



Hei Lachma Anya

A Deeper Look

Why There?

Maggid, the section of the Haggadah that recounts the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, begins with the paragraph of “*Hei lachma anya*,” and the Rabbeim would begin their discussion of commentary on the Haggadah at this point.

The question is: *Maggid* should have opened with “*Avadim hayinu*”—or at least with “*Mah nishtana*”—both of which fit with the theme of *Maggid*, recounting the story in the form of questions and answers. “*Hei lachma anya*” is seemingly only about inviting all people to come participate in the *seder*.

There must be a reason it was placed at the beginning of *Maggid*.

Three Questions

“*Hei lachma anya*” primarily discusses three things: “*Hei lachma anya*”—the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in Egypt; “*Kol dichfin... kol ditzrich*”—inviting all those who are hungry and needy to join; and “*Hashata hacha*”—the yearning for the *geulah*.

Several questions arise: Firstly, what is the connection between these three topics that brings them all together into one paragraph? Second, the invitation for the hungry and needy people should have come before we mention the “*lachma anya*,” so that they can partake in that as well. And third, the wish for the *geulah*, which doesn’t have any apparent connection with the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*,

should have come at the end of the Haggadah.

Inviting the Poor

To answer these difficulties, we must first understand the idea of “*Kol dichfin... kol ditzrich*.” In a spiritual sense, one might think that since poverty is usually brought about by sin,¹ we shouldn’t change what was ordained by Hashem by alleviating their poverty and inviting these poor people to our *seder*! And practically, in order to accommodate many people, one would need to be wealthy enough to be able to afford such a feast.

That’s why we start off the paragraph with “*Hei lachma anya*,” reminding ourselves that the bread of affliction—which should instill *bitul* and *emunah* within a person—“*di*



לע"נ
 מרת גאלדא מרים בת ר' חנניה ע"ה
 שיפרין
 נלב"ע י"א ניסן ה'תש"פ
 תנ"צ'בה'
 נדפס ע"י בנה
 הרה"ת ר' אליהו וזוגתו מרת רבקה ומשפחתם שיחיו
 שיפרין



achalu avhasana”—both my own and the poor person’s forefathers ate it. In a practical sense, we do not need to be wealthy enough to pay for a feast, we’re just serving matzah—“*Hei lachma anya*.”

A Hakhel Seder

This can be connected to the theme of this year—Hakhel. Pesach, being the “Rosh Hashanah of Yomim Tovim,”² carries an influence throughout the whole year. Because this year is a year of Hakhel, by inviting and gathering Yidden for a meal, we are essentially holding a Hakhel gathering, which will lead to the ultimate Hakhel in the times of Moshiach.

From Galus to Geulah

At the end of the paragraph, we express our yearning for the *geulah*. But we preface it by saying “*Hashata hacha*”—this year we are here. What is the point of highlighting the obvious

fact that we are currently still in *galus*?

The answer is that we bring about the *geulah* specifically through the *avodah* of *galus*. This is accomplished through creating general awareness about Moshiach’s coming, and specifically through the *avodah* of tzedakah, as it says³, “So great is tzedakah that it brings the *geulah* closer.” This applies to both physical charity and influencing someone positively in a spiritual sense.

Additionally, within tzedakah itself there are different levels, the greatest of which is giving food that can be eaten straight away. The Gemara⁴ praises the wife of Abba Chilkiyah for doing so, saying that the advantage of this is that the “benefit is immediate.” When one gives tzedakah in such a way, he causes the *geulah* to become an immediate reality as well.

Thus, the connection between all three themes of this paragraph is clear: “*Hei lachma anya*” is the bread that

humbles us—and all our forefathers ate it. “*Kol dichfin... kol ditzrich*”—we invite poor people to participate, an act of tzedakah (the *avodah* of *galus*, “*Hashata hacha*”) which brings the *geulah* closer—“*Lshana haba’ah*.”

Now we can answer our original question, why “*Hei lachma anya*” is a part of *Maggid*. The essence of this paragraph is the idea of *geulah*, connecting it to the *geulah* of Mitzrayim, the theme of *Maggid*. As it is written, “*Ki’mei tzeischa mei’eretz Mitzrayim*—Like the **days** of your exodus from Egypt...” in a plural form—because the journey of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is a continuous one, ultimately leading to the final *geulah*.⁵

1. Shabbos, 55a.

2. Rosh Hashanah, 4a.

3. Bava Basra 10a.

4. Taanis 23b.

5. Adapted from the sicha of the second night of Pesach, 5727.