

Spin the Seder

HAGGADAH COMPANION



jewish
futures

Pesach Pack

About THE JEWISH FUTURES FAMILY

Jewish Futures exists in order to ensure a vibrant Jewish future for young Jews irrespective of background and affiliation. It is a platform upon which sit a number of dynamic educational charities. Each of these provide a different set of opportunities for engagement with Jewish life. The broad offering represented by the family of Jewish Futures organizations reflects the diverse range of people and personalities that make up the Jewish community today. Together they combine to offer a compelling range of educational and experiential touch points.

The various organizations harness many different approaches offering a plethora of ways for people to connect and interact with their Jewish identity. These include compelling speakers and personalities, discussion circles, contemporary culture and issues, journeys to locations that carry the story of the Jewish People, immersive experiences of Jewish living, social responsibility, textual study, lecture series, lifecycle events, leadership courses, social events, volunteering opportunities and much more.

The family of Jewish Futures organisations appeals to Jews from the entire spectrum of the Jewish community from ultra-orthodox to secular: Ashkenazim, Sefardim, young and old. Jewish Futures has always been forward thinking in its contemporary approach whilst maintaining unwavering commitment to authentic Torah values.

Jewish Futures organisations are all driven by the same set of core values which revolve around Jewish life, family, Torah, being a mensch, living with integrity and passion, tolerance of others, relevance of our 3,500 year-old story to contemporary life, authenticity, love of fellow Jews irrespective of differences, unity, sense of responsibility and readiness to stand up and be counted.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

The 2020 pandemic saw the smooth and efficient transfer of all organizations online with incredible alacrity and a dizzying outburst of ongoing creativity, engaging unparalleled numbers via a plethora of original web-based offerings. The personable staff and opportunities provided by the family of Jewish Futures to the broad Jewish community during Covid-19 has served as a constant beacon of light, hope, purpose, direction and inspiration to thousands as we journey together through uncharted waters.



Outlined below is a synopsis of each organization's mission:



Aish UK

Sharing the wisdom, depth and beauty of Judaism with young Jews empowering them to make a brighter Jewish future



GIFT

Inspiring the next generation to become givers through dynamic education, impactful volunteering and helping others



Chazak

Building the next generation of the Sephardi community today, while empowering the leaders of tomorrow



Forum for Jewish Leadership

Identifying, educating and training a new generation of young leadership for the Jewish community and beyond



Chazon

Empowering Chareidi youth, parents and teachers via foundational discussions, classes and travel experiences



Ta'am

Inviting Jews to savour their Jewish story via culinary traditions, customs, memories and connections



JRoots

Facilitating inspiring educational Jewish journeys for all ages and backgrounds to international destinations of Jewish interest



Legacy Live

Bringing the enduring lessons of inspiring Jewish personalities in cutting edge digital form to future generations



Time4Torah

Building a compelling online digital forum for Jewish textual studies



Shelanu

Jewish connection for Israelis in the Diaspora

WELCOME

Welcome to the Jewish Futures Pesach Pack!

Pesach has always been a time of connection. From the very first Seder in Egypt prior to the Exodus, down through thousands of years in an unbroken chain, Jewish families across the world gather together to celebrate this night of nights in an authentic, yet diverse way, with as many traditions as there are families, united around a common theme.

We are delighted to present the Jewish Futures Pesach Pack - a cutting-edge and revolutionary way for the whole family to experience the Seder. It is perhaps an under-exaggeration to say that there is 'something for everyone'; from academic essays to history to fun activities and games, we have endeavoured to put together a broad selection of materials to enhance your Seder experience.

1. *The Hagaddah: an easy-to-use, newly designed and illustrated Hagaddah suitable for Ashkenazim and Sephardim. At key points in the seder, you are invited to 'spin the seder plate' or build your own seder experience through the range of guided resources provided.*
2. *Spin the Seder board and dice to build your own journey to freedom.*
3. *Hagaddah Companion - containing deeper insights from Aish UK, lessons in leadership from FJL, stories of freedom from across Jewish Futures, a close-up look at the JRoots Journey Map and games for all the family.*
4. *Ta'am Recipe Book - containing delicious edible treats to enhance your seder table.*
5. *Chazak Discussion Cards to involve and engage teenagers with the main themes of the evening in an engaging and contemporary fashion.*
6. *GIFT kids' workbook - pre pesach activities to engage primary school children with Pesach, teaching the importance of giving and kindness.*
7. *JRoots Interactive Jewish Journey Map - with ideas, insights and activities to trace the times and locations we will 'visit' during the Seder.*
8. *Place mats and Fold-out Posters to literally see yourself as having come out of Egypt.*
9. *Origami set to decorate your seder table with an Egyptian theme*

And as if that isn't 'Dayeinu/Enough!', we are delighted to present 'sedernight.org' - a brand new website filled with outstanding educational, cultural and viral content. You can also find and download stunning A1 posters, digital copies of all educational material and Ta'am's Pesach Essentials shopping list.

Many of the Seder night themes revolve around the concept of gratitude. In putting together this project, the efforts and commitment of so many people are due enormous recognition and thanks. To Rabbi Naftali Schiff, Founder and Chief Executive of Jewish Futures for his endless passion and drive. To Rabbi Daniel Rowe, CEO of Aish UK for his vision, wisdom and support. To the outstanding graphic design team: Deby Sarfatis, Emily Theodore and above all Dan Matalon, whose tireless dedication and astounding creativity made this project not just possible, but also a visual feast.

To Naomi Cowan, Rabbi Saul Kelly and the incredible team of staff keeping logistics running smoothly, not least of all in setting up the 'sedernight.org' site. A big 'thank you' to Marc Bloch and Benji Harris, and to Michael Chinnery at CPUK for coping with such a large project and an extremely tight turnaround!

Last but certainly not least, to the phenomenal team of educators at Jewish Futures whose content throughout the Haggadah, Companion and 'sedernight.org' website will truly bring Seder night to life.

Wishing you and yours a happy, healthy and joyous Pesach,

Project Directors:

Rabbi Eli Birnbaum, Director of Education, Aish UK

Rabbi Jonny Roodyn, Director of Education, Jewish Futures

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INTRO TO SEDER NIGHT

To understand the journey from slavery in Egypt is to understand the story of man reaching out to God and God reaching out to man. It is to understand what it means to escape the confines of the present and root our existence in the future. It is to understand not merely what freedom is, but why it is so essential. Seder night offers us the chance to envision a world radically different to our own. It is a story that has empowered so many generations, and inspired numerous social and political revolutions, down to modern times.

Every year we are asked not merely to retell it, but to *relive* it. The annual 'Seder night' is the most observed of all Jewish practices. The word 'seder' means 'order'. Yet at first glance it seems difficult to discern any! The Haggadah appears to meander from theme to theme. Discerning that structure is key to understanding the journey that Seder night invites us to join.

In Torah thought, it is not sufficient that experience of the Exodus forms the basis for Jewish existence. Even as the events were unfolding, God told Moses that a key component of the events themselves is that they will be retold: 'In order that you will tell over in the ears of your child and grandchild, the way that I jostled with Egypt...'

Indeed, every single time that Torah discusses the education of a child, no matter what question the child asks, the answer always begins with a discussion about Egypt.

Seder night, in the eyes of Torah, is the core of all Jewish education. And it is

with sensitivity to the terminological structure of the relevant Torah verses that the Haggadah itself derives its form and content.

The word Haggadah appears twice in the Torah in contexts relevant to Seder night. In Exodus 13:8 we are instructed that, 'You shall tell over [lit. 'do Haggadah'] to your child on that day saying:"because of this [Pesach, Matzah and Marror] Hashem acted for me when He took me out of Egypt.' This verse is so central to the Haggadah that it appears explicitly four times, and implicitly at least once more.

It appears twice in the section of the four sons, forming replies to the cynic and to the child who does not ask; it is the verse from which the Haggadah derives the fact that Seder night is *the* moment to transmit these core messages; and it is used towards the end to demonstrate that each person should feel that they personally left Egypt. A closer analysis of the verse that speaks of this 'telling over' framed as the 'First Haggadah' reveals tremendous depth about the Seder night ideal, as well as Pesach as a festival:

'Vehigadeta' - 'and you shall do Haggadah': implies that the discussion should be in question and answer format. This leads to the early part of the Seder attempting to provoke questions. As soon as those questions have been asked, rather than address them directly, the Haggadah talks about how important the discussion itself is, thus provoking even greater curiosity.

‘Levincha’ - ‘to your child’: We then discuss different types of children.

‘Bayom Hahu’ - ‘on that day’: We then discuss which day and time it should be.

‘Lemor’ - ‘saying over’: We then give over the message via the farmer’s first fruit declaration (elaborated below).

‘Ba’avur zeh’ - ‘because of this [Pesach, Matzah Marror]’: We then discuss how Pesach, Matzah and Marror capture those key messages

‘Asa Hashem li’ - ‘God acted for me’: We then read about how every person should feel as if they personally left Egypt

‘Betzeisi Mimitzrayim’ - ‘when He took me out from Egypt’: We then recite the first two chapters of Hallel that celebrate coming out of Egypt.

Of course the element of the verse that least well describes its parallel in the Haggadah is the term **‘Lemor’** - ‘saying over’. The verse offers no hint that there is much of a message beyond the discussion linking the meal to the Exodus.

The ‘Second Haggadah’: The Farmer’s First Fruit Declaration

It was a scene hardly imaginable to us today. By the tens of thousands, farmers ascended to Jerusalem, their oxen laden with baskets of the ‘first fruit’ of the new harvest. The Mishnah records how the residents of Jerusalem would come out to greet the advancing masses with music and festivities. In an agrarian society with

few natural rivers, the farmer-populace spent the winter working and praying, uncertain as to what crop yields they would have. When the first fruit arrived the scene was sheer jubilation. But the Torah insists that the celebration and bounty should not be personal, but *national* - capped with a deep expression of gratitude and recognition of the gifts of God.

In a moment when the year’s crops look secure, it is easy to forget the vulnerable anxiety of just a few weeks earlier. In moments of comfort it is easy to forget to be grateful for what we have. And so the Torah insists that the farmers not merely offer their first fruits as a thanksgiving; but that they *retell the story of our humble beginnings*, as slaves in Egypt, and of our national gratitude to God. The farmer’s declaration is prefaced by the word ‘higadeti’ [lit. ‘I am doing Haggadah’]. It is the second time that the Torah uses the word ‘haggadah’. Its topic is also the Exodus. In Midrashic interpretation, a repeated rare-term acts like a hyperlink. If the Torah instructs us to ‘do Haggadah’ on Seder night, and then offers an elaborate Exodus-themed speech, it also calls Haggadah in the context of the harvest, then the Seder night Haggadah *must* include the farmer’s declaration. Why?

(Continued overleaf)

INTRO TO SEDER NIGHT

THE LINK BETWEEN THE TWO

The Torah talks about the retelling of the Exodus several times. Indeed the discussion of the ‘four children’ is a Midrash that picks up on the four times the Torah discusses children asking questions (or not asking, in one case). In each case the response begins with some form of retelling the Exodus.

