

			
			
	<p>ALL TOGETHER NOW</p> <p>○</p> <p>A unity Haggadah Companion by the Rabbis and Rebetzins of South Africa</p> <p>○</p>		
			
			
			

Chief Rabbi and Gina Goldstein | Rabbi Osher Feldman | Rabbi Ari Kievman | Rabbi Yehuda and Rebbetzin Estee Stern | Rabbi Avraham Tanzer | Rabbi Menachem Raff | Rebbetzin Haddassah Auerbach | Rabbi Baruch Rabanowitz | Rabbi Jarred Bloch | Rebbetzin Goldie Simpson | Rabbi Dani Brett | Rebbetzin Pnina Spinner | Rabbi Daniel Kaplan | Rebbetzin Avigail Popack | Rabbi Daniel Beider | Rabbi Azriel Uzvolk | Rabbi Mendel Popack | Rabbi Shmuel Ozhek | Rabbi Dovid Wineberg | Rabbi David Shaw | Rabbi Dovi Goldstein | Rabbi Danny Sackstein | Rabbi Mendel Rabinowitz | Rebbetzin Maria Beider | Rabbi Mordechai Rodal | Rabbi Justin Swaine | Rabbi Shmuli Kagan | Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg | Rabbi Ari Shishler | Rebbetzin Dr Dvori Blumenau | Rabbi Darryl Froom | Rabbi Asher Deren | Rabbi Dr P Zekry | Rebbetzin Joan Bernhard from the writings of her late husband, Rabbi NM Bernhard, zl | Rabbi Dovid Baddiel | Rebbetzin Tziporah Carlebach | Rabbi Hillel Bernstein | Rabbi Yossi Chaikin | Rabbi Aharon Zulberg | Rabbi Eli Spinner | Rebbetzin Lee-at Goldstein | Rabbi Avi Shlomo | Rebbetzin Joan Bernhard | Rabbi Yochi Ziegler | Rabbi Avigdor Blumenau | Dayan B Rapoport | Rabbi Alon Friedman | Rabbi Mendel Lipskar | Rabbi Gedalia Kauffman | Rabbi Rodney Richard | Rabbi Dovid Hazdan | Rabbi David Chiger | Rabbi Ami Glixman | Rabbi Chanoch Galperin | Rabbi Shlomo Glikberg | Rabbi Yoel Smith | Rebbetzin Aviva Thurgood | Rebbetzin Laia Uzvolk | Rabbi Levi Avtzon | Rabbi Matthew Tucker | Rebbetzin Gila Chitiz | Rabbi Yosef Menachem Salzer | Rebbetzin Feige Hazdan | Rabbi Sean Cannon | Rabbi Steven Krawitz | Rabbi David Mesinter | Rebbetzin Sara Ozhekh | Rebbetzin Temmi Hadar | Rebbetzin Chami Baddiel | Rabbi Levi and Rebbetzin Rosie Popack | Rabbi Yechezkel Auerbach | Rabbi Shimon Wolpe | Rebbetzin Tamar Taback | Rabbi Motti Hadar | Rabbi Yossie Hecht | Rabbi Yossy Goldman | Rebbetzin Tali Kagan | Rabbi Pinny Kahn | Rabbi Jonathan Fox | Rabbi Alex Carlebach | Rabbi Naftali Silver | Rebbetzin Debra Rubanowitz | Rebbetzin Debbie Suiza | Rabbi Reuven Zail | Rebbetzin Aviva Rabinowitz | Rebbetzin Mashi Lipskar |



All together now

There is a dramatic scene described in the *Haggadah* of a *Seder* that took place during turbulent and uncertain times. Five of the greatest sages of the time were there. The Temple has just been destroyed and Roman soldiers were all over Israel. The future looked bleak.

But on that *Seder* night, they find faith and light, strength and hope. They are so enveloped by the experience of relearning and relooking and re-engaging with telling the story of the historic events of our slavery and Divine liberation from Egypt that the night passes by.

And then – their students enter the room to announce that the dawn has broken. As if to say that the darkness dissipates; that, after delving with such tremendous faith and energy into the story of the Exodus, the light has broken through, and the time has come to recite the *Shema* – the ultimate declaration of faith.

The *Seder* experience carries them through the night of their uncertainty, and gives them strength and hope and inspiration. And it can do the same for us, as it has done for generations of Jews, in good times and tough times.

This is going to be a Pesach like no other. This year, we will be having our *Seders* on our own. We won't have friends and extended family around the table. But we will have the opportunity to immerse ourselves fully and deeply in an experience that takes us back to ancient Egypt and the awesome miracles of the ten plagues, the splitting of the sea and our G-d-given freedom. We will have the opportunity to connect to the generations of Jews who handed to their children the story of the history of our people born in slavery and the Divine liberation. We will be able to feel the pain of the persecution and the awesome light of the redemption of our ancestors.

We will also be able to feel the presence of Hashem at our *Seder* tables. One of the names of G-d is *HaMakom*, literally, "The Place". This name comes up twice in the *Haggadah*. What does it mean when we call G-d "The Place"? Our sages explain that the world is not G-d's place, but that G-d is the place of the world. In other words, we don't look at G-d as part of our universe; rather, G-d contains everything. He holds the universe together. He holds our lives together. On *Seder* night, we remember how G-d freed our ancestors, how He looked after them, how He has held us throughout the journey of Jewish history, and how He holds us today.

We will be able to go on this inspiring journey of faith and history, of inspiration and knowledge, of joy and strength, because the *Haggadah* and the mitzvah of the night will carry us.

But we don't need to go on this journey of the *Seder* night alone. With this in mind, I invited the remarkable and talented rabbis and rebbetzins of our community to be our companions on this journey. Their response, as always, has been so positive and warm.

And so, I'm excited and honoured to present the first ever Unity Haggadah Companion from the rabbis and rebbetzins of South Africa. It is a compendium of insights and inspirational ideas from our rabbinic leadership. Each of these short pieces reflects the unique insights and

personalities of their authors. We are blessed as a community to have such unified and inspiring teachers and leaders.

The words of the *Haggadah* contain Divine wisdom for our times and all generations, and the comments and insights presented in this companion will help us discover the endless depth and light contained in these ancient words.

I invite you all to pore over the ideas, to explore them as preparation for your *Seder*. To print out the companion and select a few ideas that really speak to you to read out loud at the *Seder*.

I wish you all a *Chag Kasher Vsame'ach* – a beautiful Pesach, and deeply meaningful, enriching *Seders*. Let's make this year's *Seders* the best we have ever experienced.

May G-d bring health and healing to our community, to our country, to our world.

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein
Nissan 5780
April 2020



Curiosity and wonder

How does this night differ from all other nights? It is customary at the *Seder* for the youngest child to ask the “Four Questions”. If there is no child present, the adults pose the questions to each other. If a person is alone, even if they are the wisest of all people, they must ask themselves the “Four Questions”.

This beloved tradition is in the spotlight this Pesach, since, sadly, many Jews will find themselves without their children and grandchildren on *Seder* night. Even those of us parents with children at home will find ourselves feeling alone, without our parents and grandparents joining us.

The custom to ask the “Four Questions” in any circumstances is quite unusual and thought-provoking. What can we learn from it? We learn to summon the child within each one of us – the part of us buried under the adult worries, adult practicalities and cold adult logic; the part that still looks at the world with endless curiosity and wonder.

“And even if all of us were wise, all people of understanding, all elderly, all of us knowing the Torah, there is still a mitzvah upon us to tell the saga of the Exodus from Egypt.”

We all know the mitzvah of the *Seder* ‘*Vehigadata L'binchah*’ – to pass on our sacred teachings to our children. But we also know that the world does not always revolve around children, and that our children learn their most memorable and powerful life lessons at home simply from observing their parents. As parents and grandparents, we must own our influence, the pivotal role we play in our children’s lives – and ensure we ourselves remain inspired and excited so that we can inspire and excite those who look up to us to learn how to live.

Ultimately, through asking these four childlike questions, we learn the deepest lesson of the Pesach *Seder* – the lesson of *emunah pshuta*, simple faith. That, in times like these, we humbly acknowledge that we know nothing, except maybe just one thing: “Who knows One? One is our Almighty G-d Who Rules over the Heavens and the Earth.” And that we are always, no matter what, His beloved children.

I would like to thank all our diverse and talented Rabbis and Rebbetzins for their beautiful contributions to this *Haggadah*. May it encourage us to ask the questions. May it enable us to find the answers. And may it lift us all at this challenging time.

Le'shana ha'ba b'Yerushalayim.

Gina Goldstein
Nissan 5780
April 2020

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NISSAN

The Month of Nissan

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See You at the Seder!

Rabbi Osher Feldman

Cape Town Hebrew Congregation – Gardens Shul

Pesach will be very different for most of us this year. Instead of large sedarim with extended family and friends, this year's seder under lockdown will have just immediate family. For some this means with only their children, for others with only their spouse, and for still others, it may even mean having the seder alone! A very sad thought indeed.

But you know what helped me feel a little bit better about it? Zoom! Not because it helps with the actual seder (one is not allowed to use Zoom on yom tov; a good idea is to rather share a Zoom pre-Pesach good yom tov get-together with the kids and grandkids), but because it reminds us that there are deeper realities of connection that bind us.

If there would have been a lockdown a hundred years ago, short of a short phone call or a message on the radio, there would have been no way of staying socially connected. Nobody would have ever imagined the level of virtual connection we are experiencing today in lockdown. This is because a hundred years ago that reality didn't exist. Or didn't it? Sure it existed; humanity just hadn't discovered it yet.

Our sages teach us there is an even deeper reality than virtual connection. We call it soulful connection. We may not see it yet in its full revealed reality, but it exists. On the level of soulful connection, we are all united as one wherever we are in the world. Nobody is ever alone. We are all bound up together with each other and with G-d.

By observing the seder with all of its rituals, traditions and laws, we connect with a deeper part of the human psyche, the Neshamah. The soul. And when we do, we can be sure that we are celebrating the seder with all of our spiritual brothers and sisters around the world and with all of our ancestors before us. And what better space to tap into this reality than the Pesach seder, the space that unites our past, present and future in such a powerful and meaningful way?

This thought brought some encouragement for me in lockdown; I hope it does for you too. See you at the seder!



It's in the Air

Rabbi Ari Kievman

Chabad House

Do you have the “symptoms”?

Today everyone's worried about “symptoms.” But it's not the symptoms we are concerned about, but that which causes them: the virus, which itself is unobservable.

But even when someone gets the symptoms (G-d forbid), that's not the real concern; the real concern is that the symptoms mean that we have it.

This is also true in a positive sense. Everything that happens in this world is actually only a symptom of a spiritual energy that has been unleashed in higher spiritual realms.

When a miracle – such as the Exodus from Egypt – occurs, it is because a supernatural divine energy was present at that time. The physical Exodus was a ‘symptom’ of the spiritual energy that was conducive for liberation and freedom that was present on that fateful night, the 15th of Nisan, 3332 years ago.

The annual calendar is circular. Every year on every date, the same spiritual energies are present. So that same energy that allowed for the miracle of the Exodus 3332 years ago is also present every year on the same night. We ourselves can tap into it and experience liberation too.

So an essential part of the seder is a question we must all ask ourselves: in which area of my life do I lack freedom? What are the unholy habits that limit and “enslave” me and don't allow me to maximize myself – my soul – and be who I know I can be? And understand that the seder night is the time when we can go free.

The Jews in Egypt didn't have the power to go free on their own; they needed divine assistance. We too, even if we don't have the power ourselves: on this night we are granted divine assistance to do so. The energy is quite literally in the air.



Another New Year?

Rabbi Yehuda and Rebbetzin Estee Stern
Sydenham Shul

‘Shana Tova’ and ‘Happy New Year’ are wishes and greetings that we are accustomed to hearing on Rosh Hashana and the High Holiday season. G-d created the world in the month of Tishrei, and every year He infuses the world with renewed energy.

However, the Torah calls the month of Nissan the ‘head of all months’, making Pesach the head of the year. In other words, we have another New Year. Why would that be necessary? Sounds like a mere ploy to motivate us again...

Our Sages explain that G-d created the world in the month of Tishrei (Rosh Hashana), but with the intention that the month of Nissan would bring purpose and direction to the world. It was in the month of Nissan that G-d took us out of Egypt to be His nation. It was in this month that we began preparing for the giving of the Torah. It was in this month that G-d brought to fruition the two reasons for creation, the Torah and the Jewish People. This is the purpose of a second New Year.

Rosh Hashana is the head of the year for the laws of creation and nature. Pesach, however, is the head of the year for the revelation of G-d’s hand and the miraculous way He governs the world. Pesach reveals a deeper connection between G-d and His people, one that surpasses logic or nature.

We often get carried away by the stress and pressure of life. Work, family, money and health all seem to be governed by ‘mother nature’, and we have to deal with it, for good or for bad. The month of Nissan reminds us of the truth: everything is in the hands of G-d and it is all miraculous, whether we can see it or not.

The Great Shabbat Talking in Darkness with Absolute Faith

Rabbi Avraham Tanzer
Rosh Yeshiva Yeshiva College

I wish to record our ongoing thanks and appreciation to our distinguished Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein, for his outstanding leadership in these most challenging of times. His initiative of bringing the opinions of Daas Torah, our leading Torah leadership, to our attention is a source of great chizuk to us.

The Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos HaGadol, the Great Shabbat, because in Egypt it was the day the Jewish people took the sheep that they would bring as their Pesach offerings. Each family tied its sheep to the bedpost and informed the infuriated Egyptians that the sheep, an Egyptian deity, would become an offering for them. The Egyptians were powerless to react, but the Jews did not know that. They acted as they did because Moshe told them to – and because they trusted Hashem and His prophet. Thus the Shabbos before the redemption was a day when the Jews showed emunah – faith and were rewarded with Hashem’s protection. Therein lies an important key to our personal and national growth: in order to usher in a geula, a miraculous redemption, we need to show MESIRUS NEFESH – commitment and determination to ‘walk the talk’ and to do what we fear, to grow ourselves and move beyond our limitations. This emunah – following through with the strength of conviction – is the first step of miracles and expansion – and indeed of the ‘long walk to freedom’.

It requires mesirus nefesh to take the high moral road – to be the person we wish to be even when it is least comfortable or convenient.

We commemorate this courage every year with the special title and status of ‘Great Shabbat’, which indicates that indeed this mesirus nefesh is required from us in each and every generation. We cannot respond to the challenges of our times and of educating and raising our own children – the new generation – to wisdom and morality based on the mesirus nefesh of our ancestors; we have to commit ourselves totally and take the risks that are inherent in growing up. We need to constantly talk of the mesirus nefesh of our parents and forebears, and inspire ourselves to take the high road.



Wishing you chag kasher v'sameach – may it be a true chag of cherus – freedom – for each of us personally and Klal Yisrael.

THE MONTH OF NISSAN

Remain Aflame

Rabbi Menachem Raff
Yeshiva Maharsha

The פסוק in describing the fire, the שא that was placed on the *Mizbeach*, says:¹
אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח, לא תכבה – a permanent fire shall remain aflame on the *Mizbeach*, it shall not be extinguished

ה"ה commanded that the *Kohanim* arrange three different stacks of wood, the *ma'arachos*, on the exterior *mizbeach* in order to burn, to consume the *korbonos* of *Klal Yisroel* for the purpose of achieving a ריח ניחוח לה', a pleasing aroma to *Hashem*.

Shabbos haGadol introduces us and leads us in to *Pesach*, *zman cheiruseinu*, *zman geulaseinu*! In the past years the creation of this *esh*, our *avoidas Hashem*, has been, as one has said so many times, through the vehicle of community: communal learning, communal *davening*, communal *Kiddush*, communal support in so many different ways.....however, this year we find ourselves in such strange circumstances!

To explain through a call I received this week: I was asked regarding the saying of *Kaddish*. My response was, there's not a *minyone* throughout the entire world! There's no public *krias haTorah* throughout the entire world! For whatever reason *HKB"H* has closed up our *Shuls*, our *Batei Midrashim*, our *Yeshivos*, our schools, *rachmana litzlan*!!

However, our *avoidas Hashem* through our individual, private *Tefillah* has not been taken away from us. Our commitment and follow-through on our individual, private *limud haTorah* has not been taken away from us.

The call of the hour, to each and every one of us, is to strengthen these *avoidas*, to call on our own personal internal resources, and to infuse them with the sentiment of the *posuk* of:
אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח, לא תכבה – a permanent fire shall remain aflame on the *Mizbeach*, it shall not be extinguished, and in this way to achieve the ריח ניחוח לה', pleasing aroma to *Hashem*!

Please G-d, through these *zchusim*, we should give *nachas* to *Avinu she'b'Shamayim*, Who in turn will send *besoivos tovos*, and to have the merit to herald the *geulah shelaima*, the coming of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*, *bimheira v'yameinu*, amen!

¹ Leviticus 6:6





PREPARATION

Preparation

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My tablecloth and me

Rebbetzin Hadassah Auerbach
Ohr Somayach Glenhazel

My Pesach table is much smaller than it ever was. We had to buy a new plastic to cover such a small table.

Yet my Pesach tablecloth is on, for the 48th Pesach since my husband and I have been married. It was given to me to embroider by my mother's cousin one Purim when I was 11 years old. Hungarian Chassidim give gifts on Purim like we do on Chanuka. I put it in my drawer and forgot about it; my grandmother found it one day and embroidered the whole thing and gave it back to me as an engagement present.

What has this tablecloth seen over the years?

A lot of spilled wine. Children and then grand-children standing on chairs, saying Mah Nishtanah and getting little chocolates from me; lots of munching the hand-matzah as we and our guests try to fulfill all the Mitzvos properly and quickly, leaning on pillows culled from the many bedrooms in our home... The crumbs from the Afikoman that has seen many small hands excitedly hiding, finding, hiding again...

Yet here we are. Great-grandparents now, and all alone. As I said to my husband last week, how the mighty have fallen! We started with two and Hashem has seen fit for us to celebrate Pesach just the two of us.

Will my old tablecloth understand?
Do I understand?

Get Thinking

Rabbi Baruch Rubanowitz
Kollel Yad Shaul

The seder is a personal journey. Everyone is encouraged to contemplate their own role in Jewish heritage and clarify their own attitudes. To this end, please consider the questions below, crystallize your own answers and share them with others throughout the holiday.

