**Hallel on the Night of Pesach**

**by Rav Yaacov Francus**

The "Hallel" that we say during the Pesach Seder has two unique characteristics: First, it is said at night, even though the mishna in Megilla (20b) lists Hallel as something that is recited during the day. Second, we break it up into two parts - we recite the first part of Hallel right before we drink the second cup of wine, and the rest after the meal before drinking the fourth cup.[[1]](#footnote-1) As we say in a slightly different context, "Ma nishtana?" Why is the Hallel on Pesach night different than all other Hallels? Are its special features indicative of a larger uniqueness in its nature? To answer this question, we must examine the various aspects of Hallel's nature and its applicability to the night of Pesach.

1. **Hallel In General**

The gemara in Arakhin (10a,b) discusses the days on which we recite the entire Hallel. It lists eight days of Chanuka, eight days of Sukkot (including Shemini Atzeret), the first Yom Tov of Pesach and the first Yom Tov of Shavuot. On Rosh Chodesh, the entire Hallel is not recited, based on Yeshayahu 30:29: "a song (ha-shir) will be recited [following the redemption] just as a song is recited on the night that a holiday is consecrated" ("ha-shir yiheyeh lakhem ke-leil hitkadesh chag"). Rosh Chodesh is not consecrated because there is no issur melakha - work is permitted. Chanuka is problematic - there is no prohibition of work, yet there is Hallel! The gemara explains that Hallel is said on Chanuka because of the miracle which took place on the holiday.

Thus, two distinct reasons are mentioned in the gemara for reciting Hallel:

1) Hallel is said on a Yom Tov

2) Hallel is said in response to a miracle.

We will see how these two categories are reflected in the Hallel we say on Pesach night. For now, the first unique aspect of Hallel on Pesach night - namely, its nocturnal recitation - may be based on the verse in Yeshayahu which explicitly mentions a "shir" on the night of Yom Tov (ke-leil hitkadesh chag). However, this characteristic may also indicate that Hallel on Pesach is in fact fundamentally different from the Hallel we normally recite.

We will now examine how different authorities view our case of Hallel on Pesach night.

**II. Ramban**

Hallel on Pesach night is curiously missing from the discussion in Arakhin 10b. This bothered the Ramban,[[2]](#footnote-2) and he offers two solutions. The first is that the gemara there is only discussing Hallel which is said during the day. The second answer is that the gemara there is not discussing a particular instance of Hallel: namely, the Hallel which is recited at the time of the performance of a mitzva. Rather, it only mentions Hallel which is recited on account of the day itself. Thus, the mishna in Pesachim (95a) states that Hallel was recited on the occasion of the shechita of the korban Pesach, both on Pesach Rishon and on Pesach Sheni. These instances of Hallel are also not mentioned in the gemara in Arakhin.

According to the first answer, Hallel on the night of Pesach can be viewed as falling under the category of "Hallel said on Yom Tov" - on account of the day itself - while according to the second answer, the Hallel of Pesach night is related to the mitzva of akhilat Pesach and matza. (The Ramban at the end mentions akhilat matza as well as akhilat Pesach.)

The Ramban insists that in any event, the requirement of saying Hallel on Pesach night parallels the regular chiyuv of saying Hallel, and therefore requires a berakha. The division of Hallel into two parts does not change this fact because the split is part of the takana itself (of saying Hallel on Pesach night), and the meal in the middle is not an interruption.

In his Hasagot to the Rambam's Sefer Ha-mitzvot,[[3]](#footnote-3) the Ramban also mentions Hallel at the time of akhilat Pesach as being in the category of "Hallel which is recited during the performance of a mitzva." There, the Ramban takes the view that the two instances of Hallel - that which is said on Yom Tov and the Hallel said during the performance of a mitzva - are mi-de'oraita or halakha le-moshe mi-sinai.

Thus, according to the Ramban, Hallel on the night of Pesach follows the regular rules of Hallel except for the special takana which requires us to say Hallel in two parts. Presumably, this stems from the desire to combine the reciting of Hallel with the mitzva of akhilat Pesach and matza.

