarim 26:5-8).

The reason why MAGGID chooses this format to tell the story is based once again on a statement in the Mishna in the tenth chapter of Masechet Pesachim: "ve-dorshin me-arami oved avi ad sof ha-parasha" - and then we elaborate on the psukim from 'arami oved avi' until the end of that unit - and that is exactly what the Haggada does!

In other words, the Haggada uses Devarim 26:5-8 - beginning with 'arami oved avi' - as the 'framework' for telling over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Even though 'technically' it would suffice to simply quote these psukim, we elaborate upon them instead, in an effort to make the story more interesting and meaningful.

[In fact, we are quoting a Sifrei - the Midrash on Sefer Devarim, which most probably was composed for this very purpose.]

Practically speaking, this point is critical for us to understand, for in this section - we finally fulfill our obligation to TELL THE STORY - and hence this section should be treated as the most important part of MAGGID!

[Unfortunately, this section is usually one of the most neglected parts of the Haggada, since we are usually 'out of steam' by the time we reach it. Also, if one is not aware of the elaborate nature of these quotes, it is quite difficult to understand what's going on. Therefore, it's important that we not only pay attention to this section, but we should also be sure at this point to explain the details of the story to those who don't understand these psukim.]

WHY MIKRA BIKKURIM?

It is not by chance that Chazal chose to incorporate a Midrash of "mikra bikkurim" - even though it is rather cryptic - as the method through which we fulfill our obligation of sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Let's explain why.

Recall from our shiur on Parshat Ki Tavo, that in essence mikra bikkurim (see Devarim 26:1-10) serves as a yearly proclamation, made by every individual, thanking God for His fulfillment of the final stage of brit bein ha-btarim.

[This is supported by numerous textual and thematic parallels between the psukim of mikra bikkurim (Devarim 26:1-9), and brit bein ha-btarim (see Breishit 15:7-18). Note as well the use of the word 'yerusha' in 26:1 and in 15:1-8!]

This proclamation constitutes much more than simply thanking God for our 'first fruits'. Rather, it thanks God for the Land (see Devarim 26:3) that He had promised our forefathers (in brit bein ha-btarim / see Breishit 15:18). The 'first fruits' are presented as a 'token of our appreciation' for the fact that God has fulfilled His side of the covenant - as each individual must now declare that he will be faithful to his side of the covenant.

As mikra bikkurim constitutes a biblical 'nusach' [formula] through which one thanks God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim, one could suggest that it was for this reason that the Mishna chose these same psukim as its framework for telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

[It very well may be that this custom to tell the story at the Sefer with "mikra bikurim" began after the destruction of the Temple (note that the Tosefta of Mesechet Pesachim does not include this custom, while the Mishna (compiled later) does include it! Without the Temple, the individual could no longer recite "mikra bikkurim". However, we can at least remind ourselves of this yearly need to proclaim our allegiance to God's covenant - by quoting from "mikra bikurim" at the Seder!

This may explain why the Haggada only quotes the first four psukim of mikra bikkurim (where it talks about Yetziat Mizraim) but not the pasuk that describes how He bought us into the Promised Land.

Finally, note also the word 'higgadeti' in Devarim 26:3 and compare it with the word 've-higgadeta' in Shmot 13:8!

See also Rambam Hilchot Chametz u-Matza chapter 7, especially halacha 4.]

THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES

When you study the "drasha" of these four psukim, note how the drasha of the final pasuk leads us directly into the Ten Plagues. At this point, the Haggada quotes an additional drasha - by R. Yossi ha-Glili - that there must have been 5 times as many plagues at the Red Sea than were in Egypt [based on the ratio - 'etzba' of the Makkot to 'yad' at Kriyat Yam Suf, i.e. hand/finger = 5/1].

Then R. Eliezer and R. Akiva add multiples of 4x and 5x for each plague - based on Tehillim 88:49.

[Note in the Rambam's nusach of MAGGID, he skips this entire section. This suggests that this Midrash is an additional 'elaboration', but not a necessary part of the story that we must tell. In other words, if you need to skip something, this section is a 'good candidate'.]

DAYENU

Now that the story is finished, it's time for 'praise' - following the format of the Mishna "matchilin bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" - and we will now explain how DAYENU serves as a special form of HALLEL (praise).