1. Why are we so grateful and surprised about the Exodus from Egypt? Hashem brought us there, so wasn't it His responsibility to correct the situation, using miracles if necessary to bring us back to where we came from?
2. Why does the Torah call the holiday חג הפסח – “The Holiday of Passing Over”? “Independence Day” seems much more appropriate. Later in history, the name זמן החרוּת – “Period of our Liberation” – was used; this seems more appropriate. Why does the Torah focus on the miracle of protection?
3. Was it really necessary to have ten plagues? Couldn't Hashem have sufficed with the last one? Or darkness for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire for the Jews?
4. Why was it necessary for Hashem to receive Paroh's consent for the Jews to leave? Couldn't He have ignored Paroh and the Egyptians and extracted the Jews despite the objections of the Egyptians and their leader? And when Paroh did give his permission, Hashem hardened his heart. Why go to all that trouble?
5. Why do we have so many mitzvos to remind us of the Exodus? Shabbos, tefillin, firstborn laws, interest laws – in fact a majority of mitzvos allude to this event in some way. Isn't this overdone?
6. Why is the wicked son a guaranteed staple for every family? The haggadah seems to assume that Jews will never get Jewish education right and that every family will have one wayward son.
7. Why is the Pesach celebration so dichotomous? We speak and behave as if we were royal and free, but we eat bitter herbs and salt water. Is the matzah to remind us of a poor man's bread or our speedy exit? Will the real Pesach please stand up?
8. Why does the haggadah focus on the makkos, the plagues on the Egyptians? Why the negativity? Why not focus on how we were freed instead of how the captors were punished? Why so many repeated afflictions rather than one non-destructive miracle?
9. A seder is usually child centric. So many actions are taken so the children will ask. If someone doesn't have kids at their seder, is their Pesach experience any less because of it?



Blessings on constructive thinking

Rabbi Jarred Bloch
Ohrsom Students

One of the most difficult balancing acts that one is forced to face when experiencing any threatening scenario, is to not become overwhelmed by a purely defensive state of mind – a type of mentality that, whilst being effective in being able to mitigate and prevent the imminent dangers, can, if left unmanaged, simultaneously create a comprehensive defeatist state of being, which can obviously have its own damaging consequences.

The verse in Tehillim¹ tells us that every time one tries to avoid negativity, one needs to simultaneously do proactive acts of goodness. This shows the inherent link between the requirement to always have a balanced mindset as to how one tackles these challenges and to always make sure to emphasise that there is a positive, active component to one's relationship with these challenges.

This same principle appears to manifest on a technical level in the laws of blessings. In siman 132 of Orach Chaim, the Shulchan Aruch rules that one doesn't make a blessing over the nullification of one's chametz on Erev Pesach; rather, one only makes a blessing over the burning of the chametz. The reason he gives is that one doesn't make blessings on matters of the heart, דבר שבלב, i.e., it seems that blessings require more tangible actions and are not applicable to mitzvos which are totally ethereal, based on pure thought.

A potential contradiction arises when one sees the ruling of the Vilna Gaon in Orach Chaim with regards to a ruling requiring a person to make a brocha for even thinking in learning, without any verbal enunciation, just simply plain thought.

Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg in his sefer Mishmeres Chaim reconciles this seeming contradiction and explains that there are two types of thought patterns. In the case of the nullification of chametz, the thought process required is negative and destructive and consequently the result is an expression of disassociation and emptiness. Conversely, the positive creative thought patterns expressed during Torah learning are inherently positive in nature with creative results. Therefore, we can refine our original understanding of the Shulchan Aruch and determine that a brocha is only omitted when there is no creative and productive result through one's thoughts. On the other hand, learning in thought and creative thinking alone have qualities that allow them to be categorized similarly to any type of meritorious physical act.

What brings blessing in the face of imminent threat is not just our best mitigation technique, but recognizing the new creative and constructive opportunities that one can accomplish specifically because of the unique conditions that one might be exposed to. But it all starts with a positive thought and a creative idea, hopefully one that you can make a blessing on.

¹ Psalms 34:15, 37:27



Kadesh

Rebbetzin Goldie Simpson
Great Park Shul

(Inspired by ספר המאמרים חי ניסן ת"ש)

It all starts with Kadesh. This night of healing, freedom, responsibility & opportunity starts with everyone standing around the table and reciting kiddush together, proclaiming "... for You have chosen us and sanctified us..." We acknowledge that we are holy, precious & chosen by Hashem. The seder is designed as a journey of growth, meant to inspire us to make personal resolutions to be our best selves. But this can be accomplished when we first and foremost remember not what we need to become, but what we ARE: sanctified children of Hashem; shining diamonds who were born into this world because G-d said, "You matter!"

Already the evening before Pesach we start to internalize the message of the Pesach kiddush. We search our homes for chametz with candle, feather and spoon, all of which are burned the following morning. But why burn the candle? It didn't touch chametz; it was used only to look for the chametz!

It is precisely for this reason that it needs to be burned. It is a tool that is used for searching for the undesirable in our homes - and inside ourselves. Pinpointing that which is unfavourable is indeed at times a necessary task. But once done, we burn that candle, reminding us that our ultimate objective is not to focus on finding the negative, but rather to see things with the paradigm described in the words of the kiddush – when we proclaim the essential positives in each person. Our goal is to see the strengths even in those who live a different lifestyle than the one we hold dear, to look for opportunities to search for – and bring out – the good in a spouse, child, neighbour and ourselves.



The 15 Steps & Seder Plate Manual and Toolkit

Rabbi Dani Brett
Torah City Wide, Cape Town

Although there is of course much symbolism in the seder plate, it is first and foremost a practical toolkit to facilitate the fulfilment of each of the steps at the seder. And those 15 steps themselves provide a manual to guide us through the numerous mitzvot of the night, which of course also have many levels of message and meaning. So, what you should be thinking as the haggadah takes you through its steps and substeps, and as you engage with the various items on the seder plate, is: which mitzvah or mitzvot (yes, sometimes a step has more than one) or minhag is being structured into this step, and how does this item get used at this point?

An example: there are four cups of wine. Note exactly where they are poured and where they are drunk. There's always a reason, firstly from a structural perspective, and then an underlying takeaway message as well. For example, the last cup of wine is held and placed in front of us during Hallel. Hallel itself is a mitzvah of the night – the only time, in fact, that we have such a mitzvah at night. And the Sages place one of the four cups in the framework for Hallel. What about the other three? Give that some thought.

This is just one example. But this is the thinking that can unlock and decode the framework of the seder. I hope that you find that this mindset enables you to truly engage with the haggadah instruction manual and the toolkit that accompanies it. But mostly, that you then find yourself alive in that space as well, analysing the steps and tools, to understand what, when, how and why.

I'll leave you with one last example: We have three matzahs as part of the seder plate. And one is broken in 2, leaving us with four pieces effectively. Each of them is used at four of the 15 steps respectively. Have a look and figure out when each piece is used and why.



Inner Exodus

Rebbetzin Pnina Spinner
Chabad of Glenhazel

In each one of us there is an Egypt and a Pharaoh and a Moses and Freedom in a Promised Land. And every point in time is an opportunity for another Exodus.

Egypt is a place that chains you to who you are, stopping you from growth and change. And Pharaoh is that voice inside that mocks your attempts to escape, saying, “How could you attempt being today something you were not yesterday? Aren’t you good enough just as you are? Don’t you know who you are?”

Moses is the liberator, the infinite force deep within, an all-powerful drive to break out from any bondage, to always transcend, to connect with that which has no bounds.

But Freedom and the Promised Land are not elements that lie in wait. They are your own achievements which you may create at any moment, in anything that you do, simply by breaking free from whoever you were the day before.

Last Passover you may not have yet begun to light a candle. Or some other mitzvah still waits for you to fulfill its full potential. This year, defy Pharaoh and light up the world and your world with plenty of light.

This year we have more of an opportunity as we all sit at our own tables and conduct our own seders.

May our seders this year light up the whole world, sending so much healing to all, and sending the final redemption we are all longing for.

Wishing you all a kosher and freilichen Pesach.



K A D E S H



Kadesh

⇒ The four cups

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The Why and What to Do With the Four Cups of Wine

Rabbi Daniel Kaplan
Yeshiva College

Why do we drink four cups of wine on Pesach?

The theme throughout Pesach is cheirut (freedom). It encompasses the whole chag and in particular the seder night. The seder night is a night where we don't only speak about freedom but we also experience it. The experience of the night is meant to guide us not only in remembering our ancestors' path to freedom but also to serve as our opportunity to find our own personal freedom.

One of the ways we do this is by drinking four cups of wine at the seder. The Gemara¹ tells us that we drink wine like free people and therefore there is a commandment that every person must drink four cups of wine. The Yerushalmi² highlights this by connecting the four cups of wine to the four expressions of freedom.

However, there is another dimension to drinking the four cups of wine during leil haseder which is mentioned by the Tosafot³. When we do the four mitzvot on the seder night – kiddush, retelling the story of going out of Egypt, benching and Hallel – we add an extra element by accompanying them with a cup of wine. It gives extra importance to the mitzvot, exactly like we do at a wedding or a brit, etc. This reason suggests that the seder night is also a night of praise and thanks to Hashem.

How big should the cup of wine be? The Gemara in Shabbat⁴ tells us that we should use a cup that holds at least a revi'it of wine. The Shulchan Aruch⁵ paskens that this is the same amount that should be used on Pesach night. So how much is a revi'it? This is a machloket (debate) between Rav Chaim Naeh, who says it is 86ml, and the Chazon Ish, who says it's 150ml. The Mishnah Berurah paskens that it is okay to use a cup that holds 86ml. However, if you want to be machmir, the Biur Halacha writes that for the first cup, which is kiddush, one should use a cup that holds 150ml, while the rest can be 86ml. There is also a debate whether we should drink a cheek full each time or the majority of the cup. Tosfot say a cheek full is enough, whereas the Ramban says that because the night is all about freedom it's not enough just to taste; we should drink the majority of the cup. The Shulchan Aruch cites both opinions. The Magen Avraham says that to make it easier, one shouldn't use massive cups – use smaller cups to solve the problem.

Therefore, the four cups of wine symbolise the feelings we should experience on the seder night. First and foremost, they help us find our own way to freedom, to tackle our own challenges and free ourselves from them. Secondly, the seder night is a spiritual journey where we can reach



incredible spiritual heights. With the help of the different steps and the four cups of wine throughout the seder we have the opportunity to strengthen and deepen our relationship with Hashem, ultimately ending off our night in praise and thanks to Hashem. I suggest that each time you drink a cup of wine at the seder this year think about how you can reach your own personal freedom and how you can create your special bond with Hashem.

¹ Talmud Pesachim 109b

² Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 10, Halacha 1

³ Tosafot, Talmud Sukkah 38a

⁴ Talmud Shabbat 76b

⁵ Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 472:9

Times of challenge

Rebbetzin Avigail Popack
Chabad Centre of Cape Town

Women are not obligated to do "time bound" positive mitzvot (commandments). There are three places in Jewish tradition where this does not apply.

Tosafot, a foremost commentator, teaches that the Chanukah miracle came about in the merit of Jewish women.

We recognize this in the story of Chana and her seven sons and her sacrifice at that time, and Judith and her bravery against the general Holofernes.

In this merit, women can light Chanukah candles and the halacha (ruling) states that the woman's Chanukah candle lighting fulfills the obligation for the entire family.

Secondly, the reading of megillah on Purim – a time bound mitzvah, being read both evening and morning – is another exception. This is in the merit of Esther Hamalka (the queen), whose leadership, foresight and bravery saved all Jews at that time in history.

Thirdly the four cups of wine which we traditionally drink at both seders at night, although time bound, still obligate women. This is because, as our Sages teach: "Due to the merit of the women we were redeemed from Mitzrayim."

These few examples indicate that women have always played a pivotal role in educating and inspiring the Jewish people and beyond.

We are now being called upon more than ever to bring forth our emunah (trust), creativity and ability during the present difficult time in our history. I have no doubt we will!

AM YISRAEL CHAI

¹ Talmud, Sota 11b



Bracha of Shehecheyanu

Rabbi Daniel Beider
Ohr Somayach Glenhazel

We are filled with overwhelming gratitude to Hashem for freeing us from Egypt. But He also arranged for us to be enslaved there in the first place. Clearly, it cannot be the case that we are simply thanking Him for rescuing us from a situation He created.

It must be the case that we are thanking Him for the journey. Being free after having experienced prolonged slavery is very different to having always been free. Against the backdrop of slavery, freedom looks very different.

At the start of our seder, we make the shehecheyanu blessing. It is hidden at the back end of kiddush. It is not exclusive to Pesach, and could easily be overlooked, and often is. To do so this year would be tragic.

“Shehecheyanu” is a chance for us to thank Hashem for having enabled us to make it through to another yom tov. We often take it for granted that we will be around to celebrate yom tov after yom tov for many years.

In our daily tefilah we say that Hashem is “mechadesh b’tuvo b’chol yom tamid” – He “renews in His goodness every day, always”. The creation is renewed each day. The processes which we are so accustomed to, gravity, sunrise, sunset, rain falling and the fact that plants grow, are reestablished each day. We dismiss all this as “nature”.

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, all this looks very different. Particularly now, our lives can seem very fragile. Now we are acutely aware that our bodies’ ability to fend off infection and disease does NOT always happen in the manner which we have become accustomed to.

The fact that we have made it through to Pesach – that Hashem has kept us alive – takes on a whole new seriousness.

Let us focus on shehecheyanu as though our lives depend on it. Because they do.



URCHATZ



Urchatz

Haggadah Tidbits

Rabbi Azriel Uzvolk

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URCHATZ

Haggadah Tidbits

Rabbi Azriel Uzvolk

Victory Park Shul

Why Kadesh and only then Urchatz?

Surely the order should be reversed; holiness needs to be preceded by purity. One cannot achieve holiness without first being “clean”, so why Kaddesh and then Urchatz?

Pesach commemorates escaping from Egypt, which is akin to running out of a fire. When escaping a fire one cannot afford the luxury of measured, calculated steps. The main thing is to get to safety. Only afterwards can we begin to put things into perspective. On a spiritual plane, this expresses the idea of teshuva. The first step is to jump out of the negative space and to attach oneself to kedusha, but then the process of calculated perspective needs to begin. Kadesh and then Urchatz.



Karpas

**The Four Questions at the
Seder and Their Answers**

Rabbi Mendel Popack

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K A R P A S



The Four Questions at the Seder and Their Answers

Rabbi Mendel Popack
Chabad Centre of Cape Town

The 'four questions' asked by the children on seder night is arguably the most famous part of the seder. It incorporates an important aspect of chinuch, education, creates inclusion, and highlights the value of each and every member of the family down to the youngest child.

However, where in the haggadah are the answers to these FOUR questions found?

The ABARBANEL, a foremost scholar and commentator, says that we find the answer in the first sentence after the questions. It begins:

"WE WERE SLAVES TO PHARAOH IN EGYPT" – which emphasizes our SLAVERY and answers two of our questions: why we eat MATZAH – which was the bread of our affliction and the bread of poverty while in Egypt, and similarly, why we eat MARROR – symbolizing the bitter slavery which we endured.

The next part of the sentence answers the other two questions: "BUT G-D, OUR G-D, TOOK US OUT FROM THERE". This emphasizes the time of REDEMPTION.

Why do we dip? TIBUL (to dip) has the same letters as BITUL – (humility) this is how we left Egypt ready to become Hashem's nation.

Finally, why do we recline? To show that we are as free as kings.

The Malbim explains the continuation of the verse, "WITH A STRONG HAND AND AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM."

Strong hand – Hashem shattered the natural order of things. G-d's strength was apparent even to the Egyptians.

An outstretched arm – if you look at an outstretched arm you can follow it back to the person. So too, the miracles in Mitzrayim were clearly "THE HAND OF G-D", and there was no doubt that it came from Him.



Y A C H A T Z



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YACHATZ

Right Now

Rabbi Shmuel Ozhekh
Ohr Somayach Cape Town

“I don’t have any time!”

Pesach is about breaking the hurried state of life. The feeling of never having any time to actually start living.

“The wicked go around in this world like a circle” – Psalms.¹

The Ishbizter teaches that Yachatz, the breaking of the traditionally round matzah in half, is a profound act of liberation from the shackles of life, from the familiar statement of “once I finish this then I can start living,” although we discover that there is constantly more to do.

Break the cycle of asking where I can find life in the future, of thinking that once I make a certain amount of money I can relax, once I achieve enough I can feel like I’m enough, and bring yourself totally into the present; understand that you intrinsically are enough and have a right to exist and experience life fully now.

¹ Psalms 12:9



Yachatz – Afikoman’s Little Brother

Rabbi Dovid Wineberg
Marais Rd Shul

Which is the most important ingredient at the seder? What allows us to effectively re-experience Exodus?

It’s not the proud matzah with which we perform the mitzvah, nor afikoman, the wine or salt water. It’s the forgotten broken middle matzah, younger brother to the afikoman.

“There is nothing more whole than a broken heart,” sang the Chassidic giant R’ Aharon of Karlin.

Jewish Law instructs us that when telling the story of our liberation, the broken middle matzah must be visible & present. This is to capture the spirit of brokenness – affliction – personified by the “bread of affliction”. Only then can we experience true freedom.

Many this year are reading this passage alone at their seders. I think of my parents, may they be well, sitting in Vancouver, just the two of them. In a lifetime of Shlichus, they have hosted thousands at their seders! They are blessed with dozens of progeny kenehora. Yet, this year they sit alone. The whole matzah, cups overflowing with red wine – even the marror – these do not capture their loneliness like that small, broken, dislocated matzah.

The story of Pesach is that the same broken matzah of affliction becomes the very symbol of liberation. As we say in the haggadah, “Why do we eat this matzah? Because when our ancestors fled Egypt, there was no time for the dough to rise.” Brokenness becomes the instrument of liberation.

The seder is an opportunity to embrace the cracks in our life. At the seder, salt water, bitter herbs and broken matzah are as much our story as the overflowing wine, whole matzah and delicious kneidlach.

Our sedorim this year, dislocated and unusual as they will be, are very much a part of our story.

As you break your middle matzah, embrace this chapter, reach out to each other in care & concern and hear the whispers of redemption rumble ever louder.

Next year in Jerusalem!



MAGGID



Maggid

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The Power of Love

Rabbi David Shaw
Beit Hamedrash Hagadol Sandton

There is a custom which is brought in the Shulchan Aruch¹ to distribute nuts to the children on the night of Pesach. This is a rather strange custom, as we all know that during the High Holidays, on Rosh Hashanah, we are precluded from eating nuts. One of the reasons is that the Hebrew word for “nut” is close to the numerical value (gematria) of the word for “sin”. We eschew any connection, even a tenuous one, to the concept of sin.