The longest and most elaborate is the response given to the wise child.

“You shall say to your child: ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand. Hashem performed great and destructive marvels against Pharaoh and all his household. He freed us from there in order to bring us to the land that He had promised to our ancestors. Then Hashem tasked us to observe His laws, to revere Hashem our God, for our lasting good and for our survival.’”

The Midrash that we quote in our Haggadah appears to make a remarkable suggestion: when the wise child asks their question you should respond as the Torah does, but you should do so ‘according to the laws of Pesach’. In those days the term ‘laws of Pesach’ meant the Tractate of Pesachim. The Mishnaic texts to which the discussion refers are those that give us our Haggadah. In other words, what the Midrash is saying, is that the wise child gets the full Haggadah. Somehow the Haggadah itself is really the Oral Torah’s expansion of the messages packed into

the typically terse yet infinitely fertile Torah verses.

Indeed upon closer examination, it turns out that each of the verses used for the wise child becomes a theme at one point of the Seder or another; the verses encapsulate the Haggadah’s themes. We begin the retelling itself using the precise words that the Torah verses open with: ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh...’ Towards the end of the Haggadah, when describing how in every generation we have to see ourselves as if we came out personally, we also quote the verse: ‘He freed us from there in order to bring us to the land that He had promised to our ancestors.’ Likewise we discuss the need to ‘observe His laws...’ with particular reference to Pesach, Matzah and Marror.

Like the earlier verse, the themes of the Haggadah are mapped out. But there is one theme that is spelled out in the answer to the wise child that was not explicit before: ‘Hashem performed great and destructive marvels against Pharaoh and all his household.’ It is this verse that demands of us to talk about the very messages that are expressed so compellingly in the first fruits declaration.

WEAVING THESE THREADS TOGETHER

Haggadah, then, is a tapestry woven out of the fabric of three Torah discussions. One is to a child who does not know how to ask. One is the child who asks the deepest

Rabbi Daniel Rowe

Executive Director, Aish UK

and wisest questions, and the third is the farmer who at the peak of personal glory must remember to acknowledge God.

Together they afford us a glimpse into three essential goals for the Haggadah. The first is to address the aspects within us that may not be asking questions; to transform us into someone who is genuinely asking, seeking and searching. Once there, its purpose shifts to convey the message that the wise child must hear: Israel is formed in the overwhelming power of God over nature. Israel's existence is forever embedded in God and is forever rejecting of, and rejected by, the natural power structures of the world as it is. We were Created as an act of God's revelation, and it remains our task and indeed the core of our identity, to live forever as citizens of the world of the future - the world as it will be when God's revelation is complete.

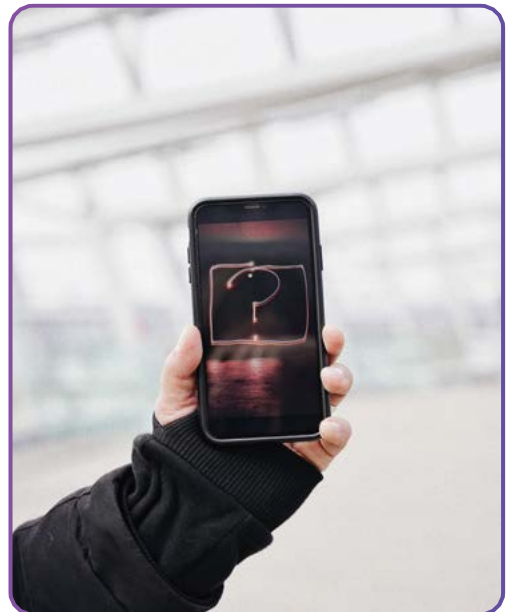
And thirdly to embrace the recognition of God's hand within nature, down to the annual crops that sustain us, and to define that relationship with the depth of gratitude of the declaration that forms the core of the Haggadah's discussion.

The Seder night begins by taking the unusual foods we are instructed to eat, in order to relive that last night in Egypt, and uses them to provoke the 'non asking' apathetic element within each of us. Through turning us into questioners the subsequent discussion transforms the meal itself. And that meal is embedded within the Hallel songs of praise because

it is itself a praise of God. The very food we eat provokes the questions. The subsequent discussion transforms the very meal. Together they form an interconnected reliving of the miracle of midnight and the endless possibilities of freedom.

Together they generate possibilities that vastly transcend just words or ideas. They invite us into a journey whose limits are only those that we still hold onto. They invite us to travel to true freedom.

[Adapted from The Passover Haggadah by Rabbi Daniel Rowe, published by Mosaica Press, 2019]



PESACH TIMELINE

1800 BCE

1750 BCE

1700 BCE

1650 BCE

1600 BCE

1550 BCE



1761 BCE

Terach leaves Ur Casdim (Mesopotamia) with his family and journeys toward Haran (Syria). Abraham, Sarah and Lot accompany him.



1576 BCE

Fleeing the murderous intent of his brother Esau, Jacob settles in Padan Aram (Turkey/Iraq), staying with his uncle Laban, father to Rachel and Leah.



1523 BCE

Jacob and his family descend to Egypt to escape a crushing famine in Canaan. They are reunited with Joseph and settle in the Nile Delta region of Goshen.



1429 BCE

Levi son of Jacob dies. He is the last of the 12 sons to die. His death marks the beginning of oppression of the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptian natives.



1738 BCE

God instructs Abraham and Sarah to leave Haran and journey onward to Canaan (Israel). Famine strikes the land and they are forced to seek provisions in Egypt.

1500 BCE

1450 BCE

1400 BCE

1350 BCE

1300 BCE

1250 BCE



1393 BCE

Oppression intensifies into crushing slave-labour. Pharaoh decrees all Israelite newborn boys be thrown into the Nile. Moses born.



1313 BCE

Ten plagues, Exodus from Egypt and splitting of the Red Sea.



1245 BCE

Joshua dies. Era of the Judges begins, continuing through to the anointing of King Saul in 879 BCE.



1314 BCE

Moses encounters God at the burning bush. God instructs him to return to Egypt and demand of Pharaoh 'Let my People go'.



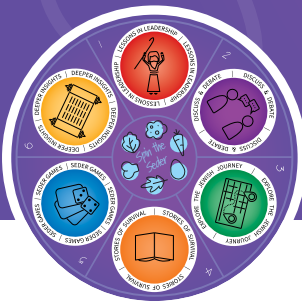
1313 BCE

National revelation at mount Sinai, Ten Commandments spoken and Torah given. Golden Calf worshipped six weeks later.

1273 BCE

Moses dies. Joshua leads the Israelites into the Promised Land and marks the first Pesach there with a huge national celebration at Gilgal, on the plains of Jericho.

Spin the Seder



Lessons in Leadership

As we go through the Haggadah we will meet characters who played a key role in sculpting the Jewish journey through the ages. From Moses and Miriam in antiquity, to Rabbi Elazar in the Second Temple era and the mysterious, anonymous author of the Haggadah itself. Follow this icon to discover Seder night's lessons in leadership.



Discuss and Debate

The word 'Haggadah' literally means 'telling over'. At the core of the Seder experience is the idea that the entire process should be framed as a dialogue that links generation to generation in one unbroken chain stretching back to the Exodus itself. The Haggadah introduces us to so many thoughts and themes that are as relevant now as they were then. Follow this icon to strike up a lively debate. Perfect for teens!



The Jewish Journey Map

Lasting over 3500 years and counting, the Jewish journey has taken in so many places and cultures. The Haggadah traces this journey from Abraham's migration to the Promised Land, all the way through to the Second Temple Era and beyond. Follow this icon to discover the story behind these locations and trace that journey yourself!

Experience Seder night your way!



Seder Stories: Stories of Survival

At the heart of the Exodus epic is a profound message of hope and belief in a better future. The Israelite slaves faced a challenge that became the hallmark of Jewish communities throughout the ages: a bold refusal to abandon hope to despair. Follow this icon to share in stories that encapsulate our national faith in our ability to transform slavery into freedom.



Seder Games

In so many ways, Seder night is given over to the younger generation. In fact, the Talmud explains that many customs that are probably familiar to us were established for no reason other than to get the children involved! Follow this icon to link the Seder experience to fun and interactive games, quizzes and activities. Perfect for kids!



Deeper Insights

Here's the thing: Seder night is busy. Really busy. The table is overflowing with Matzah, bottles of wine, trays of delicious food - not to mention all the books! And to cap it all off, within moments of starting the Seder we realise that the Haggadah seems to transcend eras and even languages. At times, it can be tricky to connect to its content. Follow this icon to explore the central themes in greater detail.



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L'Chaim - To Life!

Rabbi Naftali Schiff

There's a gorgeous little song/story that has become part of Israeli folklore. It's about a reclusive, elderly carpenter who sits alone all day in his solitary hut. No-one ever comes to buy or to visit. However, this old man carries one dream in his heart. His well kept secret is that he dreams that he personally shall craft the chair for Elijah the Prophet. When the Messiah comes he will personally bring his handiwork to greet him. This vision keeps that old carpenter living in hope year after year.

When I was a little boy, I vividly recall how my hard working father would prepare the Seder table at least a week before Seder Night. He would lovingly unwrap and polish the silver wine decanter and candelabra inherited from his grandparents from Antwerp, remove the tissue paper from the carefully preserved matzah covers from ancestors originating from Tarnow and Bialistock and place the three tier wooden structure he had made himself for the matzot in the middle of the resplendent and sparkling festive table. All this took place in eager anticipation, days in advance of the auspicious family gathering for Pesach. My mother's father, who escaped from Berlin via Amsterdam to London in the mid 1930's, also had a wooden three tier seder plate made for his home. When I became Bar Mitzvah, I asked my parents for my gift from them to be a Black and Decker workmate and tools, so that I too could





build a three tier seder plate for our family. The one I made was out of white formica and awaits our family's return to hold seder once again in our home in Jerusalem. Last year, I made friends on a JRoots trip in Krakow with master craftsman, 92 year old Auschwitz Survivor Reb Eliezer Duvid ben Yishayahu Markovits, formerly of Simleul, Romania, now David Marks of Sherman Connecticut. As a young boy, David fell in love with all things wood and was fortunate enough to be taken under the wing of a master craftsman named Pop Ynchi in his home town in the early 40's. Ynchi had originally been a poor shepherd boy who, sitting in the field one day playing at carving out wood from logs, was spotted by a passing Jewish merchant and given the chance to properly learn the craft. He repaid his debt to the Jewish merchant decades later by giving refuge from the Nazis to our friend Duvid. Young Duvid removed his peyos and headcovering and became 'Tiobr', a non-Jewish labourer in the workshop. Duvid survived Auschwitz, served in the IDF and eventually built a family and a successful furniture business in New York. Last month, we received an incredible gift delivered to London - the fourth generation in our family of three tiered Seder dishes. This one is made of maple, cherry and birch by the hands of 92 year young David Marks. He perhaps epitomises the Seder table itself - not its wooden facade, rather the depth of its emotion and the generations of trial and travail it took us to sit as we do today. David is a man in love with all. Love is complicated, as is life. David breaks down in tears easily when remembering a family and a world gone by, and lifts a glass to drink a "lechayim - to life" readily. He remarried in January and is besotted as if a man half his age. He loves listening to traditional Jewish tunes, singing along with many he recalls from the "heim". My hunch is that he may be the old carpenter of folklore fame and has his own chair of love ready for Elijah the Prophet to unite us all once again in Jerusalem.