Nevertheless, when we examine the Hallel which is said with the performance of a mitzva, we see that the Hallel of akhilat Pesach is distinct from the Hallel of shechitat Pesach. The mishna in Pesachim (95a) states that Hallel is said at the time of shechitat Pesach Rishon and Pesach Sheni, whereas Hallel is only said together with akhilat Pesach Rishon and not while eating the Pesach Sheni. Apparently the mitzva of akhilat Pesach - which also serves to commemorate Pesach Mitzrayim - combined with the zeman ha-geula is what requires the recitation of Hallel. The mitzva of akhila alone, without the commemorative aspect, is not enough to create an obligation to recite Hallel. The Ramban in Pesachim also mentions the uniqueness of Pesach night as zeman ha-geula - a factor which, apparently, works in tandem with the mitzva of akhilat Pesach to create an obligation of Hallel.

**III. Tosafot**

Tosafot in Sukka[[4]](#footnote-4) say that although women are exempt from saying Hallel on Yom Tov, they are obligated to say Hallel on Pesach night. Proof for this position comes from the gemara in Pesachim (108a), which says that women are obligated in the arba kosot. Tosafot posit that since Hallel is said prior to drinking two of the cups, women are also required to say Hallel. They explain that Hallel on Pesach night differs from Hallel on Yom Tov because it is "Hallel al ha-nes" - Hallel said in response to a miracle. The gemara in Arakhin (10b) says that Hallel on Chanuka is Hallel al ha-nes, and Tosafot apparently explain that Hallel on Pesach night is also al ha-nes.[[5]](#footnote-5) (The Turei Even in Megilla 14b also states that Hallel on Pesach night is Hallel al ha-nes and not the Hallel which is said on Yom Tov.)

According to the Ramban, women are presumably obligated to say Hallel on Pesach night, since they are obligated to eat the korban Pesach.

Thus far, we have discussed three possible ways to categorize Hallel on Pesach night:

1. Hallel of Yom Tov. (The Ramban's first answer.)

2. Hallel that accompanies the performance of mitzva. (Ramban's second answer.)

3. Hallel al ha-nes. (Tosafot's position.)

**IV. The Berakha - Is It Required?**

Presumably, despite the different reasons for saying Hallel, the chiyuv, once it exists, should not differ from the regular requirement of saying Hallel. Thus, like any other Hallel, its recitation on Pesach night should also require a berakha. Indeed, the Ramban passionately upholds the position that Hallel on the night of Pesach requires a berakha.

Tosafot[[6]](#footnote-6) also say that a berakha must be recited before Hallel on Pesach night. Even at the end of the Tosafot, when R. Yehuda's view that a berakha should not be said is cited, it is for a technical reason: a berakha cannot be recited since Hallel is interrupted by a meal. Indeed, if a person says Hallel as one unit on Pesach night, he says it with a berakha. (This case - where someone says Hallel as one unit - refers to a case where for whatever reason, somebody is unable to recite Hallel on his own, so he recites it in shul.)

**V. The Griz: 2 Dinim In Hallel**

Rav Hai Gaon[[7]](#footnote-7) explains that no berakha is recited on Hallel on Pesach night because the Hallel is recited as a shira - a song. A berakha is only recited on a keriat Hallel.

The Griz,[[8]](#footnote-8) in his commentary on the Rambam, posits a differentiation whose basis is similar to that of Rav Hai Gaon. He proposes that there are two categories of Hallel: There is Hallel which is a takana de-rabanan, and there is a Hallel which is said as a shira. The Hallel of shira is learned from the aforementioned verse in Yeshayahu which mentions the Hallel of Pesach night.

The takana de-rabanan refers to Hallel which is said on set occasions - namely, on yamim tovim and on Chanuka. This Hallel requires a berakha, just as every mitzva de-rabanan requires a berakha. Similarly, the entire Hallel must be said.