I heard from one of my teachers that the reason that it is allowed on Pesach, is because we are so confident that we will come closer to G-d and repent out of love when we count our manifold blessings over the Chag. We know that on Rosh Hashanah we will do Teshuvah (repent) out of fear and we know that Teshuvah out of fear wipes out all our sins. Teshuvah out of love, however, as we see in the Gemara in Yoma,² does not merely wipe out our bad deeds but transforms them all into great merits. Therefore at the Pesach seder we don't mind any connection to “sin”, as we are so confident that we will surely repent for our sins out of love for and gratitude to Hashem. That is the power of Pesach! That is the power of Teshuva! That is the power of love!

¹ Shulchan Aruch, Chapter 472

² Talmud Yoma 86b



Pesach – Heaven and Earth

Rabbi Dovi Goldstein

Ohr Savoy and MD of Beth Din Kosher

Why is the structure of the seder all in question and answer format? Parents ask their children and if there are no children, spouses or other members should ask each other.

Pesach is the festival of speaking. The word פסח - *Pesach* is a contraction of פה סאך - *peh sach*, “the mouth that speaks”. The hidden and deeper meaning of Pesach is that the very essence of the festival and the seder night is the concept of speaking.

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner (1906-1980), the great post-war thinker and Rosh Yeshiva, explains that the brocha we say in the morning after going to the bathroom, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר - Asher Yatzar, is followed by the brocha אֱלֹהֵי נֶשְׁחָמָה - Elokai Neshoma. Asher Yatzar gives thanks to Hashem for our physical needs and Elokai Neshoma shows gratitude for our spiritual needs. The link that connects the two brochas is the last two words of Asher Yatzar, וּמַאֲפִי לֵאסוֹס - *umafla la'asos* - ‘Hashem Who acts wondrously’. Rabbi Moses Isserles (1530-1572), the great Rabbi of Krakow and Ashkenazi posek known as the Ramo, explains that the meaning of “Who acts wondrously” refers to the supernatural wonder that Hashem created us as a composite being containing both spiritual and physical, which is most apparent through our ability to speak.

In Torah thought, humans are not defined as *homo sapiens* – wise man, but rather as “speakers”. Many animals and even plants can communicate with each other; however, the communication of human beings is unique. Speech takes an abstract concept, which exists only in the spiritual realm of our minds, and transmits it to another human being living in the physical realm. We need to appreciate the great power in our ability to communicate. Speech is the most elevated and enlightened capability that we possess with the power to build and the power to destroy.

It is for this reason that Pesach and the seder have to be transmitted via question and answer, by speech. The night of Pesach is the ultimate building of our people and the continuation from one generation to another. It is our commitment on this night to transmit the tradition that we received 3332 years ago as free-thinking composite beings, with the unique ability to choose between right and wrong, for we are made from both heaven and earth.



Maggid

Rabbi Danny Sackstein

Sunny Road Kehilla

There are two Torah commandments on the first night of Pesach: 1. eating matzah & 2. maggid – the recitation of the haggadah and the discussions surrounding it. The word maggid means to speak, to tell. To tell a particular story – the story of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. Most importantly, maggid is about fulfilling the commandment of the Torah on this night by the power of the living spoken word; we communicate to our children the events of the Exodus. This is the night when G-d’s might was revealed to the world, forming the basis of the faith of Israel.

By word of mouth we revive in our hearts, and the hearts of our children, the memory of the event of our liberation. This night, the night of the birth of the Jewish nation, has been designated by G-d to remind ourselves and educate our children. A nation who knows where it comes from knows where it is going. The seder is a wonderful opportunity to educate our children about the Divine mission of the Jewish people. The Sages prepared for us the content of maggid in the haggadah to guide us in the fulfilment of this mitzvah.

Let’s use this opportunity wisely, carefully reading the haggadah in a language we all understand, passing over our rich, holy heritage to our children.



Challenge Yourself

Rabbi Mendel Rabinowitz
Greenside Shul

One of the three positive mitzvot (commandments) we are obligated to observe on Pesach is the mitzvah of maggid, of verbally recounting the slavery and subsequent Exodus from Egypt. This is performed during the seder after the middle matzah is broken and the larger piece put aside for the afikoman. This year, many of us will be having a "quiet seder", and some will even be alone.

The Tosefta states that "A person is obligated to relate the story of the Exodus for the entire evening even if it means relating the story to himself."¹

What can a person gain by relating the story to themselves?

Relating the story, maggid, is not merely a history lesson. It is a challenge to ourselves. It is a challenge to learn more about our heritage and a challenge to appreciate our freedom, which we often take for granted. In our current "lockdown" we are all suffering. So many things that we are accustomed to have been temporarily denied to us. We need to challenge ourselves to be appreciative of everything that we have. This year more than any other year, let us appreciate the blessings we have even in situations of difficulty.

¹ Tosefta, Pesachim 10:8, 10:11

Freedom through Faith

Rebbetzin Maria Beider
Ohr Somayach Glenhazel

The introduction to the seder, ha lachma, found at the beginning of maggid, has always puzzled me. There is a profound dichotomy inherent in the essence of matzah. Is matzah the bread of affliction and slavery, lechem oni, or is it the bread of liberty and the free man?

The answer is found in the phrase, "Whoever is hungry, come and eat: whoever is in need, come and partake in the seder."

According to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks¹, by simply inviting others to come and share our food and be a part of the seder, one is transforming the bread of affliction into the bread of freedom. Liberty can be symbolized by the ability to give to others and share bread with others.

A person who fears they will have no food tomorrow is not free to share their bread. They are functioning in survival mode, only able to look out for themselves. They are quintessentially poor.

Conversely, one who is willing to share their food shows that they are capable of thinking about the other. They are free to reach out, connect and be concerned with communal needs and demonstrate responsibility to other people, even if they are strangers. The free individual exudes a profound faith that there will be enough for tomorrow.

This year, though, our invitation rings somewhat hollow. We are well aware that many people will be sitting alone on seder night, due to the worldwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. So how can we replicate this notion of freedom and sharing?

Next time we go shopping, we can exercise our sense of freedom by not panic buying. By moderating our shopping tendencies in these uncertain times, we are actively expressing our belief that there will be enough for tomorrow, as well as thinking about the needs of the community. We are explicitly demonstrating our faith in Hashem. This is the meaning of freedom.

¹ Pesach Haggadah, pp. 22-25



Never Alone

Rabbi Mordechai Rodal
Chabad of Norwood

All who are hungry should come and eat; all who are needy should come and celebrate the Pesach seder with us. Given the unique circumstances of social distancing this Pesach, perhaps we should skip saying this seemingly superfluous invitation?

Even under normal circumstances, this paragraph seems out of place. Even a die-hard procrastinator like me, who thrives on doing everything at the last minute, wouldn't leave it this late. Shouldn't this have been done earlier, before leaving shul, or for the organized ones among us, before Erev Pesach? What's the point of inviting guests when we're already seated at our table, let alone when we're up to the fifth step of the seder?

The truth is that this invitation isn't necessarily about eating and drinking. Surely that was done already (much?) earlier. This paragraph is an invitation to all who are spiritually hungry or needy to participate, learn and grow. As we start maggid and embark on a journey of the soul, we are inviting and encouraging everyone to ask questions, dig deeper, discover more about themselves, and make the most of the seder experience.

So despite practicing social distancing, we can still engage in spiritual connecting. Whether the crowd at our seder table is a fraction of what it usually is, or if we're unfortunately doing it solo, this paragraph should resonate with us. When's the last time you formally invited yourself to yourself?

By the way, you're not conducting your seder alone. Have you ever noticed that some of this paragraph is in Aramaic instead of the usual Hebrew like the rest of the haggadah?

There's a fascinating reason for this (among others). The Talmud¹ tells us that it is usually preferable to daven in Hebrew because the angels who carry our prayers heavenward don't understand Aramaic. There are certain times, however, when "Hashem Himself" is present, and we can therefore daven in any language.

The seder is one of these special times. Saying a few lines in Aramaic instead of Hebrew reminds us that Hashem Himself is celebrating with us at our seder!

¹ Shabbat 12b; Sotah 33a

The Redemption continued

Rabbi Justin Swaine
Herzlia Schools

The way in which a person starts an initiative will often set the tone of what is to come after. The way that we start the Maggid section in the Haggadah is with the stanza of "Ha lachma anya," loosely translated as "this is the bread of our affliction".

There are 2 lines in this paragraph that I would like to focus on. "Whoever is hungry, let them come and eat, whoever is in need, let them come and enjoy the Pesach". We have a command here to invite people in who need somewhere to go for the Pesach seder.

Why is the command to invite others in given specifically on Pesach? What makes Pesach unique that this command to invite others in, is requested of us now?

I once saw an answer from Rabbi Yaakov Haber who quotes in the name of the Vilna Gaon's book Aderet Eliyahu. There it says the following: There are 3 foundational events that have occurred in the world. They are: the creation of the world, the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah. The reason why these 3 events are so foundational is because these events are still continuing and we are the ones who are continuing them.

The creation of the world still continues through having children and is dependent on us. Every child is a continuation of the creation. The giving of the Torah still continues through teaching and learning. Every word that is given over to another continues the giving of the Torah. The redemption from Egypt is also continuing as we wait for the Mashiach to come. How does this include us, though? Every time we redeem a person from some difficulty, we are continuing the redemption from Egypt. If someone needs an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on or some food to eat and we help them with their issue, we are continuing the redemption.

Therefore, we can answer our original question of why on Pesach, specifically, is there a command to ask others in. When we feed those who are hungry and bring in those who are suffering, we are continuing the redemption that started in Egypt and redemption is one of the key themes of Pesach.



All Together

Rabbi Shmuli Kagan
Bnei Akiva

Why do we specifically welcome people in need to our seder?

הא לחמא עגיא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים. כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח.

“This is the bread of destitution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is famished should come and eat; anyone who is in need should come and partake of the Pesach sacrifice.”

Welcoming guests, especially the less fortunate, is a value dear to the Jewish people. Our forefather Avraham was famous for his hachnasat orchim (hospitality). Interestingly, though, early on in the haggadah we declare an invitation to anyone to join us for the seder. As touching as that sounds, the timing is a bit late! Firstly, we have already recited kiddush, which signals the meal has already begun. Secondly, halachically one can only share in the Korban Pesach of another if one was included in the group who offered it earlier in the day. Additionally, we aren't actually expected at this point to leave our homes to look for guests.

Consequently, this invitation seems not to be practical, but rather ceremonial. It is there to teach us a lesson. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1903-1993) explains we begin our seder with an awareness of others. This is critical because Pesach is the anniversary of when the Jewish family became the Jewish nation. ‘*Bnei Yisrael*’ now referred to a people, not only the sons of Jacob.

To be a nation, we need to feel a responsibility for each other. The Talmud¹ states, “*Kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*”, meaning all of Israel are responsible for each other.

The Hebrew word for nation – *am*, אִם – has the same spelling as *im*, meaning “with”. To be a nation we need to connect *with* each other. To feel together, realising we have a shared destiny.

Despite the isolation the lock-down has brought through this terrible pandemic, the Jewish people feel an existential connection to each other. Just as the haggadah beckons us to be aware of others in need even though it may be too late to act, we should feel a togetherness even though this year we may physically not be in each other's presence.

¹ Talmud Shevu'ot 39a

What does G-d Want of Us?

Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg
Claremont Wynberg Shul, Cape Town

“Before consuming chametz, recite with proper intent: Our Father in Heaven, it is revealed and known to You that our will is to do Your will and to celebrate the festival of Pesach by eating matzah and refraining from chametz. But about this our hearts are distressed, because the oppression [we are suffering] prevents us [from fulfilling these commandments], and we find ourselves in mortal danger. We are ready and willing to fulfill Your mandate that “we shall live by Your commandments [and not die by them]”. And we are observing Your warning, “protect yourself and sustain your soul greatly”. We therefore beseech You to keep us alive, sustain us, and redeem us speedily, so that we may observe Your statutes, carry out Your will and serve You wholeheartedly. Amen.”

This prayer was compiled in the Bergen Belsen concentration camp by Rabbi Yissachar-Bernard Davids who, prior to World War II, served as Chief Rabbi of Rotterdam, Holland. On Pesach, he instructed his fellow prisoners to eat chametz due to the principle of *pikuach nefesh* – the paramount rule that preserving life takes precedence above all other commandments.

This year many will not be able to celebrate Pesach with friends and family as they normally do. They might feel that in some way their observance of the festival is diminished. The prayer of Rabbi Bernard Davids should give us strength. He taught his fellow inmates that, although they could not fulfil Pesach fully due to their circumstances, there was another, vital mitzvah they could fulfil: to protect their lives so that they might live to rejoice another day. By celebrating Pesach in lockdown, we are ensuring that we, and many others, will be able to celebrate many, many more Pesach Sedarim in the future.

With best wishes for a kosher, joyous and healthy Pesach.



Ask Away

Rabbi Ari Shishler

The Jewish Life Centre, Chabad of Strathavon

Why is this night different? Because we ask questions?

Can't be; Jews always ask questions. We take nothing for granted. We challenge everything, query everything (ever witnessed a Jewish person receiving a bill?) and question, question, question.

We even answer questions with questions – don't we?

Pesach is not a one-night-opportunity for questions; we're expected to keep our enquiring mind alive year round. Rather, Pesach commemorates the birth of the Jewish nation – a nation that is different. "Why is this night different?" is another way of saying, "Why is this People different?"

We're different because we ask questions. While other religions place a premium on unquestioning faith, Judaism traditionally asks, and asks again.

Of the four sons listed at the Pesach seder, the one who turns up stone last (even after the "wicked" son) is the one who "doesn't know how to ask". Rather ask an inappropriate question (as the "wicked" son does) than ask nothing at all.

Why?

Because the only way to grow spiritually is to take nothing for granted. If you are willing to accept that you are a slave to Egypt/technology/your job/your anxiety, you can never leave. Once you ask, "Why should I remain this way?" – you take the first step to personal liberation.

A Jew's worst enemy is complacency. Questions shake us out of that apathetic state.

So, if you want to make your "night" – whatever obscures your spiritual awakening and blinds you to your personal potential – different, then the best place to start is to question everything you have allowed yourself to believe.

Wheelbarrows of Sand

Rebbetzin Dr Dvori Blumenau

Why is this night/Pesach different from all other nights/Pesachim?

One day an Israeli arrived at Ben Gurion Airport. He was pushing a wheelbarrow full of sand. As expected, he was stopped at customs. The workers said to each other: "We already know these professional thieves; let's check him." One guy brought a sieve and started sifting, while everyone around waited for the discovery of diamonds... but to no avail. Nothing was found, so they indicated to him that he could go. The man replied, "Wait a second, I have another one..." The sand was sifted and then he had another one... (The poor sifter's hand...) 300 wheelbarrows the guy passed through! At the end of the process the head of customs stood there with his hands on his hips, he looked at the man and said: "If you tell me the truth, I promise I will not punish you; what is this trick all about?" With a sneaky smile the man answered: "You are all silly; I was not smuggling sand, I was smuggling wheelbarrows!!!"

Every year, 365 days pass through our hands. Once a day is off the calendar it will never come back again! All we do all day long is sift through our "sand", our problems and errands, but the days are passing, and we haven't stopped to take a breath and to reflect: did we manage to accomplish the tikkun (correction) of that day? This is what the corona has unfortunately come to teach us: stop and think, stop ignoring all your wheelbarrows while only sifting the sand that's inside. Have we paid attention to the purpose of our existence in this world? Are we achieving it? Pesach is a different kind of chag to the other chagim and the seder night is unique too; they are both there to make us stop and think, who is the boss? Who took us out of Egypt, who gave us the Torah? Who do we need to listen to and give honour to? All crucial messages that we have to give over to the children. This year's Pesach is a unique one, it forces us to stop and reflect more than ever, and it carries the important message: do not let the wheelbarrows just pass...



In Control

Rabbi Darryl Froom

Principal, Hirsch Lyons Primary School

What is the goal of the seder? What do we want our children to come out with? Every good teacher knows that before every lesson we need to know what our learning outcomes are. We are all teachers tonight. What are our goals?

In a transcript of Harav Mattisyahu Salomon, I saw a very important idea and something we should all keep in mind on the night of Pesach. He says, “Pesach is the yom tov of chinuch. The goal of teaching Pesach is to instill belief in Hashem. We need to teach our children why Hashem established Pesach. The miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim are a reminder that Hashem is directly in control of the world and He is running it each and every second. Just as Hashem Himself took Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim, Hashem involves Himself in every aspect of our lives.”

This is so fundamental to the seder that when going through the haggadah it is so important that we have this goal in mind of how Hashem is constantly involved in every aspect of our lives. Every single sunrise, every blade of grass that has grown for the past five thousand seven hundred years... and every virus, is personally governed by Hashem! Hashem is a constant Creator, every single day!

Take a look at the Plagues and we can see this so clearly.

The Abarbanel explains that Paroh took issue with three things.

One was G-d’s existence; we see this where Paroh says, “I do not know your G-d.”

Secondly, he argued that even if you say Hashem exists, He does not pay attention to lowly creatures, thereby denying Hashgachah Pratis, divine providence.

Thirdly, he took issue with G-d’s power, saying that He is not able to change nature at all.

Through each one of these plagues, Hashem shows how He is a G-d and how He is constantly involved and that He can change nature. Think about it yourselves as we go through some examples briefly.

The first three plagues came to substantiate Hashem’s existence. Since the Egyptians said that the Nile is their god, Hashem executed judgment against their gods to show that there is a Power higher than the highest powers.

The next three plagues show that nothing is random; that there is a difference between one who serves Hashem and one who does not. This is why the wild animals came. Hashem distinguished between the province of Goshen where Bnei Yisrael dwelt and the rest of Egypt; there were no wild animals that came upon the Jews, showing that Hashem differentiates between the righteous and the wicked. He is involved in every aspect of our lives. The same happened with the cattle in the plague of pestilence; it only struck the Egyptians’ cattle but not that of Bnei Yisrael, and so too with the plague of boils.

The last four plagues showed how Hashem is in control of nature and that there is no god of the sun or moon – He is in charge of everything.

This is a fundamental message for all of us and something we have to keep in mind, especially in today’s times – Hashem is orchestrating everything.



Are You Singing Mah Nishtanah This Year?

Rabbi Asher Deren

Chabad of the West Coast - Cape Town
Chairman of the Rabbinical Association of the Western Cape

Are you one of the millions of people who, for the first time in their life, are spending the seder alone? Literally a solitary soul at your seder?