A Lesson in Thanks

Rabbi Sandor Milun

The concept of Hakarat hatov - 'recognising the good' - is one that has its roots in the Torah, where Moses is prevented from performing the first three plagues because he was saved by the Nile (which was struck in the plagues of blood and frogs) and by the ground (struck in the plague of lice) which had covered the Egyptian taskmaster who he had slain to protect an Israelite slave.

This is truly quite remarkable – and nearly illogical. Moses has appreciation for water and sand. How much more so should we recognise and appreciate the good done by our fellow human beings.

Allow me to share two different stories with you.

There was an old man who saw his grandchildren chasing a rat with a broom. The grandfather got up and called after them, asking them to stop trying to hurt the rat. The kids stood perplexed, “But Grandpa, aren’t rats vermin?”

The grandfather calmly replied, “My dear children, many years ago Grandpa was in a very horrible place. We were forced to sleep next to each other and we had only a small, thin blanket between five of us.

The blanket covered the middle three. This meant the man on either side was very cold. We would rotate so each day you moved to the left. This meant that for 2 days in a row, you were very cold. Just like we were cold, so were the rats. They would come snuggle up next to us, using our body heat to keep themselves warm. At first this was extremely unpleasant, but because we were so cold, we quickly got used to them. If it wasn’t for those rats, I probably would have frozen to death. So please, don’t hurt the rat.”

A couple of years ago I was privileged to meet a New York businessman, Sol Werdiger. He is a wonderful man with many lively and interesting stories. When he gets excited his enthusiasm is contagious. He was a huge hit with our students.

Two years after we met, word got out of a story that is absolutely incredible – and epitomises the idea of Hakarat hatov – recognising the good.

A South Korean diplomat had requested to meet Sol as he had something ‘important’ to discuss. During the meeting, the diplomat explained that he had previously thought very little of the Jewish people having believed the negative stereotypes that plague (no pun intended) online media outlets.

The previous summer, his daughter had been an intern at Sol’s business in New York. She had been blown away by some of the special practises that she had witnessed.



THANK
YOU
NHS

She had seen many people come and seclude themselves in the conference room during the day - 'very calmly and quietly', even from other offices! There was always a long line of people collecting charity and all were welcomed in a warm and caring manner.

Every Friday afternoon, the office closed early – and the entire staff were given off yet they still received a full day's wage and on a personal note; this outsider – a young girl from South Korea - was treated extremely well, with real concern for her advancing her studies and ensuring that she learnt valuable lessons and gain practical experience.

The diplomat's first request was to try to reimburse Sol for his daughter's entire internship! Sol would hear nothing of it - insisting she had worked well and deserved her wages. What came next though truly epitomises the essence of recognising the good.

The diplomat then said, "As you know, I have voting privileges at the United Nations, As I have a renewed respect and appreciation for the Jewish people, I convinced my government to abstain from voting on resolutions against Israel on three occasions. At one resolution, I was the 9th vote needed to pass the motion and because I did not vote in favour, the motion did not pass!"

This is an incredible demonstration of recognising the good someone had done to his family – and then doing something to 'reciprocate' or even more so, to honour that goodness.

May we all be able to recognise all the incredible goodness constantly done for us, and may we take the lessons of the Seder and implement them as best we can.



Pesach in Auschwitz

Zak Jeffay

In a cold Krakow synagogue sits a beacon of warmth and light. Leslie Kleinman, a Holocaust survivor who has accompanied thousands of young Jews back to Poland and Auschwitz on JRoots journeys to recount his story of survival and faith, sits on the wooden pews. He is called to make the blessings over the portion of the Torah which read as follows:

And they [Egyptians] embittered their lives with hard labour, with clay and with bricks and with all kinds of labour in the fields, all their work that they worked with them with back breaking labour. [...] And he said, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.”

For Jews, the slavery and redemption in Egypt serve as the ultimate model for the rest of Jewish history. In the midst of the destruction, whilst teaching in Budapest in 1944, Rabbi Aharon Rokeach of the Belz Chassidic sect told his followers, “the exile of Egypt encompasses all the exiles and the redemption from Egypt encompassed all the future redemptions”. The move from slavery to freedom is one of the lenses with which Jews view the world and this optimism has sustained us even at the darkest of times.

During the course of the Holocaust, despite the constant encounters with death and destruction, there were many who battled to hold on to those aspects of their identity which they still could control. In Auschwitz in 1944, Rabbi Leib Langfus managed to bribe his way to acquiring flour, and secretly baked matza to be eaten at a Seder recounted entirely from memory. The risks were enormous and being discovered would have meant immediate execution. Nevertheless, the Seder took place.

The question surely is why? Why given the risks would a group of people who are themselves slaves sit around and recount a story of freedom? Where did their ability to be able to speak about freedom even in the depths of hell come from?

The freedom we celebrate on Pesach is not simply about no longer being in Egypt, or no longer enduring the physical labour. Our vision of freedom is also one of self-determination and shaping our own destiny. In a place of slavery, freedom was created in the small areas which people defined for themselves. The block in which Leib Langfus and his friends ate their matzah managed to momentarily remove itself from the hell of Auschwitz and in a sense floated above time. For those precious few moments, they were no longer victims or prisoners: they redefined themselves as free men. Partaking in the Seder was a connection to a family that spread far beyond the barbed wire fences.

And though it is undoubtedly true that the shivering prisoners huddled together in that barracks on that exquisite Seder night would have wondered to themselves if anyone would be alive to bake the matzah next year, they realised a truth that was greater and more profound than the collective might of the Third Reich: People who can celebrate freedom while themselves in the pit of despair can never be destroyed.

Pesach as a festival is emphatically and perhaps uniquely forward-looking. It comes from the very command which we receive in order to make the Seder happen; “and you shall tell it to your children”. The freedom of Pesach is thus seen as inextricably bound to the transmission of its lessons to the next generation. Without that next link in the chain, our own chains were never truly broken. We remain shackled to legends and tales of past glories that fail to shine on our future.

Imparting our values to our children and to the next generation around the Seder table is at the very same time the freedom and also the recipe for freedom. Education and the ability to not only hope for a better future but to actively strive for it is the essence of Pesach and the secret of the Jewish people.

As we battle to tell the story of the Holocaust to the next generation we keep one eye on Pesach to learn how to keep a story alive and how to make its voice echo proudly into the future. It is worth noting that we always talk about ‘the Exodus from Egypt’, rather than ‘the slavery in Egypt’; the redemption itself takes centre stage rather than the slavery. Seeing Leslie tell his story, it is clear that his greatest lessons are the story of his exodus, how he survived, how he rebuilt himself afterwards. Being able to talk about what we did rather than what was done to us gives us the strength and determination to continue building a Jewish future.

We must be tuned in to the disaster in order to understand what happened but we must also listen carefully to how the Jewish people have striven to revive itself regardless of the tragedy. Pesach lifts us out of the hopelessness of the past and forces us to look beyond the horizons of our inglorious past to deservedly greet a bold new future. If we can sit around our Seder table and inspire ourselves and the next generation, then we can maybe for just one moment transcend above time and space, and become a link in the chain of an eternal people bringing God’s eternal message of freedom, not just to the Jewish people, but to the world in its entirety.



A Song in Nazi Germany

Tzvi Sperber

Rains had extinguished the flames of the barn in Gardelegen, Germany, where the 1,016 trapped slave labourers perished. When the rains stopped, the survivors from the burning barn, other inmates and POW's were loaded onto trucks guarded by Germans and gendarmes and driven to the woods to be shot. The woods were a few kilometres from the camp. The air smelled fresh and clean. The young brother and his cousin were on one of the trucks.

"I am bored," said one of the guards. "Hey you, Jew boy, sing for me one of your temple songs and hymns!" The cousin, a young Hasid, had a very beautiful voice.

It was April 15, 1945, only five days after the holiday of Passover. The young lad started to sing a song from the Passover Haggadah, "Ve hi she amdah la-avoteinu". The melody was a beautiful one. Soon the other slave labourers of various nationalities and the guards joined in the singing. The gentle spring wind carried the song to the other trucks in the death convoy and they, too, hummed the melody.

As they approached the forest, the German guard stopped the singing. "Tell me the meaning of your song; translate it for me."

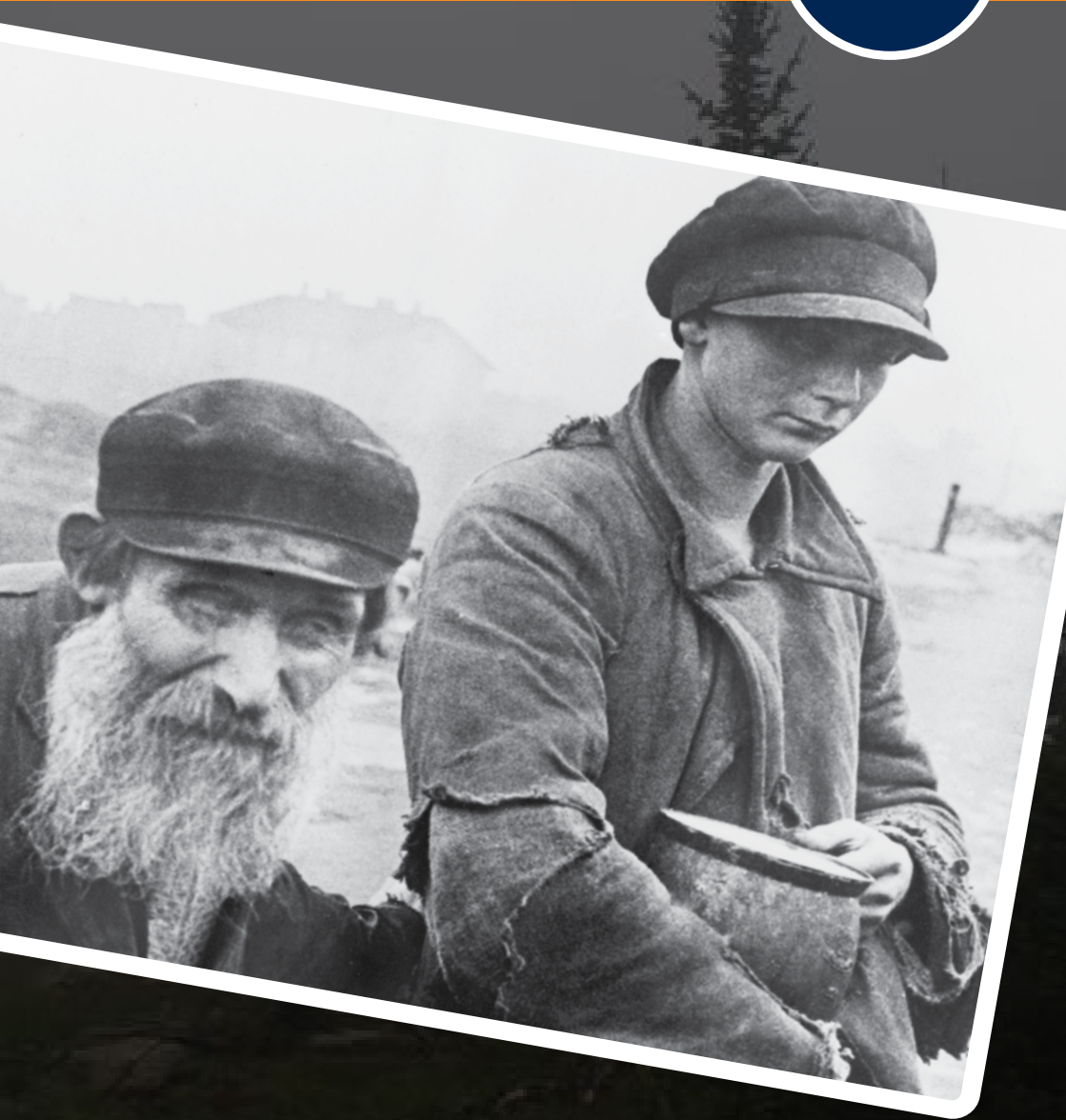
The Hasidic lad translated: "It is this that has stood by our ancestors and us. For it was not only one alone who rose against us to annihilate us, but in every generation, there are those who rise against us to annihilate us. But the Holy One, blessed be He, rescues us from their hand."