You are probably familiar with all the questions regarding what we say in Dayenu, for example, how could a Jew say, let alone sing, that 'it would have been enough' - even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a 'zionist' say, let alone sing, that 'it would have been enough' - even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

However, the answer to all those questions is rather simple, once one understands that each time we say the word "dayenu" - it really implies that 'it would have been enough - **to say Hallel!**'

In other words, we say as follows:

- Had God only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea, but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel...

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"al achat kama vekhama..."

- How much more so is it proper **to thank God** for He has performed **ALL** these acts of kindness ..

He took us out of Egypt, **and** punished them, **and** split the sea, **and** gave us the manna etc.

In essence, this beautiful poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating how each single act of God's kindness in that process would be reason enough to say Hallel, now even more so we must say Hallel, for God did all of these things for us.

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise], and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder 'to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel and building the Temple.

This takes on additional significance, as it concludes in the same manner as the final pasuk of "arami oved avi" - which for some reason we do not include in our Seder (even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should)! Recall that according to Devarim 26:9, the proclamation should conclude with: "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh"

According to Chazal - he brought us to the Bet ha'Mikdash!
"va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot" he gave us the land of Israel

Even though we don't elaborate upon this pasuk in our version of Maggid, "dayenu" enables us to include it!

In this manner, the song of "dayenu" serves as both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

It is also interesting to note that we find 15 levels of praise in the Dayenu, that most probably correspond to the 15 steps leading to the Bet ha-Mikdash, better known as the 'shir ha-ma' a lot', i.e. the 15 psalms in Tehillim (120-134) / composed for each step.

Finally, note how Dayenu discusses fifteen 'stages' in the redemption process. This beautifully reflects the theme that we have discussed thus far - that we are thanking God for the entire **process** of redemption, and not just for a specific event!

[For a full shiur on the topic of Dayenu, see:

www.tanach.org/special/dayenu.txt]

"RABAN GAMLIEL"

Even though we have completed our story, before continuing with the Hallel, the Haggada wants to make sure that we also fulfill Rabban Gamliel's opinion (in Masechet Pesachim chapter 10) that we have not fulfilled our obligation of "v'higadta l'bincha" unless we have explained the connection between that story and the commandment to eat PESACH, MATZA & MAROR.

[It appears that Rabban Gamliel understands the word "zeh" (in Shmot 13:8) refers to the 'korban Pesach' - probably based on his understanding that the phrase "ha'avoda ha'zot" in 13:5 also relates to 'korban Pesach'. Hence, Raban

Gamliel requires that we explain to our children (and whoever is gathered) why we are eating not only matza, but also pesach and maror.]

Rabban Gamliel's statement could also imply that our obligation of eating matza and maror is not complete unless we explain how they connect to the story that we just told. This would explain why it is added at the conclusion of the "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" section, as we are about to fulfill our obligation to eat matza, and maror.

[In our times, this section may also be considered a 'fill in' for the KORBAN PESACH itself. During the time of the Bet ha-Mikdash, MAGGID was said while eating the korban pesach. Nowadays, since the korban cannot be offered, we mention pesach, matza, and maror instead of eating the korban. Thus, this section forms an excellent introduction to the Hallel, which in ancient times was recited as the Korban Pesach was offered, and later when it was eaten.]

This section forms the conclusion of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim", and sets the stage for our reciting of Hallel - to praise God for our salvation. [See Rambam Hilchot chametz u'matza 7:5, where his concluding remark implies that "haggada" ends here.]

"BE-CHOL DOR VA-DOR"

Considering the integral connection between the events of the Exodus and "brit avot" (discussed above) the statement of: "be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim..." takes on additional significance.

Before we say HALLEL, we conclude our story by stating that in every generation - each individual must feel as though HE himself was redeemed from Egypt. As the purpose of this entire historical process of redemption was to prepare Am Yisrael for their national destiny - it becomes imperative that every member of Am Yisrael feels as though they experienced that same 'training mission'.

One could suggest that this closing statement complements the opening statement of MAGGID (in the avadim hayinu paragraph) that had God had not taken us out of Egypt we would still enslaved until this very day. Now that we have told the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we are supposed to feel as though we ourselves were redeemed.