Well, if there's any point of the seder where the loneliness of sitting without family and friends is most pronounced, it's the Mah Nishtanah. Maybe it was a grandchild, a niece, a cousin, or the rabbi's children who would stand on a chair and with that sweet, chirpy voice blast out a rendition of the Four Questions that would make any Bubby kvell.

And now? Who is going to sing it to you this year? Halacha clearly says that if there are no children then you read it yourself. Maybe you'll even hum the tunes. But this is probably one of those moments when the songs and tunes will be hardest to sing while still holding back the tears. But hold back on the tears for one second – we may have a different take for you!

You see, yes, it's true that in the prevalent Ashkenazi custom as taught in the Code of Jewish Law, Shulchan Aruch HaRav,¹ and others, the Mah Nishtanah is recited, as you remember, by the children – alone.

Nevertheless, the Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that a close reading on this topic in the Rambam² seems to support an outlying perspective, that after the child reads the Mah Nishtanah, the reader/leader of the seder should read it as well, and only then continue with text of the haggadah – not just the children!

The Rambam says that even the reader at the head of the table should be asking the questions. We each need to hear our own voice, find our own inner child, and yes, win our own chocolate, because at the head of our table, of 1 or of 150, is sitting our Father in Heaven who please G-d will answer all of our questions. All of them.

And yes, that means that “the child” sitting at the seder this year who, with a big smile on their face, proudly sings the “question” to our Father - is you!

¹ Shulchan Aruch HaRav, O.C. 473:40

² Rambam, Mishne Torah, Chameitz U'Matzah 8:2



Mah Nishtanah??

Rabbi Dr P Zekry

Durban United Hebrew Congregation | Umhlanga Jewish Centre

A central statement of the haggadah is, “*In every generation they rise up against us and try to destroy us*” – referring to the unbroken chain of persecutions. But this year we will focus on an additional challenge not only to the Jewish people but to the entire world as the coronavirus has affected all aspects of our lives, including our memorable traditional seder.

Mah Nishtanah – what is different this night from all other nights?

This year Mah Nishtanah will have more than the usual four questions, as many things have changed from other sedarim to this seder. Furthermore, this year, not only will questions be asked, but lessons should be learnt as well.

Some positive outcome/lessons of this lockdown is the strengthening of the family unit in a world where we are usually temporary residents in our own homes. This year we become permanent occupants in our own homes. This should be a lesson to take with us into the post-corona period; to spend more time with our families.

Mah Nishtanah – this seder where we are alone without our families and friends – now we should appreciate the importance of loved ones and not take them for granted and strengthen our family ties post-corona, not only by the likes of Zoom and Whatsapp but also by physical contact.

Mah Nishtanah – the schools are closed and the education of our children falls upon us as parents. This should teach us the lesson that the primary responsibility of the education of our children rests with us, the parents, as we read in the shema: “... *Teach them thoroughly to your children and speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you lie down and when you rise.*”¹

It behooves us that, post-corona, we continue to participate in the education of our children and that it should not be the sole responsibility of the teachers, but also that of the parents.

Mah Nishtanah – the shuls are closed now. Let us not take for granted our magnificent shuls and frequent them on a regular basis, as they play an important role in our Jewish lives.



Mah Nishtanah – there are thousands of families and individuals that have been affected badly by this virus together with the collapse of businesses and the livelihood of families. This should teach us that we all depend on Hashem and should practise humility, and above all, we should help each other in these challenging times.

Let us pray for the salvation of Pesach in a global way this year. May we be blessed with the end of this crisis, and experience the miracle of redemption and salvation speedily in our days.
Amen.

¹ Deuteronomy 6:7

Pesach's Potent Reminder

*Submitted by Rebbetzin Joan Bernhard from the writings of her late husband,
Rabbi NM Bernhard, zl*

Published for JSJ (Jews for Social Justice) 1986

Our reliving of the Exodus on Passover focuses our attention on an unusual scriptural phenomenon:

Why, in so many instances, does the Torah link a commandment to act justly and compassionately towards the alien and the disadvantaged with the duty to remember that we ourselves were once slaves in Egypt?

Surely, it is in order to overcome man's natural inclination to subjugate and to exploit those who are vulnerable to such injustices. The Al-mighty put the Jews through the suffering of the Egyptian exile and bondage so that the people He had commissioned to civilise humanity would have an extra measure of sensitivity and empathy that would motivate us to take the lead in opposing inhumanity wherever we see it.

One of the reasons G-D has raised up a fine Jewish community in South Africa must certainly be so that we can help to guide this great country peacefully out of a dark era of discrimination and oppression into a bright future of equality and freedom.



Eternal Slavery

Rabbi Dovid Baddiel

Dayan of the Beth Din, and Rabbi of Ohr Aharon

אלו לא הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אבותינו ממצרים הרי אנו וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ מִשְׁעֲבָדִים הֵיינוּ לַפְּרָעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם

Would we really have still been in Egypt up to this day?! The world continuously changes and there would certainly have been a shift in power where at some stage. We would definitely have had an opportunity to leave Egypt!

Perhaps what the ba'al haggadah is saying is that had HaKadosh Baruch Hu not taken us out at that point in time, we may have been freed eventually, but we would have been mentally affected for generations with a slave mentality. The Ibn Ezra¹ points out that none of the Bnei Yisroel had the audacity to face up to their Egyptian captors prior to the splitting of the sea, since they had this slave mentality, and it had to be a new generation that would be the one to conquer the land of Israel. If HaKadosh Baruch Hu had delayed it any longer, the future generations too would have been mentally affected and been 'subservient to Pharaoh' for good!

¹ Ibn Ezra, Exodus 14:13



Emerging From Slavery

Rebbetzin Tziporah Carlebach

Chabad of Lyndhurst

We are living through unique, unprecedented times; a Pesach which we have never before experienced in our lifetimes. I would like to share a teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe which I pray will be an inspiration to all.

The PROPHET Micha¹ states, “KIMEI TZEITZCHA MAI’ERETZ MITZRAYIM ERENU NIFLAOT – JUST LIKE IN THE DAYS THAT YOU LEFT EGYPT: SO I WILL SHOW YOU WONDERS.”

The question has been asked, why does it say “In the days of the Exodus” in the plural, being that the Exodus from Mitzraim took place in one day – we see that it is also written in connection with the mitzvah of remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim:² “Remember this day in which you went out of Mitzrayim,” in the singular?

One of the explanations is that from the day on which the Jewish people came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, they were taken out forever from the category of slavery and transposed into a new category, that of free men & women. However, the transition from slavery to freedom is not a onetime happening, but rather a continuous process. It demands frequent and constant reflection so as to experience once again, in a personal way, the emergence from slavery into freedom, and to arrive at the proper conclusions therefrom, conclusions that have to be expressed not only in thought and in words, but especially in a deep penetrating feeling which permeates the whole being, down to actions, to a corresponding conduct in all details and aspects of the everyday life.

In the present climate, PESACH 2020, as we experience more boundaries & limitations than ever before, let us realize that REDEMPTION REMAINS IN OUR OWN HANDS. Let us connect to Torah & mitzvot, free ourselves this year & thereby reach the COMPLETE & FINAL REDEMPTION WITH MOSHIACH TZIDKEINU, AMEN.

¹ Micha 7:25

² Deuteronomy 16:3



Avadim Hayinu

Rabbi Hillel Bernstein
Milnerton Hebrew Congregation

“Even if we were all wise... knowing the entire Torah, it would still be incumbent upon us to relate the story of the Exodus from Egypt, and to increase in relating it as much as possible.”

What is the purpose of the seder? Why must we remember being slaves in Egypt? If we are all well-versed in the entire Torah, then surely there is no need to discuss the Exodus, as we know it very well?!

Is it perhaps so that we can pass on the Tradition to the next generation? Perhaps that is true, but then what if someone is alone for the seder? In fact, the Gemara¹ says that if one is alone then he asks himself the questions and answers them. What is the point?

The Maharal of Prague explains that there is another most fundamental reason for the seder. The seder is our opportunity to express gratitude to the A-lmighty. We are saying thank you to Hashem for all He has done for us. Therefore we conclude with Dayeinu, which is full of events for which to be grateful.

The seder night is a time to reflect upon what Hashem has done for us as a Nation and for each of us in particular. Everyone has something unique for which to thank Hashem. This is the time to express it. And the more we go on, the greater the mitzvah!

May we all be uplifted on the seder night to feel gratitude towards Hashem in whatever situation we find ourselves, and may Hashem transform our experience of redemption into the ultimate redemption from our current exile, speedily and quickly! Chag sameach!

¹ Pesachim 116a



Seder in Bnei Brak

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin
Oxford Synagogue Centre; Chairman, SA Rabbinical Association

Everyone knows where the longest seder in recorded history took place, who attended and how it ended.

It was shortly after the Temple's destruction. That year there would be no pilgrimage to Jerusalem, no Passover offerings brought.

The mood was grim. Celebrate the Exodus, in Exile?

Rather than gather in Yavneh, the newly relocated centre of Torah, they chose to spend that Pesach in Bnei Brak.

This was the home of Rabbi Akiva, a man who lived his life with the motto, “all that G-d does is for the good.” He was the one who could laugh when he and his colleagues watched the sad sight of a fox running in and out of the ruins of the Holy Temple. While his friends cried, he was able to visualise a future Temple rebuilt on that very spot. He was the one who would now be able to comfort and inspire.

They sat there, “that entire night,” the darkness and sadness of Exile enveloping their entire being. But Rabbi Akiva was leading this seder. Ultimately, the light dawned. The disciples burst in, reminding them that “it is time to say the shema,” to declare our absolute faith in the One Above and to allow the rays of the sun to burst forth into our lives.



Everywhere

Rabbi Aharon Zulberg
The Base

The Torah categorizes four different types of children: the wise, the evil, the simple and the child who doesn't even understand enough to ask. The author of the haggadah introduces us to these children with the words, "ברוך המקום, ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל, ברוך הוא" - Blessed is The Place (Hashem), Blessed is the One who gave the Torah to Israel."

An interesting observation is the name of G-d which is used here. Each name of G-d evokes different attributes and therefore has different connotations. Here, the name "HaMakom" is used.

This name of "Hamakom (The Place)" is usually used on sad occasions: to wish comfort or pray for mercy. It speaks to the reality that there are times of difficulty and challenge - when we feel alone and that there is a void that can't possibly be filled. We may even feel that Hashem is not with us. By using "HaMakom", we acknowledge that there is no empty space. Hashem is THE place and He is always with us no matter how hard it may be to understand or feel.

Why would the author of the haggadah use such a reference at a time when one would think that there should be only joy and happiness?

Rav Shimon Schwab z"l explains that there can be situations at the seder which may not be what the participants want. He says that perhaps they do not have children of their own or maybe the children they do have are not "following" them in the way they expected. It is in this context that we acknowledge Hashem as HaMakom, reminding ourselves that every circumstance happens as part of a Divine plan even if we cannot understand it. The Torah has answers for each and every type of "child", every person: whether he is wise, wicked, simple or perhaps doesn't even know how to ask.

This year, unfortunately, many of us are going to be separate from our loved ones, extended family and friends. Especially at this stage in the haggadah we could feel a tremendous void – which there certainly is.

However, it's in this very instance that these words come alive. Potentially, we can and should realize that we are never truly alone, Hashem is always here with us even at such challenging times. "ברוך המקום, ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל, ברוך הוא."



Home Imprisonment or Incubation of Freedom? The Tree, the Soul, and Lockdown

Rabbi Eli Spinner
Chabad of Glenhazel

We all have the same question. Why would Hashem want us restricted on the festival of freedom?

Metaphorically, we can ask the same question about Judaism. How is submitting ourselves to 613 commandments a path to freeing ourselves? Are we not just becoming slaves to another master?

We are taught that man is like a tree. Freedom for a tree means to have deep roots anchoring it and nourishing it so it can grow tall and strong, eventually producing delicious fruit. For a young sapling, this first requires a sheltered environment, with protection from harmful elements. A fence may be required or a greenhouse, until it is strong enough to survive the elements on its own.

The same is true of the soul. For it to achieve its true potential in the world, its freedom, it must follow certain guidelines and commandments which protect it, creating the proper environment that allows it to grow strong, nourishing it until it can maximize its potential. This is what we celebrate on Pesach – G-d giving us true freedom through the Torah.

Just as the first stage of the sapling requires a protected and sheltered environment, perhaps that is Hashem's message to us this year. Our home is our safest space. It represents the nucleus of who we are. Being isolated for three weeks, without the usual distractions that life brings, gives us the opportunity to reconnect with our identity, enabling us to truly free ourselves. Let us take advantage of this gift, and use this Pesach to achieve personal freedom, and ultimately collective freedom with the coming of moshiach.



The Four Sons

Rebbetzin Lee-at Goldstein
OhrSavoy and Maharsha schools

The four sons, as most of us know, represent the four types of Jews that exist in the world: the wise son, the wicked son, the simple son and the one who is unable to ask. Rabbi Sacks says that the four sons also could be the different stages of development of a child. We enter the world unable to talk and ask. Though we are still simple, we become inquisitive and start wanting to know more. As we enter into teenagehood, we become rebellious and though we ask questions, they are statements and are usually asked for the sake of asking, rather than for information. Slowly, from there, our wisdom grows.

I would like to suggest a third idea. Each one of these sons represents different elements of our personality.

The wise son is us at our very best. This is us all dressed up and ready to shine. We have been learning, going to shiurim and putting in time and effort into our ruchnius (spiritual self). We feel filled up inside, connected to Hashem, and all feels right in the world.

Sometimes we are the simple son. We know we have more to learn and we are keen and interested and excited. We roll up our sleeves and are prepared for the work involved in filling the void we feel inside.

Other times we are so totally out of our depth that we do not even know where to begin. We feel a bit hopeless and alone and in desperate need for someone to notice and assist us. We do not have the words to ask, so we hope someone sees us and offers us what we need.

The fourth facet of our personality emerges when we sink into such complete helplessness that the “Rasha” in us emerges. When we feel lost and afraid, we lash out. Better to let people think we do not care, rather than say we do not know. Our fear takes the face of anger and obstinance. We hope this scares people away, because if they come too close, they will see that we feel vulnerable and afraid.

The Rasha gives me hope. He can be saved. With a bit of insight, love and attention he has the potential to let his guard down. He has the potential to admit that he is scared and just doesn't know how to ask for help. When he becomes that person, he then has the potential to become

inquisitive. An inquisitive person has the opportunity to grow and learn, and to ultimately become the best version of himself, all dressed up and shiny.

We are all the four sons. This means we may have moments of great highs and deep lows. The four sons each need time, love and attention. Sometimes we need to give to others and sometimes we need to give to ourselves. Learn to read what “each son” is saying, because when we do this, we can come closer to the best version of ourselves.



The Wise Son Fours Sons in One Child

Rabbi Avi Shlomo
Cape Town Torah High

(Based on 'When Your Child is the Wicked Son', Rabbi Benjamin Blech, aish.com)

The haggadah lists four children: the Wise child, the Rebellious (usually translated as “wicked”) child, the Simple child, and the One who Cannot Even Ask. But perhaps rather than viewing these as four separate characters, the haggadah is in fact describing ONE child, going through four natural stages.

A baby cannot speak and trusts their parents unconditionally. This is the child who does not ask questions. Once the child learns to talk, they graduate to the question of the simple child, “What is this?” Young children can ask this question in one form or another hundreds of times a day. Yet still they accept the answers given to them as fact.

When the child becomes a teenager, the questions intensify from “What is this?” to “Why must I do this?”, “Who am I?” and, “Where do I fit into this picture?” If misunderstood, this stage can be viewed as rejection and rebelliousness, as “wickedness”. But with love, acceptance, patience and education, as a result of this stage the child personalizes and deepens their relationship with Hashem and matures to become the wise child, embracing the ethics and values of their ancestors, but independently and honestly.

Perhaps this explains why the haggadah repeats the word “echad” four times: because in truth the “four sons” are all “echad”, one and the same person who is both accepting, simple, challenging and wise.



The Wicked Son The Rasha – the Wicked Son

Rebbetzin Joan Bernhard

When the wicked son asks, “What is all this ritual to you?”, he’s excluded himself. Yet he’s there and he’s asking. Perhaps this is an indication that he doesn’t NOT care. He is engaged. This relationship seems to matter to him.

The rasha was given a rap on the teeth with a sharp answer. Not the usual spirit of the Jewish way of relating.

The rap on the shin (tooth; not an essential appendage) is the middle letter of rasha (reish shin ayin). The shin was knocked out. Ra (bad) was left.

The difference between a person doing something bad and being a wicked person is major.

Perhaps engaging in bad things, but not being a bad person, needn’t lead to alienation from one’s essence, Hashem or community. Behaviour can be worked on.

The mishna in Pirkei Avot says, “Al tehi rasha b’einecha - - - don’t think of yourself as a rasha”.¹ You might give up on yourself. Everyone is capable of doing bad. Hopefully, this will help convince us that we can do better, and we’ll do better, and we’ll change our ways. DO NOT categorise a person as a rasha. It’s not for us to judge.

¹ Avot 2:18



The Simple Son Questions and Answers Lessons From a Messy Seder Table

Rabbi Yochi Ziegler
Camps Bay Shul, Cape Town

My favorite sermons to give are the ones where I pose a question, provide a few insightful answers and draw a practical life lesson in a neatly packaged, slightly humorous 10 minutes.

The Pesach seder is exactly the opposite: questions without clear answers, answers without questions and an unraveled parcel of life lessons from the Torah and our sages.

“Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand. Lets eat!” Isn’t that enough?

We do say these exact words – to the simple child.

The Pesach seder challenges us to rise from simple and comfortable to mature and considered. To really engage means we have to give ideas time to rise in our minds, not rush them – like we did with the matzah.



Not so simple

Rabbi Avigdor Blumenau

I’ve always been baffled by the inclusion of the ‘son who does not know how to ask’ in the group of the Four Sons. How is he categorically different from the others? He seems like just a simpler version of the simple son. See the Maharal (Divrei Negidim) for a deep answer.

This year it dawned upon me that even if there may be, objectively speaking, nothing unique about the son himself, from a parent’s perspective he is unique in that he demands an entirely different kind of response from his parents. Rather than just answering a question, his father needs to find the inner resources to start up a conversation with him. This could explain why only for this son does the haggadah refer to the father as *at*, in the feminine form. The father needs to find within himself the capacity to deal with his son in a more nurturing, motherly way.

It’s not about what a situation presents us with, it’s about what it brings out in us. Objectively, the situation is simple. Corona. What it brings out in us is not as simple, it’s entirely up to us.