When the boy concluded the translation, the German burst into a wild, mocking laughter. "Let's see how your God will save you from my hands."

"I am still alive, but I am not afraid to die," replied the lad. They reached a clearing in the forest. In groups of six, they were taken to a ravine in the forest and shot. The two cousins were among the last group. On the face of the German guard was an expression of triumph as the young lads were led to their death.

Suddenly, a motorcycle arrived with two high-ranking German officials. They ordered all remaining prisoners to be taken back to camp. Gardelegen had just surrendered to the American Army.

"Call it fate, call it a miracle, call it anything you want," said Mrs Glatt as she concluded the story about her brother and cousin. "But one thing is clear. We, the Jewish people, with our abundance of faith, will somehow manage to survive forever."





A Miracle in Prague

Rabbi Ari Kayser

The great Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (1713 – 1793), born in Opatow, Poland was appointed a Dayan (rabbinic judge) and moved to become rabbi of the great Jewish city of Prague. Known by many as the Nodah B'Yehudah (“Known in Judah”) after his most famous scholarly work in Jewish law, he was regarded as one of the greatest scholars of his time, to whom rabbis and laymen from all over Europe turned in times of need.

One night, Rabbi Landau was returning home from synagogue following the evening prayers when he saw a young gentile boy, dressed in rags with tears streaming down his face, wandering the streets carrying empty baskets.

“Tell me, little boy, what are you doing walking about the streets of the Jewish quarter and why are you crying?”

The boy explained, “My mother died last year and my father, who is a baker, has remarried. My stepmother is a heartless woman who loads me with baskets of bread every morning and commands me to sell every single one. If I should fail to sell each one, she beats me and makes me go to bed without food. Now I am afraid to go home.”

Moved by the plight of this young boy, Rabbi Landau asked, “You appear to have sold all your bread. Why should you be afraid to go home?”

The boy replied, “Today, I was able to sell all my bread, but as I began my journey home I noticed all the money was gone. I have been wandering the streets cold and afraid that she will beat me.”

The Rabbi brought the boy to his house and gave him something to eat. He took out 30 gold coins and gave them to the boy. The boy was very thankful and ran all the way home.

The years passed, and one Passover, on the eve of the seventh day, Rabbi Landau was learning Torah late at night. There was a soft knock on the door, and as the door opened, a young gentile walked in. Rabbi Landau was curious about his unknown guest.

“I am sure that you do not remember me for it has been many years since I was last here. I am the little boy you once helped when I had lost 30 gold coins and was hungry and frightened. I never forgot the kindness you showed me and I resolved to pay you back if I could. That time has come.

“The Jews of Prague are in great danger. Last night, the bakers of Prague gathered in my father’s home and, at the instigation of my wicked stepmother, they made plans to kill the Jews of Prague.

“They know that on the night when Passover ends the Jews buy leavened bread from non-Jewish bakers since all Jewish bakeries are still closed. The have plotted to put poison in the bread and in this way kill all the Jews in one night.

“I have told you this to repay you for the kindness you showed me. You must think up some way to save your people, but I beg of you to let no-one know that it was I who told you.”

Rabbi Landau shuddered at the terrible plot against his community and felt the weight of the world on his frail shoulders. He thanked the young man and sat deep in thought, formulating a plan that would both save the Jews and bring the culprits to justice. Time was of the essence.

On the eighth and last day of Passover, Rabbi Landau ordered all the synagogues to be closed and announced that he would address the entire Jewish community in the main synagogue on an important issue.

As the confused community gathered to hear the words of this great sage, Rabbi Landau rose to his feet and said, “As the generations pass, the Torah becomes more and more forgotten. The rabbis and leaders become less worthy and mistakes become more frequent. I must confess to you that the Bet Din (Rabbinical Court) of Prague has made an error in calculation of this year’s calendar, and in doing so, we have almost brought the congregation to eat chametz (leavened bread) on Passover.

“We mistakenly proclaimed Passover one day earlier, and so today is not the eighth day, but the seventh day. It is therefore forbidden to eat chametz tomorrow night”

Unsurprisingly, the people were shocked, but how could you argue with the Rabbi?

The following morning, police surrounded the homes of the bakers and discovered the poisoned bread, and those who conspired were brought to justice. The Jews of Prague now understood the wisdom of their leader, although they never knew how he had known of the plot in the first place.

As promised, Rabbi Landau had kept the young man’s secret, and only before his death did he reveal the story to his son, saying “It was not through my wisdom that the Jews of Prague were saved, but through an act of kindness from an old man to a little boy.”



Against the Odds

Rabbi Gitsy David

The year was 1942 and Myanmar (Burma) has just been invaded by the Japanese army. Myanmar had been home to numerous Jewish residents since the mid-nineteenth century, primarily hailing from Iraq.

It was a frightening time and with foresight of what was to come, leaving Myanmar was everyone's priority. For many, the only option was the dangerously long journey by foot across Asia. It's a story rarely told, despite being one of the most difficult, desperate mass evacuations in human history. Astonishingly, some 220,000 refugees survived the harrowing journey of up to 300 miles. Sadly, over 4000 are recorded to have died en route from sickness, exhaustion, malnutrition, starvation or drowning – although the true death toll will never be known. Before long, the opportunity arose to travel by boat. Some of the Jewish community managed to secure places on these boats.

One such family boarded a ship, India bound. The moment that was meant to be one of salvation, turned into a tragedy. Imagine the panic, thousands running to make it onto the ship. Air raid sirens wailing. Children crying. Some caring for the sick and elderly while others frantically calming their toddlers. In the middle of this chaos, one young mother of four hurried her children onto the boat while her husband accompanied his elderly parents. Convinced they had all made it safely aboard, she breathed a sigh of relief. She held her newborn tight and turned to gather her other three children. And that was when her heart sank like lead. Her three-year-old son was nowhere to be seen! The ship's horn sounded and it began to move away from the dock.

She desperately looked around panicking, her mind racing and heart pounding. Was he somewhere on the ship in the teeming crowd of desperate people, or could it be that he was still at the port? She shouted his name again and again, terrified to think that he'd been left behind, a small child lost to a country in the midst of a terrifying war.

Suddenly, she spotted a worker from the port standing with a child on his shoulders. The worker was calling out to help try and reunite the child with his mother, but in all the commotion, it was barely possible to hear him. She ran to the side of the ship to get as close as possible and cried out to her child. Their eyes locked and the child started crying for his mother.

The worker saw the terror in the mothers eyes, heard the child crying out, and put two and two together. But he barely had time to think. By now, the boat had turned and was nearly clear of the dock. Not knowing what else to do, the worker threw the child with all his might towards the mother!



The moment passed in agonising slow motion. Incredibly, the toddler landed safely, albeit terrified, into his mother's arms. She embraced him lovingly, overcome with emotion of what might have been if only a few moments more would have passed.

It's times like this that it's better not to think of what might have been but instead be grateful for what is. The young family went on to temporarily make Calcutta, India their new home, before returning to Myanmar a few years later to rebuild their lives in the new world after the war. That little boy is my uncle, Dayan Abraham David.





Pesach in the Camps

Tzvi Sperber



The conditions in the Vaihingen Concentration Camp were horrific, especially during the dreadful winter of 1944-1945. The Jews imprisoned in this Nazis concentration camp were brought from the Radom Ghetto in Poland in order to engage in slave labour for 12-hour shifts, without a break. They built armaments, dug tunnels for bomb shelters, and performed many other highly physical tasks for the Nazis, who sought to bring their armaments manufacturing underground due to intense Allied bombing. The subhuman conditions and treatment of prisoners caused Vaihingen Concentration Camp to have one of the highest mortality rates of all of the Nazis concentration camps. As the war dragged on, French and even German prisoners were sent to join the Jews there. Towards the end of the war, the Vaihingen Concentration Camp was where sick and dying people were sent.

However, despite all of the afflictions that the Jews of the Vaihingen Concentration Camp suffered, they still managed to celebrate the Passover Seder. They were determined to preserve the traditions of their ancestors, despite the fact that doing so was a risky business in a Nazi concentration camp. One camp prisoner, Moshe Perl, whose testimony is preserved in the book 'Inferno and Vengeance', recounts: "The people in the camp were already used to their miserable situation. They saw death before their eyes. But they were not willing to eat chametz on Passover." "However", he asked, "Where could we get flour and potatoes and how could we bake matzah, right under the noses of the guards?!"

Moshe recalls thinking of an innovative idea: "Shortly before Passover, one of the SS men in the camp entered my workshop, where I painted signs. He asked me to make dummy targets for target practice. Just then, an idea flashed through my mind; I could suggest making big targets with wooden frames and covering them with paper bags, which were available in abundance in the camp storehouse. I claimed that I would need flour, lots of flour, to paste the pictures of soldiers on the targets. He asked me how much flour I would need. I asked for five kilograms. He liked my suggestion and immediately gave me the appropriate referral."