As stated in Devarim 6:20-25, the events of Yetziat Mitzrayim obligate Am Yisrael to keep not only the mitzvot of Pesach but ALL of the mitzvot of the Torah! [See Sefer Kuzari section 1.]

[Note how the phrase "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham" that we recite in this section of MAGGID is quoted from Devarim 6:23! Note as well how Chazal most probably arrived at this conclusion based on Moshe Rabeinu's statement in Devarim 5:2-3 (at the very beginning of his main speech) that God's covenant at Har Sinai was made with the new generation, even though they themselves were not born yet!]

LEFICHACH / HALLEL

As an introduction to the first two chapters of HALLEL, we recite 'lefichach...'. Note how this section contrasts 'suffering' with 'redemption' (note the numerous examples). This too may reflect our theme that we thank God for the process, and not just for the event.

The two chapters of Hallel that we recite at this time are also quite meaningful. The reason for 'be-tzeit Yisrael mi-Mitzrayim' is rather obvious. But note the opening words of the first chapter: "hallelu AVDEI Hashem, hallelu et SHEM Hashem..."

In other words, as we are now God's servants ['avdei Hashem'] - and no longer slaves to Pharaoh, it is incumbent upon us to praise our new master.

THE 'SECOND CUP'

We conclude Maggid with the blessing of "ge'ula" [redemption] on the 2nd cup of wine.

As we recite this blessing, note how most fittingly we express our hope that we will become worthy of God's redemption speedily in our own time

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Even though much of our above discussion may seem 'technical', our analysis alludes to a deeper concept, that the Seder is not only about 'gratitude' - i.e. thanking God for what happened; but more so - it's about 'destiny' - i.e. recognizing why it happened!

Let's explain.

Many of us are familiar with a concept called 'hakarot ha-tov' - recognition of gratitude. Simply translated, this means that people should express their gratitude for help (or assistance) provided by others. In relation to the Seder, by telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim [the Exodus] and reciting afterward the Hallel [praise], we express our gratitude to God for our redemption from slavery in Egypt.

However, if "hakarot ha-tov" is the sole purpose of Maggid, then a very serious question arises when we pay attention to the details of the story that we have just told. Recall (from the paragraph "baruch shomer havtachato...") how we thank God in the Haggada for the fulfillment of His covenant with Avraham Avinu - that he would ultimately save Am Yisrael from their bondage. Yet in that very same covenant, God promised not only our redemption, but also our enslavement! [See Breishit 15:13-15.]

If there was a real teenager [or 'chutzpedik'] son at the table, he could ask a very good [but 'cynical'] question:

Why should we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, after all - it was He who put us there in the first place!

To answer this question, I'd like to introduce the concept of 'hakarot ha-ye'ud' [shoresh yod.ayin.daled] - the recognition of destiny [and/or purpose]; in contrast to "hakarot ha-tov".

As we explained above, our obligation to 'tell the story of the Exodus' stems not only from our need to remember **what** happened, but more so - from our need to remember **why** it happened. In other words, we are actually thanking God for both putting us into slavery **and** for taking us out; or in essence - we thank God for our very relationship with Him, and its purpose - as we must recognize the goal of that process and the purpose of that relationship.

In our shiur, we have both discussed the biblical background that supported this approach, and shown how this understanding helped us appreciate both the content of structure of Maggid.

This point of "hakarot ha-ye'ud" is exactly that we emphasized in our introduction. As our 'ye'ud' - our destiny - is to become a nation that will serve Him, God found it necessary to send us down to Egypt in order that He could redeem us.

This could be the deeper meaning of Rashi's interpretation of the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-bincha ... ba'avur zeh" - that we must explain to our children that God took us of Egypt **in order** that we keep His mitzvot. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra 13:8.] Rashi understands that the primary purpose of "magid" is not simply to explain why we are eating matza, but rather to explain to our children why God took us out of Egypt - or in essence, why He has chosen us to become His nation and hence keep His mitzvot.

To complement this thought, we will show how this same theme may relate as well to the very purpose of God's first covenant with Avraham Avinu - "brit bein ha'b'tarim".