Beginnings

Dayan B Rapoport
(Heard from my father z.l.)

She'eino yodeia lishol at psach lo – “The son who does not know how to ask, **you** begin for him.” This is referring to the fourth son, who is probably too young to ask. We are told “**at** – **you**” (in the feminine form) *psach lo*, begin for him – the mother is the one who initiates the Jewish education when the child is still very young.



The Four Sons – Understanding the Educational System

Rabbi Alon Friedman
Yeshiva College Shul

The festival of Pesach is unique; the many facets and details that surround this chag give us an incredible insight into the education system.

We are all aware that the four sons spoken about at the seder depict different understandings and approaches attributed to human behavior.

In Parshat Bo¹ the Torah tells us, “*And it shall be when your son asks you at a time to come, saying: what is this? You shall say to him: with a strong hand Hashem has brought us out of Egypt.*”

Rashi on this verse attributes this question to the *she'eino yode'a lish'ol*, the son who is not even able to ask. This answer, however, is given to the wicked son in the haggadah! It is peculiar; the same question is raised in both the Torah and the haggadah but the recipient of the answer differs in the haggadah! What relationship is there between one who does not know how to ask, to question, and one who is wicked? There certainly must be a relationship as the haggadah connects the two!

We may suggest that in the Torah, when it comes to chinuch (education), there is no room for compromise; if one receives the wrong education it is tantamount to receiving no education. One who is devoid of Torah will ultimately be satisfied with misleading ideas and thoughts.

The foundation of the pedagogic process is the ability to motivate the student to question, to initiate ideas. Questioning is a human trait. One should seek to understand by delving deeper into the profundities of the Torah. There are, however, certain limitations. One must know what to ask, when to ask, and whom to question. The ability to ask the appropriate questions indicates comprehension of the subject matter, as well as a sincere desire to understand the fundamentals of the material.

The type of question one asks and its presentation reflects the character of the questioner. Knowing when to speak and when to remain silent also indicates one's motivation in asking the question. Is one truly seeking an answer or is he merely making a statement in order to echo his



own opinion? Whom one asks is equally critical. Some individuals only ask questions to those who will offer them an anticipated desirable response. They will not ask if they expect that they will not like the particular answer.

There are a number of reasons why people do not ask questions. Complacency, ignorance, apathy, self-consciousness, and insecurity seem to be superficially valid reasons for not inquiring. Perhaps the most destructive reason for failure to question, however, is one's refusal to accept the answer. The individual with this trait does not desire to develop intellectually. He may even fear the truth which will emanate from the answer. This individual reflects intolerance and egotism. Ultimately, his refusal to accept another's answers will harm only one person: himself!

The seder is about many questions, inquiring in order to find the truth. In order for an individual to find the truth, he needs to learn to listen.

Wishing you and your families a chag kasher v'sameach.

¹ Exodus 13:14

Open the Floor

Rabbi Mendel Lipskar

Head of Lubavitch Foundation; The Shul – Hyde Park

...וְשִׂאֵינוּ יִדְעַ לְשֹׂאֵל ...

... And the one who does not know (how) to ask...

The fourth son is the one who looks on at the unusual proceedings of the seder but finds that all this is so above him that he doesn't have the terms of reference from which he is able to ask a question.

The father then reaches out to engage him in the seder experience.

There is another way of translating וְשִׂאֵינוּ יִדְעַ לְשֹׂאֵל.

Not that he is too ignorant to ask, but rather that he doesn't know that he is allowed to ask.

There are those who have been raised with the notion of, 'do as you're told and don't question', and to them Torah & mitzvos become something too overwhelming, perhaps even illogical and irrational, because they were never taught that they are allowed to ask and investigate. They were never encouraged to probe and explore Yiddishkeit. They may now be adult in years but still starting out on their Yiddishkeit journey.

To this person we must reach out. We must make him feel that he, too, is an integral part of the seder – an integral part of our exceptional Jewish Nation. We must focus on him and ensure that he knows not only that he may ask a question but that he must question and that he is entitled to be answered. The וְשִׂאֵינוּ יִדְעַ לְשֹׂאֵל must be lovingly reassured & guided to grow in the ways of authentic Yiddishkeit.



A Toast to Anti-Semitism

Rabbi Gedalia Kauffman
Aish HaTorah

וְהִיא שְׁעַמְדָּה – And it is this that has stood by our fathers and us...

This is one of the high points of the seder, where we cover the matzos and lift up our cups of wine in joy, as if making a toast. But when we read the words, we find something surprising. The haggadah is telling us that we, like every generation of Jews before us, will need to confront the hatred of our enemies. It's not ancient history, but today's news. Again and again those who oppose morality and hate Godliness will attack God's Chosen People. Indeed, we see with our own eyes that anti-Semitism has once again reared its ugly head, with Jews harassed and Israel attacked almost daily. To this we drink a toast?

Rav Chaim of Volozhin famously said, "When the Jews don't make kiddush, the non-Jews make havdalah." When the Jewish people don't live up to their potential by leading lives of meaning and holiness, when we begin to forget who we are and our unique purpose in this world, God will send our enemies to remind us. But He only does so because He wants His beloved Jewish People to return to Him, to remember who we are and recommit ourselves to living a life of Torah and mitzvos to connect to Him. When we do so, of course He is right there to "save us from their hand." Hashem loves us so much, that He is even willing to send our enemies to keep us from assimilating and disappearing.

So yes, lift your cup and drink a toast to anti-Semitism, and to our Father in Heaven who is right there waiting to save us and bring us home once again.

Faith and Miracles

Rabbi Rodney Richard
Emmarentia Shul

Ramban (Nachmanides) writes:¹

"From the time that there was idolatry in the world... belief started to deteriorate [in these three ways:]...

- "1. Some people denied the existence of G-d altogether.*
- 2. Some [acknowledged His existence but] denied His knowledge of events in the world ...*
- 3. Some admitted His knowledge but denied His personal Providence ...*

"When, however, G-d chooses a community or an individual and performs miracles for them that change the normal running and nature of the world, then the refutation of all the above is apparent, as a miracle shows that:

- "1. There is a God Who creates the world;*
- 2. He has knowledge [of events in this world], and*
- 3. He acts with personal Providence and is omnipotent."*

The miracles of the Exodus are a testimony to Hashem's ongoing personal involvement in the world and His creations. The Pesach seder is the actualisation of G-d's commandment to us to make eternal reminders and signs of what "our eyes witnessed". We must pass these down to our children as part of the injunction of וְגַדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ ("and you shall tell your son").

This Pesach, this concept is perhaps more relevant than in previous years. As we conduct our seder amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we must remember that the same G-d who performed miracles for our forefathers, with personal and specific Providence, is in complete control of what is transpiring now. We must have complete faith in His Divine Plan and our unique roles therein. Most importantly, we must have complete faith that just as the Exodus occurred in the blink of an eye, our salvation too will come speedily.

¹ Ramban, Exodus 13:16



A Nation Within Another

Rabbi Dovid Hazdan

Great Park Shul and Torah Academy Schools

“And Hashem took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great awe, and with signs and wonders.”

The haggadah explains the “great awe” as the revelation of the Divine Presence when G-d took for Himself a nation from amidst another nation.

This description: “a nation from amidst another nation” implies that the Jewish people were in many ways a nation even prior to the Exodus. In fact, they lived in their own province of Goshen, spoke their own language and had their own unique dress code and culture.

Yes, they were a nation, but “in the midst of another nation” – beholden to an evil, G-dless Egypt that subjugated, enslaved and controlled their lives.

The Midrash Mechilta¹ compares their situation to an embryo in the womb of its mother. The child is developed and has all his limbs in place. Yet he is attached by an umbilical cord and is totally dependent on his mother. He goes only where she goes, eats what she eats. He is completely and essentially dependent on his mother.

The Jewish people had many unique features of nationhood. But they were essentially and tragically defined by Egypt.

The first step towards their liberty was to sacrifice the deity of Egypt, the lamb – a brave and demonstrative act that would unshackle them not only from the chains of their oppressors, but more importantly, from the mindset, influence and headspace of Egypt.

Today, we might celebrate our freedom and independence with superficial bliss. With deeper analysis we would realise that we are tied by an umbilical cord to our environment and its prevailing whims and fancies, attitudes and popular opinions.

We walk freely as emancipated citizens even as we are bent under the conditioning of peer pressure.

Our Pesach journey to freedom must allow us to walk as uninhibited and proud Jews.

¹ Midrash, Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 14:30

Wait for dawn

Rabbi David Chiger

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be in Egypt just after midnight during the tenth plague?

Pharaoh running around in pyjamas looking for Moshe and telling him all the Jews can leave...

Wouldn't you, who has been a slave all your life in Egypt, knowing only difficulty and pain; you, who has dreamed of this moment of salvation for so long, race to gather your family and provisions for the trek into the desert towards Israel?

Why, were the shops still stocked with toilet paper surely the Jews would have bought them out in their hurry to leave!

But Moshe tells us that we can't sneak out of Egypt like thieves in the night. We will leave when Hashem tells us to, at dawn when it's light, and march out proudly. For now, enjoy the Pesach korban meal and rest. Don't even prepare to leave, Moshe says.

You go home and think while eating one of the Egyptian's gods. "I know Pharaoh has changed his mind nine times before this, allowing us to leave and then refusing when the plague stops. Why should this time be different?"

Why don't all the Jews go charging out of Egypt straight away or at least start baking bread for the journey so that generations to come don't have to eat cardboard every year?!

The answer is Faith. Huge, unquestioning, unflinching faith in Hashem and his prophet Moshe. We do only what He tells us to do for in the end it must be only good for us.

The strength of this Faith that I see in the generation that left Egypt is the most powerful example of humans putting aside what they think, their logic, their pain and their plans to be completely trusting in Hashem that only He knows what is best.

To me this guides my faith and I wish I could follow their lead completely.



Chamushim

Rabbi Ami Glixman

The verse¹ says, “And they went up ‘*chamushim*’ from Egypt.” The translation of the word is seemingly difficult to pin down, though Be’er Yosef explains that the varied explanations all hint to the same idea.

Onkelos tells us that *chamushim* means armed. Rashi cites Onkelos and adds the idea of *chamushim* as one fifth, ie. only 20% of the Jews actually left Egypt. The others died during the plague of darkness. The Targum Yonatan translates it as going out with five children. Lastly, the Targum Yerushalmi explains it as ‘a good deed’.

During the plague of darkness, those Israelites not desiring to leave Egypt died. This death sentence was a decree of the Heavenly Court – which only sentences those aged 20 and above. Hence, 4 out of 5 households had no parents. A great deed was done, in that the one fifth of the nation which did live to see the Exodus had not just their own children, but those of four other families as well. Each went out with five (sets) of children. The Jews went out armed with the communal chesed of adopting these orphaned children.

May our communal voice rise together in Jerusalem this year.

¹ Exodus 13:18



Protection

Rabbi Chanoch Galperin

East London Hebrew Congregation

The Torah says in Parshat Bo in connection with the liberation from Egypt, “ולקחתם אגדת אזוב וטבלתם בדם אשר בסוף ונהגעתם אל המשקוף ואל שתי המזוזות...” – “Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin. Touch it to the lintel and the two doorposts...” The posuk continues with, “ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר...” – “let no man go out the door of his house until morning.” Rashi explains that this teaches us “that once dominion is given to the destroyer to do harm, he does not distinguish between a righteous person and an evil person”.

How relevant this is to our time. First the Torah gives us a segulah and protection to save us from death, which is the mezuzah. When we divide the word mezuzot – מזוזות, it reads מז-מות, which means “death removed”. We should be encouraged to have kosher mezuzot in our homes. Then the Torah gives us instructions to be isolated, as it is written, “let no man go out of the door of his house”.

Isolation started with Noach. The Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote that Hashem told Noach, “בוא אל התיבה...” – “Come to the Ark, you and all your household...”

The Rebbe explains that the word תיבה, teivah, could also be translated as “word” – the words of Torah and the words of tefillah; to go into the words, to learn and daven with more concentration and meaning.

As we are in isolation, like Noach, let us also go into the teivah, the words of the haggadah, with more meaning and feeling.

¹ Exodus 12:22

² Genesis 6:18



Always Look on the Bright Side of Life

Rabbi Shlomo Glicksberg

Dayan of the Beth Din, and Rabbi of Mizrahi

The haggadah mentions the 10 plagues of Egypt. In the next few lines I would like to look into the plague of darkness and its implications:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt – darkness that can be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.’ (Exodus 10:21-23)

In the assumption that the plagues are brought in order of severity, we would expect the ninth to be especially harsh. This is strengthened by the fact that after only three days of darkness, Pharaoh calls out to Moshe saying “Go – serve Hashem” (Exodus 10:24). At first this seems surprising to us. Isn’t darkness just the absence of light rather than an independent hardship? Proof for this would be that a small amount of light can reject a whole lot of darkness.

It seems, however, that the plague of darkness consists of a special creation and a different type of darkness than we are often granted by Eskom.

There is a famous midrash in the *Mechilta*¹ saying that it was a ‘tangible’ darkness², ימש חושך, such that if you were standing when the plague began you couldn’t sit and vice versa and that the thickness of the darkness was like a coin.³

Other attempts to explain the nature of the darkness are that the darkness had a psychological effect that caused the Egyptians to freeze. A book named Siach Sadeh explains that this plague actually came about by creating an enormous light that disabled people from seeing...

However, I found an original explanation that holds an important message in the *Torah Temimah*:⁴ that the darkness wasn’t in the air but covering the eyes of the people. They had something as thick as a coin covering the pupils of their eyes. He adds that this cover on their eyes was removable. The meaning of this is that the darkness is in the eyes of the beholder. Hashem says to the children of Israel: look, I can take you out of Egypt, I can split the sea and also drown your oppressors, but all this will not make a difference if you cannot change your

perspective and see yourselves as free people. It is not enough to physically exit Egypt; you also need to have the accompanying thought process and the emotional ascent to freedom.

Sometimes a person can find himself in a terrible darkness and can feel that this darkness is so real it can cause him to freeze and be unable to change his situation. It is possible that his world is actually filled with light but he is unable to perceive this light and the positivity in his life. He must take this cover off his eyes so that he can see the good and go from slavery to freedom and from darkness to great light. “But for all the children of Israel there was light in their dwellings.”⁵

The times we are in are trying; there are real worries, concerns & difficulties; however, we mustn’t allow ourselves to be blind to all of the positive outcomes. Staying at home is not sitting in the darkness! Staying at home gives us endless opportunities of growth and achieving true freedom on both the individual and family levels. Staying at home with your family gives you the opportunity to remove the false perceptions that we may have collected and see the true light in our lives.

May Hashem light His face upon you.

¹ Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 14:20

² Exodus 10:21

³ Midrash, Tanchuma, Bo 2:3

⁴ Torah Temimah, Exodus 10:21

⁵ Genesis 10:23



Miracles All Around Us

Rabbi Yoel Smith

Dayan of the Beth Din and Rabbi of Sha'arei Chaim

וְקָרַע לָנוּ אֶת הַיָּם וְהֵעֲבִירָנוּ בְּתוֹכוֹ בְּחַרְבָּהּ.

Hashem split the sea for us and took us through it on dry land.

When speaking about the Jewish People experiencing the miracle of Krias Yam Suf – Splitting of the Red Sea, the Torah states,¹ “וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֵּשָׁה” – “The Jewish people went through the sea [what was originally the sea] on dry land”. Further on it states,² “וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבֵּשָׁה” – “And the Jewish people went through the dry land in the midst of the sea”.

The question is, why, prior to the splitting of the sea, does the Torah state, “through the sea on dry land” and after the splitting of the sea, “the dry land in midst of the sea”?

The Noam Elimelech notes that initially, when the Jewish nation walked through the sea, which was miraculously dry land, they were in appreciation of the huge wonder that took place – the mighty roaring sea had just dried up – for them!

When they arrived at the shore, suddenly they had a new realization, and rationalized that it was no less of a major miracle that the water stayed within its natural boundaries than the fact that it had split and they could walk through it on dry land.

Sometimes, Hashem performs a miracle of great magnitude to make us open our eyes and contemplate that nature running its monotonous course is no less of a miracle than walking on the dry land which was once the sea.

In this current situation that we find ourselves in, this message shouts out to us, loud and clear, teaching us to appreciate all the seemingly normal things that are so easily taken for granted: to breathe on our own, to socialize, to dance at a wedding.

¹ Exodus 14:16

² Exodus 14:29

Tambourines and Dances

Rebbetzin Aviva Thurgood

Beit Midrash Morasha @ Arthur's Road

One of my favorite parts of the Pesach story is at the culmination of all the miracles that have happened. The response of Miriam and the women is singing and dancing in happiness and gratitude. Looking at the verse inside, it says,¹ “Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took her tambourine in her hand and all the women went forth after her with tambourines and with dances.” There are three things that are confusing about this verse:

1. Why is Miriam only called the sister of Aharon; is she not the sister of Moshe as well?
2. This is the first time that Miriam is called a prophetess; why only now?
3. We know that the Jewish people left Egypt in a rush, there wasn't even enough time to let their dough rise, so how did the women have time to pack their tambourines?

Rashi picks up on the first two questions and explains that Miriam is called the sister of Aharon because when she made her prophecy that her mother would bear a son who would deliver Israel, Moshe obviously hadn't been born yet. This prophecy was made more than 80 years before and now when it was fulfilled, Miriam was called a prophetess to remind us of her original prophecy.

Miriam's name comes from the word mar – bitter; she was born in the most difficult time period of the exile, yet believed so firmly in the hope that Hashem would take them out. Eighty years is a lifetime but Miriam held on to this belief through all of the hardship that she endured and observed as a slave. She didn't just believe, she shared her hopes and dreams with the women around her, instilling an unwavering faith. The Midrash² tells us that in the merit of the righteous women, the Jewish People were taken out. How did the women have time to bring tambourines? Because they were hanging at their front doors.

¹ Exodus 15:20

² Midrash Tanchuma, Pekudei 9



Inherent Faith

*Rebbetzin Laia Uzvolk
Victory Park Shul*

"וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה... וַיֵּאמְרוּ בְּהַשֵּׁם"

"When Israel saw the great Hand which Hashem wielded... they believed in Hashem..."¹

When thinking what to share with our community, I asked Hashem to please direct me. His guiding Hand opened my haggadah to this 'vort'! Thank You Hashem for holding us so tightly!