The Jews of the Vaihingen Concentration Camp went to work baking the matzah in secret, even though they knew that they would die if they were caught. Moshe continues, "Throughout the camp, we organized wooden beams. We found a wheel among my work tools with which to prepare the matzah and our matzah-baking operation shifted up a gear. We collected glass bottles, washed them well, cleaned an upside down table with the fragments and kneaded the dough. We baked the matzah in the oven in my workroom, keeping the door and windows hermetically sealed. Our problem was how to hide the matzah we managed to bake at such great risk. We found a solution to the problem. We hid it under the shingles of our workshop roof!"

When the night of the Seder came, twenty Jews in the Vaihingen Concentration Camp managed to pull off a Seder, where aside from the matzah they ate potatoes and drank homemade wine which consisted of water and sugar. They even managed to recite the Haggadah!

Pesach and the story of the Exodus have become synonymous with acts of brave defiance. Its energy inspired the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which started in earnest on April 19th, 1943 - Passover eve. That same energy inspired the clandestine Seder in Vaihingen. And that same energy inspires us to this day.



Miracle in Iran

Rabbi Moshe Levy

The owner of Daniel's Bakery in Finchley, Mr Daniel Hakimian, recalls his very own Pesach miracle in Iran over 50 years ago:

"My brother-in-law was imprisoned in Iran for two and a half years for involvement with the Israeli government during Golda Meir's term in office. After his release, he told us that there were two boys still stuck in prison who were so distraught they wanted to give up and end their lives. Pesach was imminently on the horizon and he told us that the inmates were desperate to have someone come and make some sort of a Seder for them. I volunteered, much to the horror of my loved ones, who knew all too well how dangerous a task that was to undertake. But to me, the thought of two Jewish boys having nothing for Pesach was too much to bear so I felt I needed to do whatever I could to help their situation.

I took with me enough matzah, marror and eggs for twelve inmates as well as a chicken bone. The Iranian guard was not aware of the reason for our having this special meal and he came up to me during our Seder to interrogate me as to why I was conducting this and started to question me.

With a smirk on his face, he asked, "Why are you using the chicken bone, egg and green leaves?"

Until this very day I'm not sure how the words found the way to my lips but I gave him answers which satisfied him. I somehow made up lots of creative 'reasons' for a lot of the items. I told him that the marror correlated to the green belt worn by a renowned Islamic Imam. I also added that the egg was meant to be a prevention against sin and that the chicken bone represents the Islamic equivalent of Moses!

He enjoyed my answers and left us alone which was a miracle in and of itself.

Whenever I tell over this story I am transported to a different world where I feel so clearly that this was a Pesach miracle, so obviously orchestrated by the hand of God and one which certainly belongs to a bygone era where Jews sacrificed their lives for altruistic reasons.



That whole night another man and I stayed up talking on the prison floor covered in a blanket. I was supposed to stay for both nights, but at 7 am I was rushed out of the prison and told to go home.

I went straight to my synagogue where I was embraced by everyone because they really did not believe I would come back in one piece. I broke down in tears, filled with emotion and gratitude to our Creator. I was then given the great honour of holding and opening the Torah scrolls. We know Hashem is our protector as we say every day in prayer: "God is our shield" and I know Hashem did a great miracle for us all by allowing me to stay protected. Thank God those young boys stayed strong, survived and eventually moved to Israel. I am overwhelmed with deep happiness when I think about that miraculous day and know that it helped to save their lives."



Confronting Grief

Hannah Cohn

David felt very content and thanked God daily for his blessings. He was happily married, had four beautiful daughters and his wife Tali, a social worker who specialized in helping families of terrorist attacks, was eight months pregnant with their first son. He was a headmaster of a primary school. He lived in a picturesque community in Gush Katif.

One fateful day in 2004 while David was at work in Ashkelon, he heard news reports of a terrorist attack on the Gush Katif road. There had been a drive by shooting. His first thought was: 'Tali and the kids were due to meet him in Ashkelon later that day, and they would have been travelling on that same road!' David tried to call Tali to ask what they could do to help the family of those injured. But no-one answered the call. He called her a few more times. David started to get worried. Other members of her family had also tried in vain to get in touch with her. Finally, David made his way to the site of the incident. Upon arrival he was informed that Tali and all four daughters were killed in the attack. David's whole world collapsed in front of him. He had nothing.

Before he had time to digest what had happened, David had to make urgent and heart wrenching decisions – where to bury his family, in what order to lay them to rest? The shiva mourning period was attended by hundreds of people. Family, friends, government leaders, rabbinic figures from throughout Israel. Many survivors of previous terror attacks came and offered comfort. They were testimony to the power of time. Life continues. However, it was a comment from Rabbi Yakov Ariel which stuck with him as the shiva ended. Rabbi Ariel commented that never before had a whole family been wiped out in a terror attack. With tears in his eyes, the Rabbi continued: this was a personal holocaust. For whatever reason, this comment stuck with David and helped him start to rebuild his life months later, as he went to speak to holocaust survivors and took inspiration from them as to how they were able to rebuild and start new lives and families.

After the shiva, David was enveloped in the warmth and care of his and Tali's family. He was advised to take time off and not go straight back to work, giving himself time to grieve. Despite this, the first decision he made was to go straight back to work. He needed routine. He needed to be busy and feel productive. David admitted that there were times when he felt that he had no chance of emerging 'normal' from such a huge tragedy. David made a decision to choose life. He often says that he had two possibilities – one was to crumble and give up, the other to choose life and continue. He compares himself to a tree that has been stripped down to the bare stump. All the leaves and branches have gone. But new leaves can still grow. New life can once again blossom from the barren tree.

David not only questioned how best to rebuild and continue, but if it was at all possible to continue. Was the attempt futile from the onset?

He ascribes his ability to move forward to five 'rules' he stuck to:

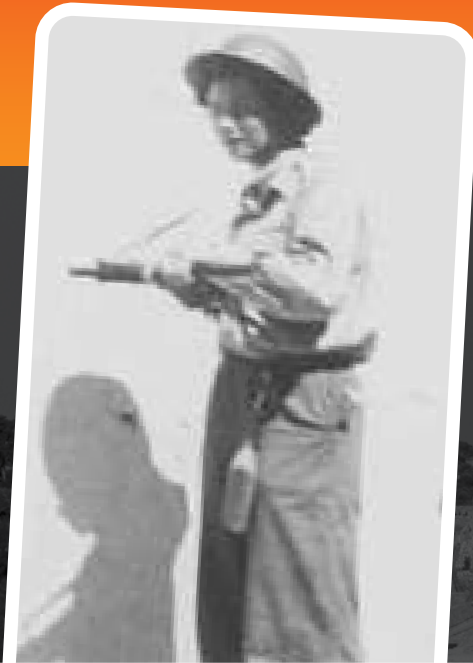
1. Faith in God. David quickly learned that asking 'why?' does not help. It doesn't let you rest. It is a question with no answers and nothing productive can ever come out of it. David understood that there are some questions we can't understand. Asking why won't help him remember or rebuild. So instead of asking, "Why did this happen?", he switched to asking, "For what purpose? What am I meant to do now?"
2. Community. David says that his every need was taken care of in the first couple of months after the tragedy. He was accompanied to work and back. His meals were arranged. He was never allowed to feel alone.
3. Routine. His decision to go straight back to work was crucial to his healing process.
4. Hope. David needed to look forward. He needed to find a new life for himself. Comparing himself to an olive branch, which can bring new life even after it has been cut from the tree, David pledged to start over again. He met his new wife Limor two years after the tragedy. They are now blessed with six children. The names he has given his children all testify to his hope and optimism. For example, Tchiya – Life; Amichai – my people are alive; Bneya – to build. He has not forgotten his old family, but rather sees his new family as a continuation of them.
5. Remembrance. It was important for David to find ways to keep the memory of Tali alive and to do something in her and the children's memory. He started a charity that helps families undergoing fertility treatments. David wanted to create new life in response to the lives which were ended. By using the initials of his daughters' names, David created the Tali Byad Ramah charity which has helped hundreds of families bring new life into the world.



Pesach in 1948

Rabbi Naftali Schiff

Just two years after the end of World War Two, with the devastating extent of the destruction of European Jewry through the Holocaust only just becoming palpable, the Jewish people were thrust into a battle for survival in the only place they had ever aspired to call home; the Land of Israel. In 1946, a young British girl by the name of Esther Cailingold, a graduate of North London Collegiate School, decided to leave her family in London, England in order to play her role as a teacher in the formation of the eternal dream of finally building a home for her people in Israel. Esther became a schoolteacher in Jerusalem. However, soon after this she enlisted in the Hagganah, the fledgling Israel Defence Forces, which at that time intermittently engaged in skirmishes with the army of the British mandatory forces, the Arab irregular fighters and subsequently the Jordanian Arab Legion. By Pesach 1948, the few hundred remaining beleaguered Jewish citizens of the Old City of Jerusalem were desperate. Under harsh conditions with sparse supplies of basic provisions including food and medicine, they found themselves reciting the haggadah story inside the besieged city. There were only 80-100 defenders of the Jewish enclave inside the Old City, and they were totally surrounded by enemy forces. Two millennia of almost uninterrupted Jewish habitation of Jerusalem was under threat. But the few hundred residents were determined to hold on, boosted in morale by the arrival of a fresh small group of Hagganah reinforcements numbering about 20 who had recently arrived, Esther and Rabbi Shear Yashuv HaCohen (later Chief Rabbi of Haifa) amongst them. Guns in one hand, haggadah in the other, the story of the Exodus from Egypt was recounted, at best in groups of two or three, each defender simultaneously manning their guard post. The Israelites' journey through the desert, the eventual arrival in Canaan, the growth then demise of the Jewish settlement, destruction of two Temples, dispersion of the Jewish people and the ever evolving, ever wandering story of 2000 years of exile culminating in the loss of 6 million and the current battle for Jewish independence. To say the poignancy of the experience was overwhelmingly powerful would be an understatement.



Just three weeks later, this young British teacher from London was fatally wounded and lay on a stretcher in agony in a makeshift hospital in the bombed out Old City of Jerusalem as the sun set on Friday afternoon. Then still just a young Yeshiva student, Rabbi HaCohen, who was smuggled in by the Hagganah to give strength and spiritual inspiration to the valiant citizens of Jerusalem, related the scene of those final minutes of sundown Friday 28th May 1948. One of the Arab Legionnaires, feeling sorry for the brave young girl, lit a cigarette and held it to her lips as a way of possibly distracting her from her pain. Indicating that Shabbat was entering, Esther instead requested that a prayer book be brought to her. She was propped up, the prayer book opened to the opening prayer of the Friday night service. Her strength fading together with the sun's rays, she pointed to the opening words-“ Lechu Neranena Lashem- 'לכו נרננה לה' Come let us sing songs to HaShem"! Singing this song was Esther's final act in this world.