ETHICS & the EXODUS -

Recall that when God first chose Avraham Avinu in Parshat Lech Lecha (see Breishit 12:1-7), He informed him that he would become a great nation and that his offspring would inherit the land. However, only a short time later (in chapter 15), God qualifies that promise by informing Avraham Avinu (at brit bein ha'b'tarim) that there would be a need for his offspring to become enslaved by another nation BEFORE becoming (and possibly in order to become) God's special nation (see Breishit 15:1-18).

Even though some commentators understand this 'bondage'

as a punishment for something that Avraham may have done wrong (see Maharal - Gevurot Hashem); nonetheless, the simple pshat of Breishit chapter 15 is that this covenant was part of God's original plan. This begs for an explanation concerning why this framework of 'slavery' was a necessary part of this process.

[We should note that according to Seforno (based on Yechezkel 20:1-10), even though God forecasted our slavery, it didn't have to be so severe. Its severity, he explains, was in punishment for Bnei Yisrael's poor behavior in Egypt. (See Seforno's intro to Sefer Shmot and his commentary on Shmot 1:13.)]

One could suggest that the answer lies in what we find in the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, immediately after they leave Egypt.

Recall the numerous commandments that include the special 'reminder' of "v'zacharta ki eved ha'yita b'erezt Mitzraim" - to Remember that you were once a SLAVE [or STRANGER] in Egypt. Just about every time we find this phrase, it is not a 'stand alone' mitzvah, but rather as an additional comment following a law concerning the proper treatment of the 'less-fortunate' - i.e. it serves as an extra incentive to keep some of the most very basic ethical laws of the Torah.

To prove this, simply review the following list of sources in your Chumash, paying careful attention to when and how this phrase is presented, noting both its topic and context:

- Shmot 22:20 & 23:9 (note the type of mitzvot found in numerous laws recorded between these two psukim). Note especially "v'atem y'datem et nefesh ha'ger" in 23:9, that phrase highlights our above assertion.
- Vayikra 19:33-36 (concluding "Kdoshim tihyu!")
- Vayikra 20:26! and 25:55! (note the context of Vayikra 25:35-55, noting especially 25:38.)
- Devarim 5:12-15 (shabbos is to allow our servants a chance to rest as well - v'zacharta ki eved hayita...")
- Devarim 16:11-12, in regard to "simchat yom tov"
- Devarim 24:17-18, noting context from 23:16 thru 24:18
- Devarim 24:19-22, continuing same point as above
- Note as well concluding psukim in Devarim 25:13-16

REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU

In light of these sources (a 'must read' for those not familiar with these psukim), it becomes clear that part of God's master plan (in the need for our enslavement to Egypt before becoming a nation) was to 'sensitize' us, both as individuals and as a nation, to care for the needs of the oppressed and downtrodden.

God is angered when any nation takes advantage of its vulnerable population (see story of Sedom in Breishit chapters 18-19, noting especially 18:17-21!). In our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we suggested that this may have been one of the underlying reasons for God's choice of a special nation, a nation that will 'make a Name for God', by setting an example in the eyes of these nations, of ideal manner of how a nation should treat its lower classes, and be sensitive to the needs of its strangers and downtrodden. [Note also Yeshayahu 42:5-6!]

Hence, after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must receive a special set of laws at Har Sinai that will facilitate their becoming that nation. As they are chosen to become God's model nation (see Devarim 4:5-8), these laws must set reflect a higher standard, to serve as a shining example for other nations to learn from. Note as well how the opening laws of Parshat Mishpatim (which immediately followed the Ten Commandments), begin with special laws for how to treat our own slaves, whether they be Jewish (see Shmot 21:1-11) on non Jewish (see 21:20 & 21:26-27). [Not to mention the laws that follow in 22:20 thru 23:9.]

With this background, one could suggest that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, i.e. their being taken advantage of by a tyrant etc., would help teach Bnei Yisrael what 'not to do' when they form their own nation, after leaving Egypt.

As anyone who is familiar with the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu (and just about all of the Neviim Acharonim) knows, it was this lack of this sensitivity to the poor and needy

that becomes the primary reason behind God's decision to exile Israel from their land, and destroy the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

A YEARLY 'RE-SENSITIZER'

Let's return to the very pasuk from which we learn our obligation to tell the story at MAGID - "v'higadta l'bincha... ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li b'tzeiti m'Mitzraim". If we follow the interpretation of Rashi & Ibn Ezra, then this pasuk is commanding us that we explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt in order that we can fulfill His commandments. Or in essence, God orchestrated all the events forecasted in "brit bein ha'btarim" to help us become that nation. Certainly, this approach fits nicely with our explanation thus far.