... And that's the first message: We need to know that Hashem's holding us in His 'great Hand'. Rabbi Bernhard ztz"l often said, "Nothing's by coincidence!" When we open ourselves up to look for it, we feel His grasp. It's so easy to spiral into panic with this virus. What if... she's a carrier and I opened the door next... or...? We must know that nothing's random! Everything's Divine Providence – who breathes where/touches what... Each case is so individual. It's clear that each person's experiencing this virus in a perfectly tailor-made way – whether I'm 'seder-ing' alone, or with what seems like a 'random' group, etc. Hashem's in charge – our Kind Father who knows the bigger picture – why this is truly good! May we see it too!

So that's my humble reflection. Now for the Torah wisdom Hashem opened the haggadah to:

The Previous Rebbe comments that all Jews have natural reservoirs of Emunah – Belief, but the expression of this potential is hindered by our self-concern and preoccupation with worldly activities.

When the Jews stood in awe, marveling at the great revelations at Yam Suf (the Reed Sea), their negative tendencies were temporarily stunned. There was nothing to prevent their inner faith from surfacing.

Hashem's put the world into lockdown. He's remodeled "our self-concern and preoccupation with worldly activities." He's making it obvious that He runs the show. Just as we did at the Yam Suf – if we choose to stand in awe, and marvel at the great revelations, our negative tendencies can be stunned and there's nothing to prevent our inner faith from surfacing!

¹ Exodus 14:31

Not for Granted

Rabbi Levi Avtzon

Linkshul, Johannesburg

If there is one section of the Haggadah that I will be singing with extra fervor this year, it will be the song of Dayenu, or as it's often referred to as: THE GRATITUDE SONG.

The whole Dayenu poem is about acknowledging each unique step in the process and not taking anything for granted.

Gosh. What could be more appropriate for Pesach 2020 where so many things we took for granted are now seen for what they truly are: gifts from Hashem?

If only I was allowed to have the seder with my parents, Dayenu.

If only I could go to Shul and participate in a service, Dayenu.

If only I could see my whole lovely dysfunctional family tonight, Dayenu.

If only we could do Pesach shopping by Pesach, not on Purim, Dayenu.

And on and on...

This year we will cherish what we do have and appreciate what we don't.

Dayenu, that's enough for me.



Thank You!

Rabbi Matthew Tucker
Ohrsom Student

On Pesach night we will sing the famous song, Dayenu (“It would have been enough”). The question always asked is how would it have been enough to have only received one or two of these great things? One of the answers given is that just one of these things would have been enough for us to express immense gratitude to Hashem.

The 15 stanzas of Dayenu highlight 15 different reasons for us to be grateful. Rabbi Avi Goldfein once pointed out that this is a general lesson in gratitude. So often we thank someone for something but we overlook all the hard work that that person actually did. For example, we will often thank a host for a meal. However, when we thank them, are we aware that in order to make the soup, the host went to one or two shops to buy the ingredients? They then sliced and chopped the vegetables and added in spices. Perhaps they first fried some onions. They then added the other ingredients. They had to turn on the stove and ensure that the soup didn't boil over or burn. They then added some more spices for taste. Now, that was just the soup. There were also the salads, the chicken, the meat and the desserts!

It is a very praiseworthy thing to take the time to think about the things that other people do for us.

The detailed list in the song Dayenu reminds us of this.

So, as we sing this wonderful song on Pesach, may we be reminded of the kind acts that others do for us. And of course, may we acknowledge all the incredible things that Hashem has done and continues to do for us, His chosen nation.

Dayenu

Rebbetzin Gila Chitiz
Educational Shlichim Mizrachi and Yeshiva College

אלו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה, דינו.

If He had brought us before Mount Sinai and had not given us the Torah, Dayenu, it would have sufficed for us!

Why is this stanza, in which we declare that it would have been sufficient had Hashem brought us to Mount Sinai but not given us the Torah, included as part of the dayenu poem? Wasn't the purpose of arriving at Mount Sinai in order to receive the Torah? What would we have gained merely by being at Mount Sinai without receiving the Torah?

Rashi¹ famously states that our national experience at Mount Sinai was unique; we as a nation were unified “as one man with one heart”. This strong sense of unity was unparalleled; at no other time throughout Jewish history were we as unified as we were at Mount Sinai. Therefore, we state in Dayenu that being able to attain such a level of unity within the Jewish nation, even if we had not received the Torah, would have been sufficient. This statement allows us to appreciate the importance that national unity holds within our tradition. This year, although we are physically divided and enclosed in our own homes, let us come together as a nation spiritually and appreciate the unifying aspects of Pesach, which is the holiday when we first became a nation.

¹ Rashi, Exodus 19:2



A Life of Thanks

Rabbi Yosef Menachem Salzer
Adas Yeshurun

Dayeinu? Really?!

The beautiful (and beautifully sung) section of the Haggadah “Dayeinu” poses SO many questions – almost as many as the number of verses. After all, Dayeinu means it would have been sufficient for us. But would it? How could it?!

Some of the more famous difficulties:

“Had He split the sea for us but not led us through it on dry land, Dayeinu.”

“Had He drowned our oppressors in it (the sea) but not provided for our needs in the desert for forty years, Dayeinu.”

“Had He brought us before Mount Sinai but not given us the Torah, Dayeinu.”

The Malbim explains the word Dayeinu in such a way that all the questions fall away.

Dayeinu means that we’d have enough to spend all of our lives thanking Hashem non-stop just for that one particular favour. And he quotes that we say the same in Nishmas every Shabbos & Yom Tov morning, and at each Seder: “Were our mouths full of song as the sea, and our tongues as full of joyous song as its multitude of waves, and our lips as full of praise as the breadth of the heavens, and were our eyes as brilliant as the sun and the moon, and our hands as outspread as eagles of the sky, and our feet as swift as hinds – we still could not thank you sufficiently, Hashem, for even ONE of the myriads of millions of favours that You have performed for our ancestors and for us.”

The paragraph that follows the Dayeinu sums it up: “How much more so should we be grateful to Hashem for having done all of the favours (mentioned in Dayeinu)”.

Let’s focus on all the kindnesses of Hashem and spend all our lives thanking Him for them!



Truly Free

Rebbetzin Feige Hazdan
Great Park Shul

After singing ‘Dayenu’, we acknowledge and express appreciation for each step of our journey from Egypt to redemption.

There are many definitions of freedom.

A plant requires air, sunlight, fertilized soil and water to be free. An animal might have all of these ingredients but would feel severely restricted without the independence to walk about freely. A human being requires all of the above but would not be free without intellectual inspiration and stimulation.

What about a Yid? Every Jew has a soul that can never be satisfied with these limited definitions of freedom. Our soul needs to be nurtured and attached to something higher. A soul that is not fed Torah and mitzvot can never experience true freedom.

It is ironic that the mitzvot require us to do duties that seem to limit and imprison us and make us beholden to a new set of regulations! We often think that we are free when we escape the rules that limit our lifestyle. But in fact, it is only by virtue of our choice at Sinai to embrace the mission of Hashem that we were liberated as Jews. As the Rabbis teach us, ‘Only he who toils in Torah can be truly free’.¹

Pesach affords us the opportunity to connect to our inner core and to think about life, its meaning, and what it takes to realize our quest for freedom.

We yearn for the ultimate freedom that will come with moshiah, who will transform the entire world to recognize Hashem.

¹ Avot 6:2



Pesach, Matzah, Marror

Rabbi Sean Cannon

Head of Jewish Life and Learning United Herzlia Schools

On seder night, as we approach the conclusion of the maggid section of the seder, we are reminded by Rabban Gamliel that there are three critical mitzvot that need a clear explanation: matzah, marror and the Korban Pesach. Why specifically these three and what is the relationship between them? The Maharal of Prague explains beautifully: the matzah represents freedom and the marror represents slavery. The Korban Pesach represents the oneness of Hashem and that He is ultimately in control, a reminder from the lamb's blood on the doorposts of the Jewish homes that allowed the Jewish firstborns to escape the tenth plague unharmed. In the times of the Temple we would eat these three together, to show that both freedom and slavery emanate from the same Hashem Echad.

What a powerful message for Pesach 5780 that we are called to remember in these unprecedented times; the same Hashem that gives us our freedom can also take it away. We know that only too well now. Internalising this message helps us to build our emunah. Just as Hashem promised us that after slavery in Egypt there would come a time when we would be redeemed, a moment we have recalled every Pesach night for 3300 years, the Maharal is reminding us that the same Hashem also promised us that there will come a time of final redemption. We should once again merit bringing together the matzah, marror and Korban Pesach in the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash Hashlishi. Leshana Haba B'yerushalayim!



All One

Rabbi Steven Krawitz

Academic Principal and Torah Teacher Hirsch Lyons High Schools

(Based on the Maharal's seder Gevuros Hashem)

The Korban Pesach is central not only to the seder and the chag, but to the Nation of Israel. We were not a nation before we left Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt and the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai bookend the birthing process of the nation of Israel. The very beginning of this birth was bringing the original Pesach. Although Hashem commanded us to bring this offering, it was as if the people were reaching out and asking to become His nation. And the Korban Pesach was the catalyst for the formation of Israel as a nation, and specifically Hashem's nation. To become Hashem's people, we would need to have an affinity to Him, and to share some of His qualities. The most central concept of Hashem that we can comprehend is that Hashem is ONE: that there is only one power that brought all of reality into being; that the multitudes of seemingly opposing forces in all of Creation come from Him and all their contradictions are reconciled in His unity; and that He unites all the components of Creation into one whole.

When the Korban Pesach was brought, not only did it have to represent all these ideas, it also needed to unite all the separate people who would make up the nation of Israel with each other and with Hashem. How did the Korban Pesach, which was either a lamb or a kid, achieve these lofty goals? Each Korban Pesach was brought by a large group of people. Families and neighbors were instructed to join together to bring one offering. This united people. The Korban Pesach had to be roasted, not cooked. In the process of cooking, liquid breaks down the ingredients. Roasting is the opposite: it causes the food to shrivel and become more compact and unified. Even the skeleton of the Korban had to be kept intact; a bone could not be broken off, maintaining the oneness of the Korban. The Pesach had to be eaten with matzah the food of freedom, and with maror, the food symbolic of the bitterness of our slavery and afflictions. Through joining these three foods, we are representing a profound philosophical concept: that Hashem, whose oneness and unity is represented by the Pesach, has power over contradictory forces: to enslave and to free.

When Bnei Yisrael brought the Pesach, they achieved a level of unity that is a necessary prerequisite to becoming a nation, and they willingly chose Hashem as their God and became joined to Him. And the Korban itself was a declaration of Hashem's oneness, identical to saying the shema and testifying to Hashem's unity.



Enough is Enough

Rabbi David Masinter
Chabad House

Never before has the meaning of Pesach and all it represents been so relevant. Never before have we needed both personal and global redemption as we do now.

The three central ingredients at the Pesach seder are Wine, Matzah, and Marror. The Gemora¹ says that “when wine enters, your deep secrets come out.” In order to achieve all that one is meant to, one needs to understand and recognise that we have deep atomic energy within. An energy that can transform not just ourselves, but also the world around us. We need to become intoxicated with this energy and passion.

Marror is bitterness. One needs to be truly bitter by what's happening in the world. The poverty, the suffering, the sickness. We cannot accept the status quo. Enough is enough!

Matzah is bread of healing. The Torah² says we eat Matzah because the Jews did not have time to wait until their dough had risen. The lesson in this, of course, is that when we resolve to do something, we have to do it without delay and with a sense of urgency.

It's time to ready ourselves and the world for the Ultimate Redemption.

In merit of us all celebrating Pesach with wine, maror and matzah, may we all experience the Ultimate Redemption – the coming of Moshiach, where all sickness and sorrow will be removed from the world and the world will be filled with the goodness of G-d.

¹ Talmud, Eruvin 65a; Talmud, Sanhedrin 38a

² Exodus 12:39

Matzah

Forever Free

Rebbetzin Sara Ozhekh
Ohr Somayach Cape Town

Matzah represents freedom whereas marror (bitter herbs) represents the bitterness of slavery. Why is the matzah displayed before the marror? Would it not make more sense to first mention the bitter herbs, which occurred first, and then the matzah that represents the freedom that followed?

Rabbi Twerski explains that until a person has experienced true freedom, they are not able to understand the limitation of slavery. Since the Jews who escaped Egypt were born into slavery, they never understood the extent of the limitations of their reality until they experienced true freedom. Whilst they were leaving Egypt they complained to Moshe by saying, “Weren't there enough graves in Egypt?”¹ This mindset reveals how the Jewish people also needed a psychological and spiritual transformation to believe in a life that reaches beyond the confines of slavery.

Thus we learn that when Hashem took the Jewish people out of Egypt, He did not only physically remove them from the brutality and dictatorship of Pharaoh, but on a deeper level and more importantly, He removed them from the shackles of having a slave mentality.

After being a free nation, they were able to understand in retrospect how the hardships and confines of Egypt were not only a physical enslavement, but had also limited their spiritual and emotional realities. The freedom that we as the Jewish People experienced during the Exodus became instilled within us as an internal reality, an intrinsic part of our DNA, that would carry us throughout the long and arduous exiles.

Although we may experience marror, we know that deep in our psyche we have already experienced the taste of the matzah and thereby have acquired the inner ability to rise above all challenges – this can never be taken away from us!

¹ Exodus 14:11



Marror From Bitterness to Joy

Rebbetzin Temmi Hadar

Johannesburg Sephardi Hebrew Congregation

It might seem counterintuitive that on the night we celebrate our freedom, we recall the bitterness of our exile. Immediately prior to when we would eat the Paschal Lamb, symbolic of our freedom, we are commanded to eat bitter herbs. Why not just focus on our freedom and savor the richness of the lamb; why do we always have to remember the difficult times beforehand?

The commandment of marror, the bitter herbs, contains within it a powerful life lesson. To truly savor our achievements, we need to recognize the challenges and difficulties that we overcame to get there. We must sense the bitterness of slavery to really taste the joy of freedom. Freedom is meaningless if one has never felt confined.

This lesson has never felt more appropriate. This year as we sit at seder tables in our homes, without our extended family gathered around, with many of us making Pesach for the first time, there are many people sitting alone reciting the words of the haggadah without other people to share the experience with. We are truly aware that we are lacking in the ultimate seder experience. We have our bitter herbs and our matzah, but we eat them without the Paschal Lamb offering, as we are without a Beit Hamikdash.

When we are confined to our homes, without much of the external pomp of a typical Pesach seder, we can truly recite the words at the end of the haggadah with meaning.

We end our seders with the words, “Next year in Jerusalem”. May Hashem hear our prayers, so that next year we celebrate our seder in Jerusalem with the entire extended Jewish family celebrating as one, with the coming of moshiach.

Why?

Rebbetzin Chami Baddiel

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.

We have a mitzvah from the Torah to speak about our Exodus from Egypt.

If Hashem gave us the mitzvah to speak about the enormous excitement of leaving Mitzrayim, why must we also include in our discussion, according to Rabban Gamliel, the marror – symbolizing the bitter times we had there?

It is not enough to speak about the fleeing, the freedom, the ecstasy. We must speak also about the maror – the bitter times we were subjected to.

Every person goes through trials in life. Tests and trials (like those years in Egypt) are there for our good; however, not always do we see it.

In order for one to feel the magnitude of the miracle, we must understand the situation we were in; the depths of despair, misery, total loss and helplessness. Our babies were being thrown into the rivers; we were forced by cruel tyrants to labour on ‘projects’ that produced fruitless results; our constant cries were our daily companions.

Having emerged strengthened, awed by the multitude of miracles that G-d performed on Pharaoh and the Egyptians in front of our very own eyes and then witnessing the splitting of the sea that enabled us to leave behind our oppressors and the cursed land – we then understandably erupted in song! Song of praise to the Almighty.

It is only after one suffers immensely, that the healing becomes so great. After such harsh bondage, our thankfulness for our redemption can be appreciated without limit.

Take an example: you have a small cut on your finger.

Are you going to make a seudas hodaah – a thanksgiving meal the year after it heals? No. A cut usually heals within a day or two. Yet if one recovered from open-heart surgery, he will more than want to give thanks to Hashem in the ensuing years, remembering the day of his operation and how he miraculously recovered.



It is according to the degree of the miracle we witness that we will show our thanks. For this reason, Rabban Gamliel taught us that we will only fulfil our mitzvah of seder night when we also mention the maror – the bitter times we experienced.

In the modim of the Amida we say: “We thank you Hashem... for Your miracles that are with us every day... evening, morning and afternoon.”

There are times when we feel totally sad and dejected and feel as though Hashem is out to punish us. We feel vulnerable and low. Hashem’s guiding hand seems to have left us and for some unknown reason is acting against us. Like the time we were in Mitzrayim.

In those times, it is worth bringing to heart the story that is told of Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) as printed below. We will then have a totally new perspective on our misery and suffering and be able to praise Hashem in this profound new state of recognition.

There was a rabbi who wanted to see justice in the world. But it often seemed to him that good people got punished, and that bad or undeserving people thrived and prospered. He pondered this, and he found no solution for his problem.

Now, this rabbi used to study at night, and sometimes he got a famous visitor—Elijah the Prophet.

“Come,” said the prophet on one such occasion. “Tomorrow I wish to go out into the world. I want to see whether the Jews around here are still hospitable; I want to experience how they keep this great mitzvah of our father Abraham. I want you to go with me. We will disguise ourselves as filthy, haggard beggars, and knock on doors. But no matter what happens, I want you to observe without asking me any questions or seeking any explanations.”

And so it came to pass. They left the next morning, and in the evening they came to a very poor hovel, hardly worthy of human occupation. They knocked and found that a poor farmer and his wife lived there together with a cow, their only possession, which provided their meager livelihood: they sold milk in the next village, and drank what was left. It kept them from starving.

The farmer couple was poor but very friendly, and ushered the two “beggars” in. They let them sleep on their best straw (they had no beds), and they shared a slice of hard bread and a bowl of milk from their cow with them.

Quietly, Elijah prayed that their cow would die. The next morning they woke up to a terrible scream. The farmer’s wife had gone to milk the cow and found the animal dead. The Rabbi was shocked with what he just witnessed, but remembering his promise, he said nothing. Thanking the couple, the two of them left.

That evening they came to a village and heard happy music. They found a mansion: servants were bustling about, but they were told that the wealthy owner of the house would not see them in. Instead of receiving food and a bed, Elijah and the rabbi were only allowed to sleep outside in the garden.

The next morning when they woke up, Elijah muttered that the broken wall in the wealthy man’s house be fixed.

The rabbi wanted to object, but he saw the stern look on the prophet’s face, and he obeyed without asking questions.