This story was first related to me by Rav Yeshayahu Hadari z"l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Hakotel. Like Esther, at the time I was a British Jew serving in the Israeli Defence Forces. I shall never forget the Rabbi then turning to us 20 year olds some 40 years later and bellowing with his signature flourish "עלינו להמשיך" עלינו להמשיך" - את הלכו נרננה שלה!" it is incumbent upon each of us to continue her song! Seder night is about relating the long and arduous journey of our people. But we don't view it as a journey per se. We talk of a 'story', one spanning 3500 years and counting. As we share our story and invite each person at our table to play their role, somehow, as a family that is part of an incredible people, our story transforms into a tumultuous song. Perhaps that song is sung in Esther's tune. Perhaps it harmoniously bridges the score of history to form the crescendo of the symphony that awaits you and I so soon.



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Exploring the essence of 'Maggid' - the Exodus story - through inquisitive eyes.
(Spin the Seder 1)

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Looking back at a challenging year, through the perspective of the 'Four Questions'.
(Spin the Seder 2)

p.40 **Far Away From Home**

A fascinating connection between Pesach in lockdown and an ancient Seder in Bnei Brak.
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The superhuman reaction of the Israelites to their newfound freedom.
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A deeper analysis of the function of the ten plagues.
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DEEPER INSIGHTS

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Dayeinu isn't just a chart-topper, it's the secret to the Jewish people's happiness.
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Matzah, that most beloved of foods. But does it represent suffering, or freedom?
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A classic Hassidic tale to liven up the long-anticipated festive meal!
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In Judaism, food is food for the soul. Music is so much more.
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Discover how a cute poem about a little goat is actually a soaring metaphor of humanity.
(Spin the Seder 10)

QUESTION TIME

“I have learned more from my students than from my teachers.” (Talmud, Taanit 7a)

There are many ways that one may learn things from their children. What the Talmud is referring to is not that the student or child in question has an increased level of knowledge or awareness in a particular field. It is precisely through the mechanism of a student to teacher relationship that the teacher learns the most about education, the student and possibly even themselves.

on the Haggadah, he also remarks that the entire process is one of reflection, encouraging children or participants to question. The verse commands “vehigadata levincha” - one should reply to one’s child, indicating that the manner of retelling the Passover story should be done through question and answer format.

In another essay, Rabbi Sacks stresses the centrality of reflection within Jewish pedagogy, noting how Passover’s central purpose - of inculcating family, friends and

"ONE CAN LEARN FROM EVERYONE IN SO FAR AS THE VERY ENCOUNTER ITSELF GIVES BIRTH TO OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT UPON OUR BEHAVIOUR."

Naturally, children and students are more skilled at practising various aspects of this process than adults. I remember seeing a study that on average a child asks seventy-five per cent more questions than an adult. I recall reading (and wasn’t entirely surprised!) that a curious child asks as many as 73 questions every day! We often joke that our three-year old has a knack of asking us questions at the most inconvenient of times. An earnest challenge faced by every parent is to not smother this potent force, instead meeting each question with the same level of energy and wonder with which they are asked.

Rabbi Lord Sacks a'h makes a timeless observation: Education means teaching a child to be curious, to wonder, to reflect, to enquire. The child who asks becomes a partner in the learning process, an active recipient. To ask is to grow. In his commentary

students in the shared story of the Jewish people - is formalised by enacting and re-enacting this reflective process. This is the very essence of ‘Maggid’, which literally translates as ‘telling over’. He contrasts this phenomenon with that of the value of questioning in other religions and cultures.

Most cultures traditionally see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. “Children should be seen, not heard,” goes the old English proverb. “Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord,” says a famous Christian text. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. In Judaism, the opposite is the case. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow. (Sacks, the Necessity of Asking Questions, 2017).



Rabbi Sacks is alluding to the practice that the Haggadah suggests that we should place peculiar items on the table during our Seder for the purpose of encouraging those present to question and seek answers to the Jewish narrative to gain a true and deep understanding of our history and destiny. By encouraging this, we are compelled to nurture and create an environment where children and adults are able to share in this experience.

The renowned 20th-century thinker and author Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe states that the Mishna which teaches “Who is wise? He who learns from everyone.” (Ethics of the Fathers, 4:1) doesn’t necessarily mean that each person can learn something from everyone they meet; such a notion is demonstrably and

practically impossible! Rather, he explains that ‘one can learn from everyone’ insofar as the very encounter itself gives rise to opportunities to reflect upon our behaviour. There is an innate lesson in analysing our viewpoints and behaviour in each interaction and reflecting upon their shortcomings to learn how to act better in the future. Through this reflective process, we gain experience and build cognitive muscles. By adopting this process, we will succeed in turning all of our interactions into learning experiences. In a sense, we will preserve the childish sense of wonder in all its beauty.



WHY IS THIS YEAR DIFFERENT?

This year, many of us will have a good answer for the timeless Passover question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” This night is different because I am worried about my loved ones. This night is different because I may not have all the family around the table with me for Seder. This night is different because I am alone.

How are we meant to navigate all the loneliness and uncertainty and not fall into the abyss of paranoia that has overridden our news outlets and radio stations, let alone our conversations with family and strangers alike?

As slaves in Egypt, the Children of Israel had to contend with many unbearable circumstances. According to the sages, the onset of the first of the ten plagues, the plague of blood, actually signified the end of more

than two centuries of slavery. Those plagues then continued more or less uninterrupted for a whole year. As frogs emerged from the depths of the Nile, locusts swarmed Egyptian airspace, and mega-hailstones of ice and fire rained down from the heavens; the Jewish people stayed indoors. The double-miracle was that the Jewish people not only witnessed the destruction of their oppressors, but also in that the plagues did not affect them. They sat by their windows and looked out at the destruction of the world as they knew it. The reset button had been pressed and they were witnessing the destruction before the rebuilding.

This came to a crescendo at the last of the plagues, the killing of the firstborn, when the Jews were instructed to stay indoors, and





paint their doorposts with the blood of the Egyptian deity, the sheep; “And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).

The name Passover itself is a reference to the fact that God did not destroy us in a plague. In the current global climate this takes on a whole new meaning. Rashi, the famous 11th century commentator asks: Why does the verse say, ‘when I see the blood’? Surely God sees everything? Rather, what it means to say is that God will be paying close attention to the fact that you are engaged in the performance of His commands — then, and only then, will ‘I pass over you’.

When the world is self-destructing outside, God is looking to see what we are doing inside.

For the duration of the year of the plagues, the Jewish people had to learn how to undo the psychological constrictions that slavery had embedded in their consciousness, and how to conduct themselves whilst figuratively stuck indoors. As the world was recreating itself outside, we were recreating ourselves inside. This was our preparation for freedom. Our freedom was preceded by a time to re-evaluate our values and decide what we stood for. It was a period not of isolation but of incubation. It was a time to inculcate within ourselves who we are, what is important to us, and to know that the strength to actualize our potential comes from within.

Perhaps we have been reliving this process over the past year. Perhaps we have been afforded the opportunity to reset. To rethink. To reassess what is important to us. As the world outside descended into the unknown, we were tasked with resetting ourselves

inside. As we collectively turned inward, and the dust and fumes of our human footprint begin to settle, the fish returned to the seas, the birds sang once more, and the smog hovering above our concrete jungles began to dissipate. As this happened outside, it happened within us too.

We may have been isolated, but we were also insulated. We may have been confined, but we were also redefining our lives. We were suffocating, but we were also incubating. We were separated, but we were also reminding ourselves that we are integrated with the global human family.

How do we navigate the loneliness and make this night as ‘different’? We can begin by changing our focus from the outside to inside. The great sage, Ben Zoma, described happiness as not a pursuit of that which you lack, but an expression of that which you already have. Our ability to access our state of happiness and joy and meaning will come not from looking outside at the things we haven’t been able to access for so long, but from peering inside into the world that our consciousness inhabits. Indeed, happiness doesn’t come to you, it comes from you.

Even though we are alone, we are alone together. Let’s make this night different not because we were forced to, but because we choose to.



FAR AWAY FROM HOME

This year, like last year - I feel like one of those Rabbis in Bnei Brak.

I always used to envision the scene in this part of the haggadah. A group of five saintly sages, dressed in their festive best, reclining to the left on their Talmudic-era couches, passionately discussing the story of the Exodus. Around them is delicious aromatic food and they are surrounded by their families and loved ones.

The problem is, when we look carefully at the names and history of each of these important

when they must advise on the kosher-status of Passover food, help to oversee the making and distribution of matzah, arrange charity for the poor (a fixture in Talmud-era calendars called 'kimcha d'pische' - literally "provisions for Passover", and help people set up their homes for the upcoming festival.

With all this in mind, it is suggested that perhaps that year, these five rabbis had docked back in Jaffa too close to Pesach. Thus, they didn't have enough time to reach their hometowns in time to celebrate the festival with their families.

"THEY WERE FAR FROM FAMILY, UNABLE TO REACH THEIR HOMES IN TIME TO HAVE THE SEDER TOGETHER... SOUND FAMILIAR?"

sages, we soon realise that none of them actually lived in Bnei Brak! The Talmud tells us the hometowns of most of them - and it's not Bnei Brak. In fact, the only sage who we know lived in Bnei Brak is Rabban Gamliel, and he isn't mentioned in this story at all. So what were they doing there on Passover night? Why weren't they at home?

One of the important roles of the sages of that generation was to counsel and advise the various communities scattered across the land of Israel. The Talmud and Midrash (Oral Torah) relate that one of the primary ways that they would reach the northern and southern corners of the land was by ship. They would depart from Jaffa port (which was right near ancient Bnei Brak) and traverse the length of the land, docking at the various seaside cities.

One of the busiest times of the year for Rabbis and community leaders is just before Passover,

So here were five people - among the most towering figures of their generation - celebrating Pesach in the most non-ideal of circumstances. They were far from family, unable to reach their homes in time to have the seder together... sound familiar?

So they did the best that they could. They gathered together and, despite the challenges, they created a Pesach seder, aided by their retinue of students and colleagues.

This year, 2021, like last year, I am comforted by this story. With family far away that we haven't seen for a year, and family nearby that we haven't embraced for a year, I feel like I am in good company. Like Rebbe Eliezer, Rebbe Yehoshua, Rebbe Elazar ben Azaria, Rebbe Akiva and Rebbe Tarfon, and like all the thousands and thousands of isolated and isolating Jews around the world - let's go ahead and celebrate Pesach.

Rebbetzen Shalvie Friedman
Senior Educator



LOOKING FORWARD TO LOOK BACK

We raise our glasses and celebrate the Jewish people's survival against the odds. Not only that, the Haggadah emphasises: "Go out and learn"- look around and see. We are a people that many of the major world powers have sought to destroy. Yet we have emerged stronger. Eighty years have passed since Jews came limping out of Europe - so many bereaved and mourning close family. Yet they marched on. We saw survivors with almost superhuman courage, looked forward, building a new life for themselves and for the future.

role of masters, while the Egyptians became their subordinates.