Finally, the very pasuk that Chazal chose that we must recite twice a day to 'remember' the Exodus on a daily basis (see Bamidbar 15:41) may allude as well to this very same point: "I am the God who took you out of Egypt IN ORDER to be your God...". In other words, God took us out of an Egypt **in order** that He become our God. Our deeper understanding of the purpose of the events (of the Exodus) can serve as a guide and a reminder to assure that we act in the manner that we assure that we will indeed become God's model nation.

In summary, when we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, we must also remember that one of the reasons for why He put us there - was to sensitize us towards the needs of the oppressed. Should we not internalize that message, the numerous "tochachot" of the Bible warn that God may find it necessary to 'teach us the hard way' once again (see Devarim 28:58-68 and Yirmiyahu 34:8-22).

In this manner, the message of the Seder is not only particular -in relation to the obligations of the Jewish people; but also universal -in relation to their purpose - the betterment of all mankind.

Or in the words of Chazal - "ein l'cha ben choriin ele mi sh'osek b'Torah" - 'Who is considered free - one who can dedicate his life to keeping God's laws

Freedom - to dedicate one's life to the service of God, both as an individual and a member of God's special nation - to internalize and eternalize God's message to mankind - that's what the Seder is all about!

chag sameiach,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. AVADIM HAYINU & SEFER DEVARIM

To appreciate why MAGGID quotes specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to begin its discussion of our obligation to tell the story of the Exodus, we must study its source (and context) in Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our study of Sefer Devarim how Moshe Rabeinu delivers a lengthy speech (chapters 5 thru 26), in which he reviews the numerous laws that Bnei Yisrael must observe once they enter the land (see Devarim 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.). As part of his introductory remarks concerning those mitzvot - Moshe states as follows:

"Should [or when] your child will ask - What [obligates us] to keep these laws and statutes and commandments that God our Lord has commanded? - And you shall tell him - AVADIM HAYINU le-Pharaoh be-Mitzrayim... - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but God brought us out with a mighty hand..."

(See Devarim 6:20-21, and its context.)

In other words, Sefer Devarim used the phrase 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its explanation for why Bnei Yisrael are obligated to keep ALL of the mitzvot.

But when we continue to read that explanation in Sefer Devarim, we find the reason **WHY** God took them out:

"ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham, lema'an havi otanu el ha-aretz..."

And God took us out **in order** to bring us to the Land that He swore unto our fathers [=brit avot].

And the LORD commanded us to do all these laws, to fear the LORD our God, for our good...

And it shall be the just thing to do, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He hath commanded us." [See Devarim 6:22-25.]

Here again, we find that the Torah states explicitly that God took us out of Egypt for a purpose - i.e. **in order** to inherit the Land and to serve God by keeping His laws.

This statement supports Rashi & Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the pasuk 'ba'avur zeh...' (as we discussed earlier in this shiur), that we are to explain to our children that God took us out of (and put us into) Egypt, in order that we keep His mitzvot.

Therefore, it is very meaningful that the Haggada chose specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its discussion of WHY we are obligated to tell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim on this special evening.

In fact, one could suggest that this may have been the underlying reasoning behind Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a). By stating that we begin the story with the pasuk of 'avadim hayinu', Shmuel is simply stating that before we tell the story, we must explain the reason for this obligation - just as we do in MAGGID!

B. BCHOL DOR V'DOR & SEFER DEVARIM

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham Imaan. [for the purpose of]..." (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot". In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'b'tarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15!

This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

C. "HA LACHMA ANYA"

This opening paragraph of MAGID is difficult to understand not only due to the Aramaic, but also due to its context and content. Let's begin by explaining the problems.

After breaking the middle matza for YACHATZ - we begin MAGGID with the following statement:

"ha lachman anya..." - 'This [matza that we are now looking at] resembles the poor man's s bread that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'

First of all, it would make more sense to understand this statement as the completion of YACHATZ (since it refers to the matza that we just broke), and not necessarily the beginning of MAGGID (for it doesn't tell the story). However, even if this section is not an integral part of Maggid, it will form a significant transition between 'yachatz & maggid' - as we shall soon explain.

