



"We Are Still Here" - השתא הכא

Why does the Baal HaHaggadah feel the need to inform us that *we are here right now*? Isn't that obvious? Do we really need to tell someone sitting at the Shabbos table or browsing in a store, "Hey, just so you know, you're here right now"? Most people are well aware of where they are.

But perhaps, on a simple level, the Baal HaHaggadah is offering us an opening wake-up call: *Hello — do you realize where you are?* You're at the Seder. This is the night. Don't let it pass you by. Be present. Be alert to the opportunity in front of you.

As the Imrei Chaim zt"l used to say: **הכל בסדר — Everything is in the Seder.** Everything can be accomplished through the Seder — if only we show up fully and don't spend the night thinking only about the kneidlach.

There's a powerful story from one of our darkest moments in recent history. In May 1944, during the horrors of the Holocaust, transport trains were departing Khust (in present-day Ukraine) to Auschwitz. As fear gripped the community, they turned to the Rav of Khust for words of comfort. The Rav began with our very phrase: **"השתא הכא"** — "Now, we are here." But he offered a new reading: *"Now, you are **still** here."*

Despite everything, despite the pain, the terror, and the suffering — we are still here. The Baal HaHaggadah is reminding us of our unshakable resilience. If we are still standing after all we've been through, then surely, we

can look forward to **לשנה הבא בני חורין** — to next year in freedom.

The phrase **בכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו** — **לכלותינו** — "In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us" — is not just a recounting of danger; it's a testament to survival. And yet... **השתא הכא** — We are still here.

This message connects beautifully to a comment from the Chasam Sofer about the egg on the Seder plate. Why do we eat an egg? Because unlike most foods, which soften when cooked, the more an egg is boiled, the harder it becomes. So too with Am Yisrael — the more we are pressured and afflicted, the stronger we become. **השתא הכא... לשנה הבאה בני חורין.**

We can add another layer of meaning: Just as a hen sits and broods on an egg to nurture new life, so too, the more we prepare ourselves spiritually for the Seder, the more we allow the potential within us to develop. The blessings of this holy night can carry us forward throughout the entire year.

There is of course the nagging thought that perhaps we are not worthy of being saved time and time again: The Mishnah Berurah (473:3), quoting the *Kolbo*, brings yet another reason for the egg: In Aramaic, the word for egg is **bei'a**, which also means "desire." The egg represents Hashem's desire to redeem us from Mitzrayim.

At first glance, this is puzzling. Why highlight the *desire* to redeem us, instead of the redemption itself? But this connects to a comment from the Zohar (Cheilek 4, 107b; also Yalkut 234). At the splitting of the Yam Suf, the *malachim* protested: *Why save these Jews? הללו עובדי ע"ז והללו עובדי ע"ז - These are idol worshipers just like the Mitzriyim!*

Hashem responded: **כך עלה במחשבה לפני**—
This is what rose in My thought.

It wasn't merit that saved us. It was Hashem's deep-rooted will and love. That desire — the *bei'a* — is what brought the *yeshua*. And so, we eat the egg to acknowledge that even when we are unworthy, His desire to redeem us endures.

Later in the Haggadah we read: **ורב — כמה שנאמר: רבה כצמח השדה נתתיך** "I made you as numerous as the plants of the field." The Avudraham explains that like grass, the more you cut it, the more it grows back — stronger, fuller. So too with the Jewish people. No matter how many times we are cut down, we regrow. **בכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו** - They try to uproot us — and still, we remain.

As the Torah says so clearly: **וכאשר יענו אתו - כן ירבה וכן יפרוץ** "*The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and flourished.*" The more they try to crush us, the more we rise. **השתא הכא. We are still here.**

Even the seemingly whimsical **חד גדיא** at the end of the Seder contains deep meaning. It may sound like a children's song, but it is far from simple. The Chasam Sofer explains it with remarkable insight: **חד גדיא — the one little goat — represents** **שה פזורה ישראל - Klal Yisrael, the scattered sheep.** **דזבין אבא בתרי זוזי** - The Father (Hashem) "purchased" us for two zuzim, symbolizing the two Luchos, or perhaps Torah Shebichtav and Torah Sheba'al Peh.

ואתא שונרא ואכלה לגדיא - the cat came and ate up the goat. So the goat was eaten; it is no longer here. But what does the next line say? **השתא הכא - חד גדיא חד גדיא** - it is still here! **השתא הכא** - we are still here!

The cat, the dog, the stick, each force trying to destroy what came before it — yet in each stanza, *Chad Gadya* is repeated. Why? Because despite all the destruction and chaos, **השתא הכא - we're still here.** The whole history of persecution unfolds before our eyes in this symbolic story, and yet the final line takes us back: **דזבין אבא בתרי זוזי — Hashem and His children remain. חד גדיא חד גדיא - השתא הכא - We are still here.**

May we be zoche that next year we will not only still be here, but we will be free — **and we can rebuild the Beis Hamikdash and once again bring the Korban Pesach.**

מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Yom Tov,