What did they do with that freedom? Did they seize children out of the embrace of their mothers and cast them in the Nile just as had been done to them? Did they assault the taskmasters who just a few days earlier had tortured them mercilessly? Did their youth smash the windows of the offices from which was administered the hatred and persecution of the Jews? No. Not one person was hurt, not one house destroyed, not one act of

"BY DEFEATING THEMSELVES, THEY ALSO WON THE GREATEST OF ALL VICTORIES: THEY BECAME FREE"

In antiquity, rebellion by slaves meant total destruction to satisfy an understandable but at the same time blood-thirsty urge for revenge and desire to uproot the 'established order'. History records many violent and ruthless insurrections of slaves against their masters. Ancient Rome saw multiple confrontations with slaves who had declared themselves free. European history witnessed the Peasants' Rebellion in medieval Germany and the bloody Cossack uprising in Ukraine.

After generations of suffering, persecution and servitude, after centuries of back-breaking labour, murder of Jewish baby boys and more, how did our ancestors respond to being set free? One can only imagine how they felt that night. For the first time in generations, not only were they not oppressed, downtrodden or tortured, they had suddenly assumed the

vandalism, hate, revenge, or violence. Put in that position, what would we have done with our newfound freedom, our licence to act without repercussion?

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik highlighted that this response is unique in the history of revolutions. He writes; would we blame the Jews if they had engaged in a few acts of vandalism and even murder on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan, killing a few of the taskmasters who had thrown their newborns into the Nile?

But the Jews did nothing of the sort. They defied their instincts and refused to gratify a basic need of the human being - the need for revenge. But when we act on these feelings, we may find ourselves in a prison of our own making. And so, by defeating themselves,



they also won the greatest of all victories: they became truly free. This is exactly what we commemorate and celebrate on the night of the Seder. Freedom is self-determination, the capacity to rise above our innate emotions or our instinctive reactions to the behaviour of others. Freedom is the ability to decide we won't let others define us and we won't let others 'own' how we feel.

The Jews in Egypt were entitled to be filled with anger and the desire for revenge. It would have been understandable had they been consumed by a negative fury directed at the Egyptians. But rather than focus on toxic emotions that would weigh them down, fill them with hate and hold them back – in a sense, 'enslaving' them still - they instead chose to focus on their newfound freedom in a different way. Instead of swarming the streets of Egypt screaming for revenge, they retreated to their homes, gathered with their families, ate the Pascal offering and sang songs of praise to God.

In short, their reaction was remarkable.

As Rabbi Sacks observes: "This is what makes us Homo-sapiens - in any given situation we can look back or we can look forward. We can ask: "Why did this happen?" That involves looking back for some cause in the past. Or we can ask, "What then shall I do?" This involves looking forward, trying to work out some future destination given that this is our starting point.

Both are legitimate ways of thinking, but one leads to resentment, bitterness, rage and a desire for revenge. The other leads to challenge, courage, strength of will and self-control. That for me is what the Jewish people represent: the triumph of choice over fate.

It is this with this strength, hope and courage that we journey forward as a people – from Egypt, from Rome, from Spain, from Auschwitz – the path in front of us paved with a preparedness and a willingness to continue to build, create and welcome in a bright future.

[Adapted from the works of Rabbi Sacks (On not being a Victim, Re'eh 5778), Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Festival of freedom page 34) and Rav Efreim Goldberg (Freedom in Prison, Pesach 5780)]



IS REVENGE SWEET?

When we think of God, it probably isn't a positive thing to imagine up a terrifying presence, suspended over the universe, waiting for us puny humans to mess up so He can deliver upon us eternal justice and pain. That certainly isn't the Jewish view.

Hashem is the all-encompassing, infinite, unquantifiable source of Mercy. In fact, the ineffable Name of God that we pronounce 'Adonai' – the same Name with which God 'introduced' Himself to Moses at the burning

those vital energies into the consciousness of the Israelites, the Egyptians and the rest of the world. Let's see how.

God demonstrating complete control over the Nile was not simply hijacking a nation's primary source of drinking water. The Nile was far more than just the physical lifeblood of the people; to them it symbolized the negation of dependence on 'God as Provider'.

This was in direct contradiction to the utterance in the creation narrative: 'Behold

"WE DO NOT TOAST A NATION'S DOWNFALL, NO MATTER HOW MUCH JUSTIFIABLE HATRED WE MIGHT HARBOUR TOWARD THEM."

bush, is a name that means 'just as I loved you before your sin, so too will I love you afterwards'.

With this in mind, one could ask, why did God treat the Egyptians to a nightmarish year of blood and boils and boulder-sized flaming hailstones? How does this fit with our understanding of God being the ultimate source of mercy?

Let's dissect the very first plague for a better view. Our sages teach (Ethics of the Fathers 5:1) that when God created the world, He did so with ten utterances. These utterances introduced energies into the creation through which the world would subsequently operate. But, the sages continued, these energies were trampled on and ignored by generations of people and therefore had to be reintroduced at a later date in history. The Exodus was that date. The ten plagues vividly reintroduced

I have given you all the grasses...and all the trees with fruit.'

God gives us the ability to be self-sufficient, but not to make the mistake of believing that we are the ultimate source of our own sustenance. It is only through His mercy that trees bear fruit and soil brings forth wheat.

By laying to ruin the source and national symbol of self-sufficiency, God unequivocally reintroduced the notion to all peoples that He is the sole provider of sustenance - a show of daily mercy and love.

The plagues were not delivered out of spite, revenge, or to needlessly humiliate the Egyptians. For God's sublime master-plan, the Israelite nation *had* to be delivered from the hands of the Egyptians in that precise manner, at that precise stage in history, and they *had* to witness the plagues while the Egyptians

Leah & Ozer Moszkowski

Aish on Campus - Leeds



experienced them, not so that they could gloat over their enemy's downfall - that is antithetical to the very nature of a Jew, and is the classic reason given for our removal of drops of wine from our cups at the mention of every plague. We do not toast a nation's downfall, no matter how much justifiable hatred we might harbour toward them. As King David wrote (Psalms 24:17): "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice".

Rather, there was a vital lesson and revelation achieved with each plague. This was a lesson for the Israelites, the Egyptians, and the world at large. Each plague re-established in undeniable terms God's dominion over all aspects of nature and reintroduced the ten original utterances and energies with which the entire universe shines.



THE GRATITUDE ATTITUDE!



There seems to be an unwritten code about Jewish events that requires a “boring speech”. So ubiquitous are these, that we have come to expect and even tolerate them. But every once in a while, something in one of those speeches catches our ear and perhaps even leaves an impression. There was one such speech I heard that left the room stunned. No one zoned out. No-one switched on their “tolerating boring speech” façade, no-one sneakily scrolled through their news feed under the table. Instead hearts were awoken and inspired. The audience walked out of this

occasion changed somehow.

The event was a luncheon celebrating the soon to be wed young groom, and the speaker was the groom himself. He was, as some in the audience were learning for the first time, a fortunate survivor of an innovative neonatal cardiovascular open-heart surgery when he was a newborn, who had gone on to leave doctors in awe of how he had thrived as he grew. Every year his practitioners would marvel at how he had developed against all odds. On this occasion he stood, confidently



making eye contact with the audience after opening his speech with a short Torah thought. But then he shifted gears.

He said, "Every year we sing a family favourite at the Seder table: Dayeinu. But as I approach my wedding day I have adapted this song to form one of my own...."

"Dayeinu - it would have been enough had I survived the surgery. It would have been enough to have been born with loving parents who looked out for me the whole way through

savings, when partnered with compound interest stacks up in an exponential way. Imagine when we consider ourselves not just the product of our personal journey, but within the context of Jewish history. We are not sitting in 2021 in isolation (well, we might be in isolation in one sense!). We are the product, the survivors, the torch-bearers of the greatest story ever told. Every step on that story could have been otherwise. But it wasn't. We are obligated to

"DAYEINU IS NOT JUST A GREAT TUNE. IT'S THE SECRET TO JEWISH HAPPINESS."

and gave me every opportunity imaginable... It would have been enough to reach my Bar Mitzvah to watch my family's Rabbi who supported us through it all, stand with tears in his eyes and say the blessing "Shehechyanu - who brought us in life to this day... It would have been enough to see how I succeeded at school and further studies...

He continued, whilst the audience's eyes grew wet, before he concluded: "It would have been enough, but the fact that I have now found someone to marry...no words can express how thankful I am!" The audience, by now wiping the tears away, sensed that this young groom had to stop there simply due to his own emotions. His point was made. Powerfully.

When we take stock and consider each step of our journey and articulate our gratitude, we stun ourselves and those around us. Incremental

see ourselves in that chain. Links are still being added to it. We are the ones who forge them.

Dayeinu is not just a great tune. It's the secret to Jewish happiness. Connect to that story and you have just accrued the greatest amount of compound interest imaginable that you can now add to your gratitude account for all time.

Some speeches leave a mark and wake us up, and sometimes a little song can do that too.



THE CARDBOARD CONTRADICTION

Like it or hate it, delicious or inedible, the matzah occupies centre stage at the Seder. As the story begins, we raise the matzah and invite all to join us as we prepare to embark on the annual journey through the Haggadah. We declare 'this matzah is "lachma anya" - the bread of slavery and suffering; we hold it up to remind us of the torture and pain our ancestors experienced in Egypt and beyond throughout our tear-soaked history.

The rest of the night follows this framework, as the story is told from the beginning through the lens of the matzah. Starting with Abraham the first Jew, through the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Sea and forty years in the

unleavened bread our ancestors ate as they left Egypt. They did not have time to wait for their dough to rise as they rushed out of their Egyptian prisons and into freedom and we, in turn, eat this unleavened bread to remind us of that. Matzah, says Rabban Gamliel, is the bread of freedom and we eat it to remind us of that newfound gift we received thousands of years ago.

Now that's confusing at best, even paradoxical. The identity taken on by matzah at the outset of Maggid is very different to the one it takes on as we prepare to conclude this central section. Which is it? The bread of 'slavery' or the bread of 'freedom'? Do we

"THE REALITY IS THAT IT TAKES LOSING SOMETHING TO APPRECIATE IT AND IT CAN TAKE SLAVERY TO VALUE FREEDOM."

desert, the story picks up speed and then winds down as we smell the aroma of chicken soup and brisket. But as we turn the final corner, the Haggadah pauses for a moment and asks the question we have all been wondering since we picked up the matzah and said 'ha lachma anya' all those hours ago.

Why in fact, do we eat matzah tonight?

The Haggadah quotes Rabban Gamliel, one of the greatest Jewish teachers who ever lived, the halachic authority and leader of the Supreme Court in the Land of Israel some two thousand years ago. He famously answers that the Jewish people eat matzah, unleavened bread, to remind us of the

eat it to remind us of the slavery of our past or to celebrate the new-found freedom of our present? The matzah seems to pose the ultimate contradiction, difficult to digest both literally and symbolically!

Human beings by their very nature take life for granted. This is true in a general sense but even more so when we look at life in the context of miracles. Whether the miracle we see is a human eye, a new-born child or a rover landing on a far-off planet. Objectively, a granule of grain rotting in the ground, dying and decaying, is the epitome of death and lost opportunity. When a new sprout bursts forth from that degeneration it should be no less of



a miracle than a corpse coming back to life, but since this happens every time a seed is dropped into a ploughed field, it has been rebranded as nature. Like the human eye and a new-born child, perhaps another way to view nature is a miracle that happens very often.