The Hallel of shira, by contrast, is said in response to the salvation of kelal Yisrael from some danger which threatened them. It is also said at the time of shechitat and akhilat Pesachim. This Hallel need not be said in its entirety. Therefore, on Pesach night we can interrupt Hallel in the middle.[[9]](#footnote-9) According to Rav Hai, the Hallel of shira does not require a berakha.[[10]](#footnote-10)

According to the Griz, the Hallel of Pesach night is actually the archetypical Hallel, while the Hallel of Yom Tov and Chanuka is a special takana de-rabanan. Apparently, what distinguishes Hallel of shira from Hallel of keria is the source of the requirement. The takana de-rabanan of Hallel is a time-bound mitzva. On certain occasions during the year, there is a chiyuv to say Hallel independent of any event. By contrast, the Hallel of shira does not depend on a date. It depends on an event. A miracle which saves kelal Yisrael from danger requires a Hallel of shira.

Similarly, shechitat Pesach and akhilat Pesach are accompanied by Hallel. Although the latter two are done on a specific date, the event, not the date, requires Hallel. Thus, in the absence of shechitat Pesach, Hallel is not said. Similarly, in the absence of akhilat Pesach (and possibly akhilat matza), Hallel is not said.

To summarize, Hallel of shira is said in reaction to an event. It is a spontaneous outburst. The takana of keriat Hallel is a formal obligation imposed on certain dates.

**VI. Ri Migash**

The Ri Migash[[11]](#footnote-11) says that a berakha is not recited before Hallel on Pesach night. The formal reason given is that a berakha is only said on Hallel which is said during the day. The Ri Migash explains that Hallel on Pesach night is not a mitzva; rather, it is an expression of the joy of the person eating the Pesach,[[12]](#footnote-12) and praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. The Ri Migash distinguishes this Hallel from every Hallel which is said during the day. Normally, Hallel is said during the day - just as Hallel was recited in the Beit Ha- mikdash while the korban was being brought. (Apparently, the Ri Migash is referring to the Hallel of shechitat ha-Pesach.)

According to the Ri Migash, Hallel on Pesach night is especially unique. It is not even part of a category which includes the Hallel of shechitat Pesach.

The Ri Migash might say that Hallel of Pesach night is similar to the category of Hallel which is said in response to a miracle of salvation. According to this view, since in every generation a person must view himself as though he left Mitzrayim, the quasi-experience of yetziat mitzrayim on Pesach night requires us to say Hallel in response to the miracle.

**VII. Rav Zt"l: Hallel And Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim**

Alternatively, the requirement of Hallel of Pesach night might be uniquely related to the mitzva of sippur yetziat Mitzrayim. The Rav, zt"l,[[13]](#footnote-13) maintains that one of the factors that distinguishes sippur yetziat Mitzrayim from zekhirat yetziat Mitzrayim is that sippur requires the format of amirat shevach ve-hodaya. This is the significance of the mishna in Pesachim (116b) which, after mentioning sippur yetziat Mitzrayim, ends with the statement that therefore ("lefikakh"), we are obligated to give praise to God.

The Mekhilta on parashat Bo[[14]](#footnote-14) learns that whoever hears about the miracles which were done to Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim must give praise - a reference to the basis for the requirement of Hallel.

According to this view, then, the Hallel of Pesach night does not exist as an independent mitzva of amirat Hallel. Rather, it is part and parcel of the mitzva of sippur yetziat mitzrayim. Thus, no berakha is made on the Hallel which we recite in the Haggada.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**VIII. Tosefta - The 2 Part Hallel**

The Tosefta, in Pesachim[[16]](#footnote-16) states that people who are unable to say Hallel for themselves go to shul and read Hallel there. They read the first part of Hallel, then they go home to eat, and then they return to complete the Hallel. If this is not feasible, they say the entire Hallel and then go home to eat the meal. Thus, ideally, Hallel should be said within the framework of the Haggada. Even if this is not possible, according to Rav Hai Gaon and the Ri Migash it is nevertheless preferable to say Hallel only after sippur yetziat mitzrayim and prior to the meal, rather than before kiddush.