As they headed back to the rabbi’s village, Elijah said to him, “I know that you did not find it fair that the cow of the good couple died, and that the wall of the miser was fixed for free. But in G–d’s world, there is more to things than what meets the eye...”

“When we were sleeping in the poor couple’s hut, I heard the rustling of big wings from outside. It was the angel of death, who had come to take the life of the farmer’s wife. I pleaded with him to leave this couple alone, but as you know, the angel of death does not go away empty handed. I convinced him to take the cow instead. And not only that: G–d will bless them this year with a child, which is their deepest wish.”

“And what about the miser?” enquired the rabbi, to which Elijah answered: “Well, in the wall of his barn someone had hidden a jar with gold coins. That person died before he could tell anybody, and the gold stayed in the wall. Now, if the miser would repair that wall he would find the jar. But we fixed the wall for him, and the gold will stay hidden until a worthier person than he will find it.”

“Now I understand that this world is not what it seems to be to us, and we can only trust G–d to do justice in His world. Thank you for taking me on your trip...” And with this Elijah and the Rabbi parted ways.

With this we can understand the Mishna: “Just as one gives blessing for the good, one should bless for the bad”.²

Speak about the Maror! At least inwardly rejoice and bear in mind it’s all part and parcel of your hidden miracle. Let us take this lesson with us throughout our journey on this world and we will have much to rejoice for.

¹ Exodus 13:8

² Mishna, Berachot 9:3; Talmud, Berachot 54a



Bechol Dor VaDor... TODAY!

Rabbi Levi and Rebbetzin Rosie Popack
Chabad of Cape Town

We are all familiar with the famous mishna¹ that we quote in the middle of the haggadah, "Bechol Dor Vador" – that in each and every generation, on each and every Pesach, we live and relive as if we are leaving Egypt this year. It shouldn't be just a story in the history books but rather something personal.

The Alter Rebbe adds to this message in Chapter 47 of Tanya that it's not just in every generation but Bechol Yom VaYom, every day. Every day a person must live like he is leaving Mitzrayim. Mitzrayim represents our challenges and limitations; we have to leave our own golus (exile), whether it be the constraints of our daily struggles or the worries which we carry. For many years we have celebrated leaving Egypt, yet we are still trapped in our own suffering. As the saying goes, G-d took us out of Egypt but he didn't take the Egypt out of us. However, he did give us the tools and abilities to overcome any obstacles that may come our way.

The Maharal of Prague tells us that the impact of the original Exodus from Egypt was a redemption of our Jewish Souls. Our bodies may continue to endure exile, but our Neshama will remain free forever, leaving the path for us to choose Torah and Hashem wide open. Sitting in solitude this Pesach emphasizes this idea. We must reflect upon our own Egypt, our personal challenges and shortcomings. It is almost as if Hashem is pushing and guiding us into a situation where we must tap into and connect with our Neshama in order to truly be free.

It is not a question of if we have what it takes, because we know already, we have what it takes! – and this is the time you can really break free to become the best possible YOU.

There is a custom passed down through the generations, dating to the Baal Shem Tov, to celebrate the final day of Pesach with the Moshiach Seudah. (It is by no coincidence that the lockdown here in SA finishes the last day of Pesach.) It is an opportunity to collectively tap into our true self. It is a collective moment where we can ask that He hasten moshiach's coming. It is a moment where we can be living a moshiach life. This will surely hasten his coming, may it be speedily in our days.

¹ Mishna Pesachim 10:5



MATZAH



Matzah

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MATZAH

Alive and Well

Rabbi Yechezkel Auerbach
Ohr Somayach

On the first night of Pesach, we fulfil the mitzvah of eating matzah. Usually, whenever we do a seasonal mitzvah, such as blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah, we make a *shehecheyanu* to thank Hashem that we have lived until this time and have the opportunity to do the mitzvah. So why don't we recite *shehecheyanu* on the mitzvah of eating matzah on Seder night?

Actually, the *shehecheyanu* we make at kiddush also covers the matzah. It then follows that if we forgot to have the matzah in mind when making kiddush, we would have to make another *shehecheyanu* when eating the matzah. And this is clearly not our minhag.

I would like to suggest another explanation. The Rema in Shulchan Aruch¹ writes that the minhag is to make the three matzahs of the Seder from an *isaron*, a certain measurement of flour, corresponding to the measure of flour used in the *korban todah*. This teaches us that the matzah is eaten to thank Hashem for our deliverance from slavery. According to the Rema, the matzah is essentially an expression of thanksgiving; we have in mind all of the kindness Hashem has performed for us, from the redemption from Egypt to this very time in our lives, when we merit to be alive and free to celebrate this Yomtov of Pesach. Therefore, the very act of eating the matzah demonstrates our gratitude to Hashem that we are alive and Hashem has brought us to this moment. This in itself is the same proclamation as the berachah of *shehecheyanu* - and therefore it is not necessary to express verbally what the action of the mitzvah is demonstrating.

This year more than ever, at the seder night we should express our abundant gratitude to Hashem that until now he has protected our South African Jewish Community from the terrible consequences of the coronavirus. We daven that Hashem should protect all of Klal Yisrael and heal all of the sick. May we merit the final redemption speedily in our time.

¹ Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 475:7



The Paradox of Matzah

Rabbi Shimon Wolpe

Rosh Yeshiva of YSA (Meshech Chochma)

When we look at matzah it is very clear that it holds within itself a paradox. We began the haggadah by stating that this is the bread of affliction, or of the poor man, which our forefathers ate in Egypt. But at the end of maggid we state that the reason we eat the matzah is because we left Egypt in such haste there wasn't enough time for the bread to rise = freedom! We lean when we eat the matzah, an act of freedom.

This is really a growth within ourselves; at the beginning of the seder we see slavery, servitude and oppression in the matzah. However, as we work our way through the haggadah and experience the tremendous miracles and kindnesses of Hashem, we begin to see how the same piece of matzah is both slavery and freedom itself.

First we eat the matzah alone (slavery and freedom), then maror (slavery) and finally we eat the two together. We no longer feel the contradiction. In Tehillim,¹ Dovid Hamelech describes the many questions he has and what he doesn't understand but then as soon as he enters the Beis Hamikdash he has no more questions. This doesn't mean he has the answers to all the questions, but the questions no longer bother him! When one acknowledges that the world is Hashem's and that He is in control, one asks no more questions! In the time of the Beis Hamikdash we were able to eat Pesach, matzah and maror in one sandwich. We had the capacity to live in a world of absolute freedom (Korban Pesach and matzah) and slavery (maror) at the same time, in the same bite! This is the absolute acceptance of Hashem as king.

¹ Psalms 73:16-17



MARROR



Marror

Marror – the Bitter Herbs

Rebbetzin Tamar Taback

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MARROR

Marror – the Bitter Herbs¹

Rebbetzin Tamar Taback

Founder, Nexus, School of Transformational Torah for Women.

Marror is the “real-life” factor.

Ask yourself a question: what is more delectable, sugar straight from the bag or well-made chocolate? Sugar water or lemonade? Hot sweetened milk or coffee? In all of these pleasures, an intrinsically bitter component is added to the sweetness, and yields a far more pleasurable result than consuming the sweetness directly.

In a similar way, light is brighter when it is on a backdrop of darkness, and it is at this point in the seder that we are able to relate to our suffering from a different place and extend our compassion to ourselves as well as to all those who suffer. For reasons we cannot fully understand, God in His infinite love adds painful challenge to the mix of life, and through it we are made great and our souls expand. A seder without marror lacks depth and beauty, and a heart without some pain lacks empathy. This is an advanced step and accrues the tremendous eternal reward of accepting our suffering with love. Ultimately, our pain brings us to an even more refined level of spirituality where we eliminate any vestige of impurity from ourselves and appear completely cleansed before God.

¹ Excerpted from ‘A Spiritually Transformational Seder: Exploring the inner mystical depth and meaning behind the seder’s 15 steps’, published by Rebbetzin Tamar Taback on her website, thenexus.org



Korech

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KORECH



A Message of Hope

Rabbi Motti Hadar

Johannesburg Sephardi Hebrew Congregation

The tenth step of the Pesach seder, just before the actual meal, is eating the “Korech sandwich”.

Right after we eat the bitter herbs, sitting upright – as the Marror reminds us of our slavery in Egypt and reclining symbolises our freedom – we recall how the great sage, Hillel, would celebrate Passover. Hillel lived in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, and observed Pesach by eating the Passover sacrifice. Instead of eating the three Pesach foods – matzah, marror, and the meat of the Paschal lamb – separately, he would make a sandwich, combining all three in one, to be eaten while reclining.

Today, we commemorate his sandwich by eating our own similar sandwiches in a reclining position, although obviously without the meat of the Passover sacrifice. This simple sandwich offers a powerful message of hope, and it tells us about the positive approach which the great sage, Hillel, adopted to all the hardships in his life. The thin matzah on the outside of the sandwich represents the freedom which Hashem has granted us. The bitter herbs on the inside symbolise the challenges and adversities we face in life.

While Hillel’s life appeared difficult, due to the extreme poverty he experienced, he understood that it was the will of Hashem, our good G-d, our kind Father, and therefore ultimately for a good reason.

Even the bitter parts of his life, he viewed positively, encouraged by his faith in the Creator, in His goodness and in the plan He no doubt has.

He therefore placed the bitterness (marror) inside the freedom (matzah) and ate it while reclining, inspiring each of us with a powerful message of hope, as we emulate not only his sandwich but his outlook on life.

We may be going through difficult times, life might be very bitter and overwhelming at the moment, and we may feel hopeless. But when we remind ourselves that Hashem runs the world, and the bitter moments are all part of His grand plan, for our sake, for our growth and for our benefit, it becomes easier to contextualise what we’re going through, to sandwich it between our trust, our hope, our faith and our belief, and to remain truly optimistic, positive and confident that next year we will be in Jerusalem!

Bittersweet

Rabbi Yossie Hecht

Chabad of Sandton

The mishna in tractate Pesachim lists five vegetables which can be used for marror – bitter herbs at the seder.

There is some discussion about their exact identity. However, the consensus is that the first, חַזֶרֶת (chazeret), is romaine/cos lettuce and the third (the second is not mentioned), תַּמְחָא (tamcha), is horseradish.

In fact it is the prevailing custom that we use cos lettuce and horseradish for both marror and korech – the matzah-and-maror sandwich.

The word תַּמְחָא is an acronym for,

"תִּמְדִּד מִסְפָּרִים כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵינוּ" – "CONTINUALLY RECOUNTING THE GLORY OF HASHEM" .

The message is profound and relevant now more than ever.

Even in our most bitter moments, we know that all comes from Almighty G-D and we praise Him.

When things are bitter and difficult we must tap into our deepest reservoirs of faith and trust in Hashem.

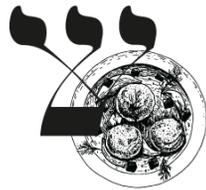
As King David reminds us,¹

"קוֹה אֱלֹהֵי ה' חֲזַק וַיִּצְמַח לְבַבְךָ וְקוֹה אֱלֹהֵי ה'"

“Hope in Hashem, be strong and let your heart be valiant.”

¹ Psalms 27:14





SHULCHAN ORECH

Shulchan Orech

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The Egg in Exodus

Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Senior Rabbi Sydenham Shul
President, South African Rabbinical Association

At Pesach seders around the world, one of the favourite items on the seder plate will be a simple hard-boiled egg. But what this little egg teaches us is far from simple.

One of many reasons we have the egg at the seder is because it symbolizes the beginning of life, and Pesach marks the very beginning of our national existence. But it's more exact than that. The egg reflects the precise position of the Jewish people at the time of the Exodus.

Look at the journey of our egg. First it is inside the hen. It is then laid and freed from those constraints. But has the egg hatched? Has a little chick emerged yet? No. The egg is only a potential life. It is not yet a living being. One day, a chick will emerge and the cycle of life will continue.

When the Jewish People left Egypt they were exactly the same - an unhatched egg. Free from the prison of Egypt and slavery - but not quite fully born. It would take seven weeks for them to reach Mount Sinai and experience the great revelation of G-d and receive the Torah. Only then were they given a way of life and purpose. Until Sinai, we were all dressed up with nowhere to go. On Pesach we emerged from Egypt like the egg that drops out of the hen. But only at Sinai were we hatched and born properly.

The message? Political freedom without spiritual freedom is an unhatched egg. We may be free, but we are still spiritually lost and morally confused.

We in South Africa, understand this message all too well. We achieved political freedom in our beloved country. We've had 26 years of democracy. But the majority of the majority are still impoverished.

And now with the Coronavirus pandemic who are the most vulnerable if not our shack dwellers and those living in overcrowded townships?

So, freedom itself is only half the story. What we do with our freedom - that is the question. We need a purpose in life, and a moral, spiritual infrastructure to help guide us in life. Otherwise we wander aimlessly through the wilderness, and our freedom remains undeveloped potential.

Let's not be unhatched eggs. Let us use our freedom wisely and achieve all our aspirations. Let us realize that Pesach is but the beginning. Now we must consult the Torah to discover how to take maximum advantage of that freedom.



Embracing Our Needs

Rebbetzin Tali Kagan
Bnei Akiva

An interesting idea I taught this week, from an article by Rabbi Shraga Simmons, is about the 15 steps to freedom corresponding to the 15 steps of the seder. Each step of the seder has the potential to bring us closer to enacting our own personal geulah. Shulchan Orech, the festive delicious meal and the ornately decorated Pesach table, the effort gone into the detail of telling the story, are all physical aspects of the evening. If we are focused on attaining higher levels of kedusha, holiness, on seder night, then it seems somewhat strange that one of the mitzvot of the night is eating a luxurious festive meal.

This is the attitude of Judaism – we embrace and encourage our material needs as long as it is to serve Hashem and elevate the physical. Our religious leaders are not celibate. They do not meditate all day on a mountaintop. Judaism encourages feasting and marital relations. Hashem wants us to embrace the abundance of Olam Hazeh. The food we consume is rich with different flavours, colours and textures. The Gemara¹ states that one of the questions asked when one reaches Shamayim is, “Did you enjoy the fruits of this world?” Seder night teaches us that true freedom is the ability to sanctify life, to embrace its beauty, not to shut it out or flee from it.

¹ Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin 4:12

Who Set the Table?

Rabbi Pinny Kahn
Maharsha

One of the stages that is hardly spoken about is שלחן ערוך, what we refer to as the meal. The מן הניסים writes (parshas Tzav) that the accurate pronunciation should not have been Shulchan Oraich, but rather Shulchan Oruch, a set table. Obviously, besides for the tune and rhyme into which the phrase Shulchan Oraich needs to fit, there must be a deeper message in this change.

The Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo¹ teaches us that מודה בהנסים אדם המפורסמים – through the experience of open miracles a person must come to acknowledge the hidden miracles. A person has no part in the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu until they believe that every single occurrence is an absolute miracle from Hashem, public or private, everything is Divinely orchestrated.

Let's return to the stage of the seder 'Shulchan Oraich'. The source for this phrase is in Tehillim;² when describing the Jews' attitude towards Hashem in the desert, Dovid Hamelech says, היכול אל לערוך שלחן במדבר – Is G-d able to prepare a table in the desert? They were unable to appreciate the ability that He can do anything and constantly does. In which case the phrase isn't Shulchan Oruch, a set table. The table doesn't set itself. Rather, Shulchan Oraich, there is Someone that sets the table. Therefore in the middle of the Hallel paragraphs, having said 'He turns a rock into a pool of water', clearly an open miracle, we stop, wash for matzah, marror and sit down to eat the meal. Understand that this is the same miracle when we sit down to eat as Hashem making open miracles in the desert. Thereby, from the open miracles we come to acknowledge the hidden ones.

May we all utilize every moment of this wonderful opportunity to elevate ourselves and our families, and to come away truly feeling that Hashem is the only thing that exists, no statistics and no news reports even interest us. The only thing that exists is 'Mi she'omar' and that will prepare us for the arrival of Moshiach, may he come speedily, we are so desperate for him, Amen!

¹ Ramban, Exodus 13:16

² Psalms 78:19



Family Quiz for the Table

The pesach story through questions and answers

Rabbi Jonathan Fox
Group Rabbi | Chevrah Kadisha

The night of the seder is a time for telling the story of the Exodus through questions and answers. Here is a compendium of questions and answers to help make your seder interesting. These questions and answers are based on the literal meaning of the Chumash.

1. Q. What were the names of the storage cities that the Children of Israel built for Pharaoh?
A. Pithom and Raamses [1:11]
2. Q. About what does it state that the more that it was afflicted, the more it increased?
A. The nation of the Children of Israel [1:12]
3. Q. Who named Moses and why was he named Moses (literally 'drawn')?
A. Pharaoh's daughter; because she drew him from the water [2:10]
4. Q. Complete: 'the bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not _____.'
A. consumed [3:2]
5. Q. "Send out My people that they may celebrate for Me in the _____."
A. wilderness (desert) [5:1]
6. Q. What was the decree that Pharaoh issued regarding the straw?
A. That straw should no longer be given to the Children of Israel to make the bricks [5:7]
7. Q. Complete: 'and they did not listen to Moses because of shortness of breath and _____.'
A. hard work [6:9]
8. Q. (a) What was the first sign that Aaron performed before Pharaoh? (b) What happened when Pharaoh's necromancers successfully emulated the sign that Aaron performed?

