From my earliest youth, I remember that the children would ask each other on the first morning of Pesach, "How long did your Seder last?" This was true in my youth, and it is still the case today.

If the children were to ask me this now, I would answer them, "I made sure to eat the afikoman before chatzos (midnight)." According to some poskim, even the recitation of Hallel should be completed before chatzos. I must point out that the present-day practice in which all the children read from their prepared sheets which they received in school is not exactly in accordance with the mitzvah of נאמרת לָאִבֵּךְ, you shall tell to your children, etc. (Shemos 13:8) The children have started a new mitzvah of נאמרת לָאִבֵּךְ, you shall teach your father and mother, which makes it extremely difficult to reach the mitzvah of achilas matzah — and certainly the afikoman — before chatzos.

Rather than discourage the children from actively participating, they should keep their remarks brief, so the father, or other leader of the Seder, can read the text of the Haggadah and explain the nissim of yetzias Mitzrayim. However, the children should be encouraged to say their divrei Torah during the meal if there is time or, otherwise, during the daytime meals of Yom Tov.

The Haggadah shel leil Pesach is probably the most popular sefer, after the siddur, in the Jewish home. There are at least a thousand commentaries on the Haggadah, each with different explanations and interpretations. It is not the purpose of this shiur to add another one, but rather to share a few thoughts on various parts of the Haggadah.

On Seder night, it is a mitzvas asei d'Oraisa to retell to one's children the events surrounding yetzias Mitzrayim. If one has the zechus to have children or grandchildren, it is a mitzvah for the father or grandfather to hand down to them the details of yetzias Mitzrayim. The saying of so-called "gute vertlach," good, short pieces of Torah, is very nice, but if these are not details of the narrative of yetzias Mitzrayim — or its meaning and message — they are not a part of this mitzvah. On Seder night, the children are encouraged to ask any question relevant to yetzias Mitzrayim, and the father has a special