It is also clear from the Tosefta that Hallel, ideally, should be divided into two parts. Apparently, this stems from the takana of four kosot. Each cup has a mitzva of some sort connected to it, and the fourth kos is connected to the last part of Hallel. Indeed, the Yerushalmi in Pesachim (10:1) proves from the halakha of the Tosefta (it is brought in the Yerushalmi in the name of R. Yochanan) that be-di'avad, the mitzva of arba kosot can be fulfilled even if they are drunk consecutively. When Hallel is read as one unit, nothing separates the third and fourth cups.[[17]](#footnote-17)

**IX. Masekhet Soferim: 2 Hallels**

A beraita in Masekhet Soferim sheds a different light on the Hallel of Pesach night. The beraita[[18]](#footnote-18) states that the individual is obligated to recite the entire Hallel on 18 days and one night, and in chutz la-aretz, 21 days and 2 nights. It is mitzva min ha-muvchar - the ideal form of the mitzva - to read Hallel the 2 nights of Pesach in shul with a berakha. When the Hallel is repeated at home, it is said without a berakha, since it was already recited in shul.

This beraita explicitly states that ideally, Hallel should be recited with a berakha in shul on Pesach night, and without a berakha during the Seder. In contrast, the Tosefta was describing a situation in which people were unable to say Hallel at home.

This beraita in Masekhet Soferim is not accepted le- halakha by Rav Hai, the Ri Migash, or the Rambam. The Bavli does not mention this beraita. Indeed, the gemara in Arakhin (10a), which quotes a similar beraita, omits the Hallel of Pesach night from the list. Thus, according to the Bavli, Hallel on Pesach night is only recited as part of the Haggada.

The Ramban quotes the beraita in Masekhet Soferim as proof for his position that Hallel on Pesach night requires a berakha. Similarly, the Ramban quotes a Yerushalmi[[19]](#footnote-19) as further support of his opinion.

**X. Why Are Two Hallels Required?**

The double recitation of Hallel on Pesach night requires an explanation. The Ramban states that when Hallel is recited in shul with a berakha, the Hallel of the Haggada is recited without a berakha, and the birkat ha-shir - the berakha after Hallel - is also not recited. Rabbeinu Dovid[[20]](#footnote-20) concludes that even if Hallel is said in shul, the berakha of the fourth kos, birkat ha-shir, is not omitted.

The Ramban does not explain why Hallel should be recited twice. The Ramban may maintain that there are two contradictory aspects of Hallel. On the one hand, it is preferable to say Hallel be-tzibbur - with the congregation. On the other hand, since the Hallel of Pesach night accompanies the mitzva of akhilat Pesach and matza, it should be recited immediately prior to, and subsequent to, these mitzvot. Therefore, we recite Hallel twice. However, only one berakha is made since there is in fact only one chiyuv.

Alternately, the Ramban may claim that Hallel is repeated during the Seder because of the takana of arba kosot. Since part of the takana is to say Hallel before drinking the cup, Hallel must be repeated during the Seder. However, this does not justify saying birkat ha-shir, the berakha recited after Hallel. Just as no berakha is said before Hallel on Pesach night if Hallel was recited in shul with a berakha, the berakha after Hallel also is not recited.

Rabbeinu Dovid asserts that although Hallel is recited in shul on Pesach night since it is zeman ha-geula, the birkat ha-shir is still said prior to drinking the fourth cup. In addition to the chiyuv of Hallel which stems from zeman ha- geula, there is an additional takana to say Hallel as part of the ceremony of arba kosot. The birkat ha-shir is recited as part of the requirement of the fourth cup. The berakha might also, in fact, only apply to the part of Hallel which is recited after birkat ha-mazon - it may have absolutely nothing to do with the beginning of Hallel. If Hallel is not recited in shul, then the berakha must be recited during the Seder - both before and after. In this event, Hallel is recited both as Hallel of zeman ha-geula, and as part of the takana of arba kosot. Similarly, birkat ha-shir has a double role. It functions as the berakha after Hallel, and as the berakha of the fourth cup.