- A.(a) He threw down his stick and it became a snake [7:9] (b) Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs [7:12]
9. Q. What happened to the fish in the River when the water turned to blood?
A. They died [7:21]
 10. Q. Who struck the dust of the land of Egypt to initiate the plague of lice?
A. Aaron [8:13]
 11. Q. Who said to whom: "It is a finger of God!"?
A. The sorcerers to Pharaoh [8:15]
 12. Q. What did Moses throw heavenward to initiate the plague of boils?
A. Soot of the furnace [9:10]
 13. Q. Which of the servants of Pharaoh chased their livestock into their houses because of the impending plague of hail?
A. Those who feared the word of Hashem [9:20]
 14. Q. During the plague of hail, what was flaming within the hail?
A. Fire [9:24]
 15. Q. Were the firstborn of the beast included in the decree of the plague of the firstborn?
A. Yes [11:5]
 16. Q. Hashem told Moses and Aaron to instruct the Children of Israel regarding the first pesach-offering. (a) What types of animals would be eligible for this offering? (b) On what date in the month was the animal to be taken? (c) At what time in the day was the animal to be slaughtered? (d) How was the meat of the offering to be prepared for eating? (e) With what other foods was the meat of the offering to be eaten? (f) At what time in the day was the meat of the offering to be eaten?
A. (a) Sheep or goats [12:5], (b) On the tenth of the month [12:3], (c) In the afternoon [12:6], (d) It was to be roasted over the fire [12:8], (e) With matzahs and bitter herbs [12:8], (f) At night [12:8]



17. *Q.* On which part of the house was the blood of the first pesach-offering to be put?
A. On the two doorposts and the lintel [12:7]
18. *Q.* During the plague of the firstborn, what would be a sign to Hashem to pass over the houses of the Children of Israel?
A. The blood [12:13]
19. *Q.* Which days of Passover are to be a holy convocation?
A. The first and the seventh [12:16]
20. *Q.* What was to be dipped into the blood and used to put the blood on the lintel and doorposts?
A. A bundle of hyssop [12:22]
21. *Q.* At what time did Hashem smite the firstborn in Egypt?
A. At midnight [12:29]
22. *Q.* Upon leaving Egypt, what items did the Children of Israel request from the Egyptians?
A. Silver vessels, gold vessels and garments [12:35]
23. *Q.* About how many men of the Children of Israel journeyed from Ramses to Succoth?
A. 600 000 [12:37]
24. *Q.* Into what did the Children of Israel bake the dough that they took out of Egypt?
A. Into unleavened cakes [12:39]
25. *Q.* Regarding the pesach-offering, state whether each of the following is true or false: (a) It may be eaten in several houses (b) One may not break a bone in it (c) an uncircumcised man may not eat of it.
A. (a) False [12:46], (b) True [12:46], (c) True [12:48]
26. *Q.* What does Moses call the month during which the Children of Israel left Egypt?
A. The month of spring [13:4]
27. *Q.* Whose bones did Moses take from Egypt?
A. Joseph's [13:19]

28. *Q.* With what means did Hashem lead the Children of Israel by day?
A. With a pillar of cloud [13:21]
29. *Q.* With what means did Hashem provide the Children of Israel light by night?
A. With a pillar of fire [13:21]
30. *Q.* With what did Hashem move the sea all the night?
A. A strong east wind [14:21]



Tzafun

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T Z A F U N



Tzafun

Rabbi Alex Carlebach
Chabad of Lyndhurst

Dearest Friends,

The most vivid religious memory that most of our fellow brothers & sisters have is that of the Pesach seder, when the entire family, zeidas & bobas, parents, children & grandchildren got together & the interaction was to high heaven. For reasons beyond our comprehension this will be the first time perhaps in history that Jews world over will be celebrating seders on their own. Even those who have family members in walking distance. Know that none of us are alone. We are connecting to our Nation all around the world. We are also connecting to all the Pesach seders held throughout history, going back to the first seder in Egypt. Then, too, we were given the commandment: “No person should leave their home.” We are connecting to seders held in the lowest times of our history, like the remnants in the Warsaw Ghetto, to the highest, most glorious times when our ancestors flooded Jerusalem & brought the paschal lambs in the Holy Temple. I appeal to EVERY JEW & JEWESS with a family or alone. CREATE A SEDER THIS YEAR. FULFILL THE MITZVOT of Pesach, even if, as the Talmud puts it, you have to ask yourself the 4 questions. Let us make it memorable in different, yet equally spiritual, ways.

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach says in the name of the Kozhitzer Maggid about Yachatz, “The world is so broken, yet our children can make the world whole again. We break the Middle matzah; the small piece we keep; and the big piece – the bigger brokenness – our children take away. When they bring it back towards the end of the seder, they are bringing us a whole afikomen. Our children are the ones who are taking brokenness away from us.”

LET US OBSERVE PESACH THIS YEAR WITH THE ARDENT PRAYER L'SHANA HABA B'YERUSHALAYIM – MAY WE, TOGETHER WITH ALL THOSE ALIVE TODAY BE HEALTHY, SAFE & STRONG TO KEEP PESACH ALL TOGETHER & ONCE AGAIN CONNECTED WITH ALL OUR FAMILIES & FRIENDS NEXT YEAR, IN YERUSHALAYIM WITH MOSHIACH, AMEN.



Dogs and Afikoman

Reb Naftali Silver
Chief Rabbi's Community Kollel of Cape Town

Amongst the many interesting and peculiar customs we have on seder night, there is one that we don't recognize as much. I am writing about the stealing of the afikoman by the children at the Pesach seder. What is this idea of stealing the afikoman?

There are many different insights as to where this custom comes from. Many explain how to bring ourselves, as if in a time machine, to the night before the Exodus and the day following. I would like to share an idea from a Gemara in Pesachim¹ that I recently came upon. There, Rav tells his son that he should not live in a city without dogs, the reason being that dogs naturally know if there is a thief and will bark. So if you do not have dogs to keep thievery at bay, your possessions are not safe.

We know that on the night of the Exodus from Egypt, dogs did not bark: “*There shall be a great outcry in the entire land of Egypt, such as there has never been and such as there shall never be again. But against all the Children of Israel, no dog shall sharpen his tongue, against neither man nor beast, so that you shall know that G-d will have distinguished between Egypt and Israel.*”

As a result of that, there were thieves out all over the place in Egypt. So, in order to commemorate the night, our children steal the afikoman. They mimic the theft that occurred on that night, to memorialize the happenings of the Exodus from Egypt. Amazing how we bring in the smallest of details, to tap in to what happened 3300 years ago.

This Pesach, when my children gleefully hide the afikoman, I will try to have this in mind. To remember that while this is something that gives the children a fun activity, it also takes us back to what happened in Egypt.

Wishing everyone a safe, healthy and joyous Pesach!

¹ Talmud Pesachim 113a



Hallel

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H A L L E L



Why is Hallel on This Night Different?

Rebbetzin Debra Rubanowitz
Kollel Yad Shaul

There seem to be two distinct situations in which singing praises to Hashem is appropriate and even required:

1. As an emotional expression of sincere gratitude after a tragedy has been averted.
2. On festivals, times of joyous celebration. At such times, all are expected to open their hearts and sing the praises of Hashem for the gifts granted at that time. This is something one must work towards. It isn't a spontaneous burst of emotion, but rather a solemn hymn of thanksgiving after one has contemplated the gifts received.

The Maggid Mishneh explains that type 1 was enacted by the prophets and has the weight of a Torah obligation. Type 2 was enacted much later in history and has the halachic status of rabbinic legislation.

Raavad offers an example of type 1: when the Jews were encouraged to break out into songs of praise to Hashem after the siege on Yerushalayim was broken and Sancherib, King of Assyria, was defeated in 701 B.C.E.

This event was described by the prophet Yeshayahu (30:29):

הַשִּׁיר יְהִי לָכֶם כְּלִיל הַתְּקֵדֶשׁ הַגָּ.

It is not referred to as hallel, a hymn, but rather shir, a song. Interestingly, the prophet compares it to the Hallel sung at the seder.

Apparently, the events that took place the night of the seder are analogous to a victory in war. On the night of the Exodus, the Jews were saved from their oppressors. Thus, both are classified as type 1 (shir/hallel); a grateful outburst of emotion.

The Kesef Mishneh refutes this explanation by noting that the hallel recited on Chanukah also commemorates salvation from a difficult war. If the Maggid Mishneh were correct, the Rambam should have classified that victory as a type 1 hallel. In fact, the Rambam explicitly refers to it as type 2 (מדברי סופרים).

In defense of the Rambam and Maggid Mishneh, perhaps we can explain that the hallel recited on Chanukah is a commemoration of the victory in a war the Jews had won (in the past). A festival was established around that historical event, and every year since then we praise

Hashem with formal hymns and songs of praise. That is not a natural outburst of emotion that comes from shir (hallel type 1); it is the ceremonious type 2 enacted by later sages (מדברי סופרים).

Hallel at the seder is not a hallel mandated in commemoration of a historical event. On this night, it is incumbent upon all participants in the seder to become so emotionally involved that they feel as if they themselves had been under threat and were subsequently redeemed by Hashem. Having had such a personal and emotional experience is cause for type 1 hallel (שיר) (ומדברי קבלה). That is why the Raavad includes hallel for a recent triumph in war (like the victory over Sancherib) and hallel on the night of the seder as examples of the higher-level hallel (מדברי קבלה).

Hallel on seder night is intrinsically different from hallel on any other festival. Tonight, we sing in joy and triumph as if we had actually just gone through the turmoil and emerged victorious.²

Tonight, let us sing hallel at the seder not as a commemoration of a historical event that took place centuries ago. Let it be a personal expression of joy and gratitude for our salvation as if it just happened. It is a shir – a heartfelt personal outburst of real emotion.

With this analysis he explains why the Rambam (Chanukah 3:6) refers to Hallel on Yom Tov as rabbinic (מדברי סופרים, a lower-level enactment). The Raavad refers to another type of hallel that is classified as מדברי קבלה, a high-level enactment on par with a Torah law. The higher-level enactment is appropriate after a victory in war, when the people burst out with emotion and a feeling of gratitude to Hashem.

In the Haggodoh we are taught:

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים.

On Seder night we are meant to experience the redemption as if we ourselves were leaving Egypt. We begin by eating the bitter herbs and the bread of affliction. This enables us to relive the difficulties and thereby experience the salvation. Subsequently, we eventually break out in a song of gratitude in joyous recognition of Hashem's love for us. This is not a formal, ceremonious hymn. This is not hallel type 2 (מדברי סופרים). It is type 1 (מדברי קבלה).



Five Levels

Rebbetzin Debbie Suiza
Herzlia Schools

This is seder night, where we retell the story and celebrate our nation's freedom from enslavement in Egypt and the unbreakable soul of our Jewish Nation.

Chazal teach¹ us that our body is the vessel honoured with housing our precious and Divine neshama in all its missions. Kabbalah illuminates for us the five levels to the paradigm of our neshama. How can we enhance our seder night by including all five levels?

Our Nefesh is our basic life force, our instincts and our survival mode which are all deeply ingrained in us. We express these elements when we read and hear the words and the songs in the haggadah of the suffering of our people over 3000 years ago.

Our Ruach is a uniquely human trait based on our quest for truth and social justice for all. We must remember that we were once slaves in Egypt and have compassion for all.

Our Neshama refers to the power of our thoughts, our morals, our sense of purpose and belief that we need to pursue in order to ensure that Am Yisrael continues to not only survive but to flourish.

Our Chaya is our life force that ignites when we hear, see, smell, taste and touch our Torah, our heritage, our Israel.

Our Yechida is our ultimate deep connection and identification with Hashem. When we finish the third cup of wine and we sing Hallel, where we express our love to Hashem with all our heart, soul and might, we activate our Yechida.

The absorption of all five levels into the Pesach seder maximizes our experience and resonates with our soul and all of klal Yisrael.

Wishing you all a Pesach kasher v'sameach.

¹Talmud, Berachot 10



NIRTZAH



Nirtzah

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NIRTZAH

Call to Order

Rabbi Reuven Zail
Ohr Somayach

We call this special night 'leil haseder' – the night of the seder. Seder means 'order' or 'arrangement'. There are fifteen different parts that make up the evening's proceedings, arranged in a specific order, beginning with kiddush (kadesh), then the washing of hands (urchatz), followed by eating a vegetable dipped in salt water (karpas), and so on until we conclude with the final step (nirtzah), when we pray that Hashem accept our observance of the seder and that He speedily send mashiach.

The notion of 'seder' features prominently in the most central of our activities as Jews. Our prayers are arranged in a 'siddur' and our study of Torah focuses on 'Shas', an acronym for the shisha sedarim, the six orders of the oral law. The rabbi who officiates at a wedding is called the 'mesader kiddushin', the arranger of the marriage ceremony. A fixed, daily Torah learning session is colloquially referred to as a 'seder'.

One of the greatest Torah personalities of the previous century, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, was once asked how he merited to achieve his unique level of greatness. He answered with one word: 'seder'. On a basic level this means living a life of planning, organization and prioritizing. It means putting things into perspective and acting sensibly, with foresight.

On a deeper level, 'seder' means making sense of an otherwise chaotic world. It means finding order and purpose in what appears to be random and haphazard. This is especially relevant in the challenging times we are now experiencing.

Sedorim were conducted in the concentration camps. They were expressions of the deepest yearnings of Jews who found meaning amongst desolation and depravity and were able to acknowledge the Orchestrator of all of existence.

On seder night we remind ourselves of our history. We discuss chronology. We also get into the moment and perform mitzvos that bind us to our Creator. As one of the fifteen steps of the seder we eat maror, bitter herbs of pain and disconnection, but we put them into a perspective of past and future redemption.



Seder means there is a time to rejoice and a different time to cry. It means that there is a time to feel secure and loved - asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim! There is also a time to feel vulnerable and fragile when contemplating an uncertain future.

Above all, seder reminds us that Hashem has a plan for us. As we conclude nirtzah, the fifteenth step, the haggadah expresses our hope and aspirations in a beautiful passage:

“Pure One, Who dwells in His heavenly abode, raise the uncountable congregation of Israel. In the near future, lead the shoots You have planted to Zion, redeemed, joyously.”

Hakol yihyeh b'seder!

NIRTZAH

Complexity and Combination

Rebbetzin Aviva Rabinowitz
Greenside Shul

The word "matzah" conjures up emotions of the Israelites gaining their freedom. Hurrying out of Egypt, they did not even have time to bake proper bread. The haggadah, however, begins with us holding up a piece of broken matzah and reciting the words, "This is the bread of our affliction".

So what does matzah symbolise - freedom or affliction? The answer is both. Life is not always crystal clear. The world is a combination of good and evil. As the light of the day turns to the darkness of the night, so do we experience times of joy and sadness in our lives. Currently, we are all experiencing the matzah of affliction, circumstances with huge challenges. The haggadah ends triumphantly with the words "next year in Jerusalem".

Hopefully we will soon return to our regular lives and taste the matzah of freedom.

Wishing you all a chag kasher v'sameach.



How Long the Night?

Rebbetzin Mashi Lipskar
The Shul – Hyde Park

The custom is that at the seder, the child asks the time-honoured Four Questions. If a person is sitting alone at the seder, he, too, asks the Four Questions, because we are aware that our Heavenly Father is listening.

In Jewish homes everywhere it is therefore an age-old, beautiful tradition to preface the Four Questions with the words, “Father, I will ask you four questions.”

Chassidus explains that we are actually asking these of our Father in Heaven. Like every part of the haggadah, the Four Questions have deep mystical meaning. These are questions that we ask Hashem from the very depth of our souls. They are questions about why this night – this exile – almost 2000 years long – is different from all other exiles.

There have been too many dark nights throughout this exile where our holy Nation has endured ongoing, unspeakable, unfathomable pain & challenge.

As we recount the suffering of our people in Mitzrayim – the first and therefore the prototype of all exiles – we become acutely aware of the exile we are in now and ask why.

We ask so that we may do our part in bringing about the end of this long night and the dawn of the great new day in the yearned-for time of ultimate revealed light and goodness – the Era of Moshiach.

This year, our hearts are joined with those of our brothers and sisters everywhere in an unprecedented way. Although many sit at the seder on their own, it is without question that each of us asks these questions from an altogether different perspective.

Wherever we are, we beseech our Father in Heaven to turn night into everlasting day.

We are now in the very month of redemption, at the very time that You, dear Father, performed miracles for our ancestors.

Dear Father. What better time than right now?



#Grateful

Rabbi Gidon Fox
Pretoria Hebrew Congregation

In the introductory paragraph to Hallel in the Haggada, we state: “Lefichach anachnu chayavim lehodot”, therefore we are obliged to express gratitude and to praise etc. to Hashem. The concept of gratitude and praise is certainly a central theme of Pesach and a cornerstone of Jewish life.

The Midrash tells us that Moshiach will come either in a generation entirely worthy, *kullo zakkai*, where all are righteous, or in a generation entirely unworthy, *kullo chayav*, where all are not righteous. The holy Ruzhiner Rebbe, was perplexed by this Midrash. How could it be that a totally “guilty” generation should be worthy to experience the Messianic redemption?

He avers that the Midrash is saying that Moshiach will come in a generation *shekullo chayav* means a generation that is totally chayav, indebted to Hashem. Moshiach will come to a generation that is totally appreciative of all the blessings they have and that they are a gift from Hashem.

This idea should resonate greatly with us in our current situation. We have been blessed to live in probably one of the best, if not the best, times in Jewish history. The freedoms the Jewish people enjoy globally, the material comfort we have, and the ability to actualise our Yiddishkeit without fear or concern, is likely unparalleled in our history.

Yet one cannot help but feel that, as life became more comfortable, we ceased to appreciate the blessings, both large and small, that Hashem showers upon us on a daily basis.

Comes Covid-19 and reminds us how, the things we take for granted, are great and wonderful blessings. The ability to go to work, make a living, walk the streets, go to gym and more. For all these “basic”, we saw no reason to be grateful. After all, it is a normal part of life. Comes Corona and reminds us of the daily blessings we take for granted. It reminds us of the blessing of health, of family, of life.

Corona doubtless will turn us into a generation of gratefulness. Please G-d, may that be the key to our ultimate redemption and this year already, in Jerusalem.



To the future, with thanks

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our Rabbis and Rebbetzins who responded with such enthusiasm and commitment to my call to submit pieces to this *Unity Haggadah*.

This entire project was turned around in a matter of days, and that was only possible because the submissions came pouring in almost immediately. I'm especially appreciative given the pressure everyone is facing in these circumstances. Our Rabbis and Rebbetzins are doing all in their power to hold their communities together, virtually – and yet, as always, they came through. It epitomises their selfless dedication to our community: always giving, leading, sharing – and caring. We are so blessed to have such talented compassionate leaders in all our shuls and schools.

The *Seder* begins with a focus on the past – the origins of our people. But it ends with a vision for the future. The soaring praises of *Hallel* culminate in the beautiful words of *Nishmat Kol Chai*. This magnificent prayer envisages the Final Redemption – a time of universal peace and prosperity, of widespread unity and goodwill. A time of moral and spiritual clarity, when Hashem's presence is manifest and the “soul of every living being” is moved to utter glorious praise to the Creator. This is a time when, as the prophet says: “G-d will wipe away tears from all faces.”

And so, as we traverse the *Seder*, we journey from the past into a glorious future, and pray fervently for that Final Redemption. We drink four cups of wine, corresponding to the four expressions of redemption, and conclude with a fifth cup of wine for Elijah, who heralds the coming of *Moshiach*.

This Nissan – a month of miracles and deliverance – may Hashem bring true redemption to the world, and health and healing to all of humanity.

With blessings,

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

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