

# Leil Shimurim: Experiencing the Past and Anticipating the Future

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There is a fundamental theme that runs through the entire Haggadah, from beginning to end. It is not a side idea, but rather a central framework that shapes how the entire Seder is meant to be experienced. This approach, rooted in the teachings of the Gra and developed beautifully in the Haggadah of the Novominsker Rebbe, reframes the Seder as not merely a commemoration of the past, but as a bridge to the future.

Chazal teach that one of the questions a person will be asked is: *ציפית לישועה*—did you anticipate the redemption? The Smak raises a powerful question: where is this obligation stated? Where does the Torah explicitly command belief in Mashiach or anticipation of redemption? If a person fulfilled everything written, how can he be held accountable for something that was never commanded?

The answer lies in the opening of the Aseres HaDibros: *אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים*. This is not merely a historical statement, but a definition of who Hashem is. He is not only the One who redeemed us in the past, but He is defined as a *Go'el*. To believe in Hashem is to believe in Him as a redeemer. The belief in *Yetziyas Mitzrayim* necessarily includes the belief that He will redeem us again in the future.

This becomes a central purpose of the Seder. It is not only to recall the *geulah* of *Mitzrayim*, but to internalize that it serves as the model and guarantee of the *geulah ha'asidah*. The Seder is not simply memory; it is a structured experience designed to build *emunah*.

The *pasuk* states: *ליל שמורים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים*. While the simple understanding of *שמורים* is protection, the *Baal HaTurim* explains that the word also connotes anticipation. This is a night of anticipation. The plural form indicates a dual anticipation: one for the *geulah* of *Mitzrayim* and one for the *geulah ha'asidah*. Embedded within this night is both the past redemption and the anticipation of the future one.

This concept is expressed immediately at *Yachatz*, when we split the middle *matzah*. One half is used now, and the other is hidden for later as the *afikoman*. The *matzah* represents *geulah*, and by dividing it we express that *geulah* itself unfolds in two stages: the revealed *geulah* of *Mitzrayim* and the hidden *geulah* of the future. The hidden half, which is larger, represents a greater redemption that is not yet accessible, described as *מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך*. Thus we keep it for "*צפון*".

Immediately after this, we declare *בני חורין* *השנה הבאה*. Unlike other occasions where we conclude with *בירושלים* *השנה הבאה*, here we begin with it. This reflects the core structure of the Seder, in which the experience of redemption in the present is meant to generate

certainty in the future. Obviously, this leads into other key parts such as **ויהי שעמדה לאבותינו**.

Before accessing that future dimension, we must fully experience the past. Through Maggid, we relive Yetzias Mitzrayim, fulfilling **יצא ממצרים הוא יצא ממצרים כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים**. This culminates in the first part of Hallel, which directly reflects the experience of redemption from Mitzrayim. Thus, the first two paragraphs of Hallel, which discuss **יציאת מצרים** directly.

Only after this complete experience do we transition to the future. We eat the afikoman, the hidden half of the matzah, that we put away for later. We have now reached the point that we are able to appreciate the future geulah. We begin to access the concealed dimension of geulah; the **צפון**-the hidden- becomes revealed. We are now able to eat the **צפון**. At this point, we recite the second half of Hallel. This half, says the Gr"a, is not on a past redemption, but on a future one. Normally, Hallel is said only after salvation has occurred, as in **אשירה לה' כי גמל עלי**. However, on the night of the Seder, the emunah is so real that it allows us to say Hallel even on what has not yet happened.

Before this, we open the door and recite **שפוך חמתך**. The Mishnah Berurah explains that this is not merely symbolic, but an expression of emunah. We act as if the geulah is imminent, embodying the concept of Leil Shimurim as a night of anticipation. Having fully experienced Yetzias Mitzrayim, our belief in the future redemption becomes immediate and tangible. Reading the language of the Mishnah Berurah we feel our idea coming to life. He writes: **לרמז שאנו מאמינים שכשם שגאלנו הש"י ממצרים הוא יגאלנו עוד וישלנו לנו את אליהו לבשרנו**.

According to the Gra, the night itself is divided into two halves: the first corresponding to the geulah of Mitzrayim and the second to the geulah ha'asidah. This explains why the latter part of Hallel is associated with a different temporal framework.

The Seder, then, is not simply about remembering Mitzrayim. It is about using Mitzrayim as the foundation for anticipating the future. If one leaves the Seder having recalled the past but without strengthening his anticipation for the future, he has missed its essential message. The geulah of Mitzrayim is not the conclusion of the story, but the proof that the story continues.

**Sources:**

1. Vilna Gaon, commentary to Haggadah.
2. Novominsker Rebbe, Haggadah.
3. Sefer Mitzvot Katan (Smak).
4. Baal HaTurim to Shemos 12:42.
5. Mishnah Berurah, Orach Chaim 480.