The Ramban claims that birkat ha-shir cannot be viewed as a berakha al ha-kos since there is no mention of yetziat mitzrayim in the berakha. Thus, it can only be explained as a berakha of Hallel. Rabbeinu Dovid maintains that since Hallel is said in the framework of sippur yetziat mitzrayim, the birkat ha-shir can be viewed as part of the Haggada.

The Ritva, in his introduction to the Haggada, asserts that the fourth kos refers to our future redemption. Yetziat mitzrayim calls to mind our future redemption. Therefore, the berakha need not make reference to yetziat mitzrayim.

The Ritva also explains that there are two independent reasons to say Hallel on Pesach night. During the Haggada, we read the Hallel as a shira, in accordance with the view of Rav Hai Gaon, and no berakha is recited. In shul we recite Hallel in accordance with the beraita in Masekhet Soferim.

The Ritva recounts that the Re'ah would recite Hallel in shul with a berakha, and then repeat Hallel during the Haggada without a berakha. The Ritva in Sukka[[21]](#footnote-21) writes that Hallel must be said as one unit on Pesach night with a berakha, before or after the Haggada. Thus, unlike Rabbeinu Dovid - who writes that when Hallel is not recited in shul, the Hallel of the Haggada fulfills a dual function - the Ritva maintains that each Hallel must be recited separately; they have separate purposes. The Ritva may believe that reciting a berakha before the Hallel of the Haggada is impossible, since the shira-based nature of that Hallel precludes the possibility of making a berakha.

Rav Chaim Brisker[[22]](#footnote-22) held that Hallel should be recited in shul on Pesach night with a berakha, in accordance with the verse in Yeshayahu which indicates that the "Hallel of Yom Tov" should be recited on Pesach night, even though Hallel is normally recited during the day. Hallel is then repeated during the Haggada as part of the mitzva of sippur yetziat mitzrayim. The minhag in Eretz Yisrael is to say Hallel in shul with a berakha on Pesach night, in accordance with the pesak of the Shulchan Arukh[[23]](#footnote-23).

May we soon have the ability to say the Hallel whose recitation is required by a new zeman ha-geula.

1. See the mishnayot in Pesachim 116b, 117b. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pesachim 117b. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Shoresh Alef, p19-21 in the regular editions. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 38a, s.v. "mi she-haya." [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Tosafot's claim that women are obligated in Hallel on Pesach night since it is Hallel al ha-nes raises the question of the obligation of women to say Hallel on Chanuka. The collection of the Rav's shiurim called Reshimot Shiurim (volume on Sukka) discusses this point with regard to the Tosafot. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Berakhot 14a, s.v. "yamim." [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Teshuvot Ha-geonim, Sha'arei Teshuva 102. It is cited by several Rishonim, including the Ramban and Ran in Pesachim 117b. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hilkhot Chanuka 3:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. As proof, the Griz cites the mishna in Pesachim 64a to prove the Hallel said at shechitat Pesach was not always completed. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. By contrast, the Griz cites Rabbeinu Tam's view (from Berakhot 14a) that even Hallel of shira requires a berakha. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Teshuva 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Apparently, that is the meaning of simchat be’alim. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Shiurim le-zekher Abba Mori z"l, vol 1, p2-3, footnote 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Parasha 12, s.v. "va-amartem zevach Pesach" [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Hallel is recited during shechitat Pesach Sheni, but not during akhilat Pesach Sheni, according to the mishna in Pesachim 95a. This supports the view that Hallel of Pesach night relates to the mitzva of sippur yetziat mitzrayim and not to the mitzva of akhilat Pesach. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Chapter 10, halakha 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. According to the Bavli (108b), though, the mitzva of arba kosot is in fact not fulfilled properly if they are drunk consecutively. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 20: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Berakhot 1:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Pesachim 117b. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 39a. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Quoted in Shiurim Le-zekher Abba Mori z"l, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Orach Chayim, chap. 487 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)