Secondly, this opening statement leaves us with the impression that we are eating matza at the Seder to remember how Bnei Yisrael ate matza during their slavery. However, Sefer Shmot leaves us with the impression that we eat matza in order to remember the hurried nature in which Bnei Yisrael left Egypt (see Shmot 12:33-40 and

subsequently 13:3 & 13:8). In other words, should we be explaining at this time that matza on our table is to remind us of our slavery, or to remind us of our redemption?

The simplest answer would be to explain that 'this is the matza that our forefathers ate in Egypt - **when they brought the very first korban Pesach!**' In other words, we are not stating that this poor man's bread was the 'staple' of the daily diet of our forefathers in Egypt - rather, it is the special bread that God commanded us to eat with the original Korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:8).

Furthermore, the reason for calling this bread "lechem oni" [lit. either bread of affliction or bread of poverty] is obviously based on Devarim 16:3 ["shivat yamim tochal alav matzot lechem oni - ki b'chizazon..."]. However, when studying the context of those psukim (see Devarim 16:1-4), the phrase "lechem oni" can be understood as a description of what matza is, and not necessarily as the reason for the commandment to eat it. [The question is whether 'lechem oni' defines for us WHAT matza is, or explains WHY we eat matza.]

This returns us to our discussion of the two reasons for matza (see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo) - where we explained that the reason for eating matza with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with the fact that we later rushed out on the next day. Rather, there had to be some intrinsic reason for eating matza (and not chametz) with that korban; either to remind us of our slavery, or to symbolize our need to reject Egyptian culture to be worthy of redemption.

If we continue with our understanding that this is the 'matza' that our forefathers ate together with the first Korban Pesach, then the next statement of "kol dichfin" - which otherwise is very difficult to understand - begins to make sense. Let's explain why.

The next statement (right after explaining that this matza used to be eaten by our forefathers) - at first sounds like an invitation:

"Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who is in need, let him come and join in the Pesach, this year 'here', next year in the Land of Israel; this year - slaves, next year - free men"

It can be understood in one of two ways, either:

- an open invitation for others to join us. - or
- a quote of what our forefathers once said.

These two possibilities are a result of how one understands the word "v'yifsach" in the phrase "kol ditzrich yete v'yifsach" [anyone who needs, let him come and join our Pesach].

If we take the word "va'yifsach" literally, then this must be an invitation to join in the korban Pesach - and hence, it must be a quote from an earlier time period.

If "va'yifsach" is not translated literally, and hence it refers to the Seder, then this section was composed to be recited as an invitation (to the Seder). But this wouldn't make much sense at this time, since everyone is already sitting down, and considering that we've already made Kiddush and eaten "karpas" - isn't it a bit late to be inviting people!

Let's return therefore to the possibility that "va'yifsach" refers to the actual 'korban Pesach' (which seems to be the simple meaning of this word). If so, then we can easily pinpoint exactly who we are quoting - as it must be from a time when the korban Pesach was offered, but also when we were not yet living in Israel, and still in slavery!. There answer is simple - this must be a quote of what our forefathers said to one another (translated into Aramaic) in preparation for the very first korban Pesach (i.e. the one in Egypt, as described in Shmot 12:1-23).

It can only refer to that very first korban Pesach, for that was the only time in Jewish history when the korban Pesach was offered when we were both (1) in slavery (hoping next year to be free) - and (2) living outside the Land of Israel (hoping be next year in the Land of Israel)! If this interpretation is correct, then the flow of topic makes perfect sense. We break the matza, and explain that this was the same type of bread that our forefathers ate with the first korban Pesach in Egypt, and then we quote what they said to one another in preparation for that special evening - fulfilling what God instructed them in Parshat ha'Chodesh (see Shmot 12:3-8!).

This quote of our forefathers, from the very first Seder in Jewish History, is quite meaningful - for we begin MAGGID by emphasizing the connection between our own Seder and the very first Seder that Am Yisrael kept thousands of years ago (and its purpose). By quoting from the special atmosphere of that very first korban Pesach family gathering, we highlight the continuity of our tradition and our hope for the fulfillment of its goals.

[Note how this would conform to Shmot 12:14, in its context!]