Born into freedom, we expect it to continue. Because we have never lived in slavery or under a tyrannical regime, we take liberty and opportunity for granted. The reality is that it takes losing something to appreciate it and it can take slavery to value freedom. The bread of freedom can only be fully appreciated if it is first understood in the context of the bread of affliction that came before it. The matzah is both what our forefathers ate while enslaved in Egypt and what they ate when they marched to freedom because freedom only finds true meaning when it is juxtaposed to slavery.

The Torah writes in no less than twenty-four places the prohibition to oppress a stranger.

There are many potential reasons for this but surprisingly the reason actually given is “because you were slaves in the land of Egypt”. The irony here should not be lost on us. Of all nations, the Jewish people know best the bitter taste of slavery and the harsh reality of exile and living in a strange land, and as a result of that experience, we are now obligated to identify with others facing the same predicament. Only because we were there can we identify with it fully and that creates the responsibility.

The matzah is bread of slavery and simultaneously bread of freedom. This is not a paradox. Just as there is no paradox between a decaying seed and a flourishing shoot. Matzah takes on both identities by urgent necessity. Without understanding our history, it is impossible to grasp our future and the message of the matzah is clear - don't take freedom for granted.



ONE DAY MORE

Bob and Joe were a pair of homeless beggars living together in the back alleys of London, close friends and partners in grime. Joe was Jewish and Bob was not. After many days without a proper meal, Joe told Bob with boundless joy that tonight was Passover. “The Jews hold a gigantic feast and everyone is invited! If we just stand outside synagogue we’ll certainly be invited for Seder night. Trust me, you’ve never seen anything like it!”

Bob was ecstatic and excitedly hurried along with Joe to the synagogue. Sure enough, they both got invited to the home of one of the wealthiest Jews in the city! The table was set beautifully with the finest dishes and cutlery

talk some more! This went on for hours; no food, not even more wine was forthcoming. Nothing! Growing a bit antsy, Bob took a deep breath and resolved to remain a bit longer in the hope that the food would be brought out soon. Finally, everyone began silently and rapidly chewing mouthfuls upon mouthfuls of the dry, cardboard-like crackers. While it wasn’t the succulent chicken he was waiting for, Bob partook with gusto. At least it was something to satisfy his terrible hunger! With hopeful eyes, he noticed that things seemed to be moving a bit more quickly now. Perhaps the meal was finally beginning?

A moment later a white shredded substance

“THE WORLD HAS BEEN STARVING FOR CONNECTION AND SECURITY. WE’VE HAD OUR FAIR SHARE OF BITTER THINGS. AND YET THERE IS LIGHT AT THE END OF THIS LONG TUNNEL.”

fit for royalty. Bob’s mouth began to water. He couldn’t believe his tremendous luck! After a few songs, a glass of wine was poured for all of the guests and an incantation intoned. Bob waited until the blessing was completed and drank thirstily, his heart bursting with excitement, sure that they were about to bring out all the delicacies he could ever dream of.

Unfortunately for Bob, this isn’t what happened. Instead, everyone washed their hands and nibbled on radish heads. “Strange”, thought Bob, “I’m sure they’ll bring out the main course now”. But no. Instead the guests all broke plain square crackers in half and began to talk, and talk, and talk, and

was brought out. He couldn’t exactly make out what it was, but he was sure it was something delicious! Bob made sure to take an extra big bite (he deserved it, after all, waiting so patiently). Instantly, his smile disappeared. The shooting sensation of intense heat that erupted in his throat, spreading up his nose and burning his eyes was unlike he had ever experienced before. Furious, and with tears streaming down his red and swollen face, Bob spat out the vile substance, jumped from his seat, and ran out of the house in a fit of anger! A few hours later, he was woken suddenly by a kick in the leg. He looked up to see his friend Joe standing over him and smiling from ear to ear. “What are you so happy about?” he



grumbled. “You Jews are crazy! That was no feast, that was torture!” “You fool!” Joe cried. “If you would have waited just a few minutes more, you would have experienced the most incredible meal of your life! Just a few more minutes of patience and perseverance and you could have had everything you ever dreamed of!”

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (d.1810, Uman, Ukraine) would say that so often when life is difficult and the challenges seem never-ending, we reach a point where we feel as if we simply can’t go on. The story of the two beggars teaches us that it’s just at those moments that we need to gather all of our strength and find the courage to hold on just a little bit longer.

The story of the Exodus is one of hope. In the history of Egypt, no slave ever escaped. How could an entire nation ever walk free? And yet after centuries of enslavement, God miraculously redeemed us just when it seemed things were at their worst. It is following the darkest points in

the struggles of life that the dawn of salvation breaks.

These past twelve months the world has been waiting patiently. The world has been starving for connection and security. We’ve had our fair share of bitter things. And yet there is light at the end of this long tunnel. We’ve all had a very difficult year but as Passover arrives this spring, the sun is shining and there is blossom and bloom. Throughout the world, vaccination programs are in full swing and Covid cases are dropping drastically. There is hope for better days ahead. The bitter taste of marror might still linger on our tongues but I hope we can all take a moment and smell the aroma of that incredible feast wafting in from the kitchen. Good times are coming! The great feast is just around the corner - if we can only hold on for just a few more minutes.



THE CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT



It's close to midnight, you have sat for many hours. Your stomach is full; three cups of wine, matzah and a nice helping of lettuce mixed with apples and cinnamon. You have recounted the Exodus story in all its glory and re-lived the moments our ancestors left Egypt.

For some, the retelling of the Exodus story is like a history lesson; long, boring and repetitive. Haven't we done this before? I'm sure we were here last year, and the year before and the year before that?

If you have reached this far in our publication, there is no doubt you will have read a lot on the significance of the Haggadah. It is not merely meant to be a historical account, but rather, a retelling in order to connect to the power of freedom. And perhaps through all of that - through living and experiencing freedom - the climax is 'Hallel'; the words of praise expressed as we fill our final cup.

So why Hallel? And why now?

"In every generation, everyone is obligated to see themselves as though they personally left Egypt."

During the Seder, we must personally experience our own exodus from the slavery of Egypt. We begin by recounting the misery of our toil and labour, tasting the saltwater tears of our nation's suffering. We suffer the harshness of bondage through the bitter herbs, and we feel the quickening haste of the sudden redemption as we eat the matzah, the bread which had no time to rise before we fled Egypt. Each of us 'leaves Egypt'—and in 'spontaneous' response, we cannot help but sing the song that Jews have sung throughout the centuries at their moments of redemption: Hallel! We echo Moses and the Jewish people on the banks of the Red Sea, Mordechai and Esther in Shushan, the Jewish people at Chanukah and so many other miracles that have become a part of our history. We sing it not to commemorate an old, dusty miracle, but to celebrate the redemptive miracle we experience personally during the Seder.

We need not stand. We do not have time to go to Synagogue. It is as though Hallel is the champagne brought out at the end of the meal to toast the joy of victory.

The Hallel of the Seder thus reflects the



character of the entire festival. Pesach celebrates the creation of the Jewish people, the forging of our relationship with God. And yet it is not merely the anniversary of our covenant with God, not merely a day on which we remember that He took us out from another nation and consecrated us as His own, but the re-enactment of that marriage. Hallel celebrates that moment when we personally leave Egypt and start out on the road to accepting the Torah at Sinai and becoming God's chosen people. But why is this specifically expressed through song?

Music and song belong to everyone, regardless of race, creed, age, or status in life. Music speaks

language because it can hardly be understood, and yet it is acknowledged and completely appreciated for what it is. This is why in Judaism whenever there is overwhelming gratitude or sadness, the moment is often expressed through song. Because song/music is one step higher than conversation. It expresses something far deeper.

The power of Hallel at the Seder is just that. To bring us closer to our final goal. To realise our hopes and dreams and to connect us to our soul. If we do the Seder right and look towards our own personal exodus stories and use the Seder

"MUSIC SPEAKS FROM THE SOUL. IT REACHES OUT AND EXPRESSES WHAT WORDS ARE UNABLE TO SAY."

from the soul. It reaches out and expresses what words are unable to say. A mother communicates her love for her baby who may not understand a word she says, but feels safe and loved just the same, as she hums a lullaby.

Whatever experiences a person may be going through, whether it is a heartbreak or unspeakable joy, can be expressed through music. Never mind that the lyrics may be inadequate. The melodies alone are able to convey messages, soul to soul. A beautiful melody can bring tears to one's eyes. It is powerful enough to soften the hardest heart and heal the most painful memory. It breaks barriers of time and space, provides comfort for the grieving, and calms the anxious mind. It is a gift that everyone can share. It is unlike any other

to begin to illustrate that, then we set our soul free.

Hallel is that realisation. That connection, that ability to break free and sing YOUR song, whose notes are the truest and most powerful expression of your personal freedom.



THE G.O.A.T

We have reached the culmination of a beautiful Seder, feeling inspired and a tangible connection to God himself. Yet, there is a nagging voice at the back of our head which we just can't ignore; 'Yes, *now* we feel inspired and uplifted, but how do we make it last? Will we continue to have faith, even when all odds are against us, or will we allow everything to fall apart and surrender to whatever challenge is round the corner?'

The song of "Chad Gadya" tells us the tale of a father who buys a kid goat for two "Zuz" to add to his herd. However, the goat grows up and starts to form a persona of its own. Curiosity kicks in - which eventually leads to

ignites a little flame, slowly engulfing wood that was dry enough to sting the dog. Before we know it, the stick is lost in an inferno of fire. The fire, brutal and ferocious, consumes all in its way, only to be met with crushing failure as it heads into the river bed. Water, as powerful and destructive as much as it sustains life, is the very definition of limitless and defiant of all boundaries. However, it too cannot escape the parched ox. Yet the ox too has its limitations - the human slaughterer. And yet he too cannot escape the angel of death, ever.

By the time we get to the penultimate stanza, we have totally forgotten that this whole mad caper began with a simple stray goat.

"BY THE TIME WE GET TO THE PENULTIMATE STANZA, WE HAVE TOTALLY FORGOTTEN THAT THIS WHOLE MAD CAPER BEGAN WITH A SIMPLE STRAY GOAT."

it rebelling against its master, until finally - the goat runs away. And thus begins one of the most popular songs - and metaphors - in all of Jewish liturgy.

After wandering around for a bit, a cat comes and attacks the little goat. Failing to escape the cat's claws, the goat is left with no choice but to give itself up to the cat's hunger. Suddenly, out of nowhere a dog comes to the rescue and scares the vicious cat away. Feeling eternally grateful to the dog for saving his life, the goat seeks to thank it. But then a big wooden stick appears, and beats the dog away. The stick feels unbeatable, he is the hero that beat the hero, and in his pride and ego, he is oblivious to the tiny spark which

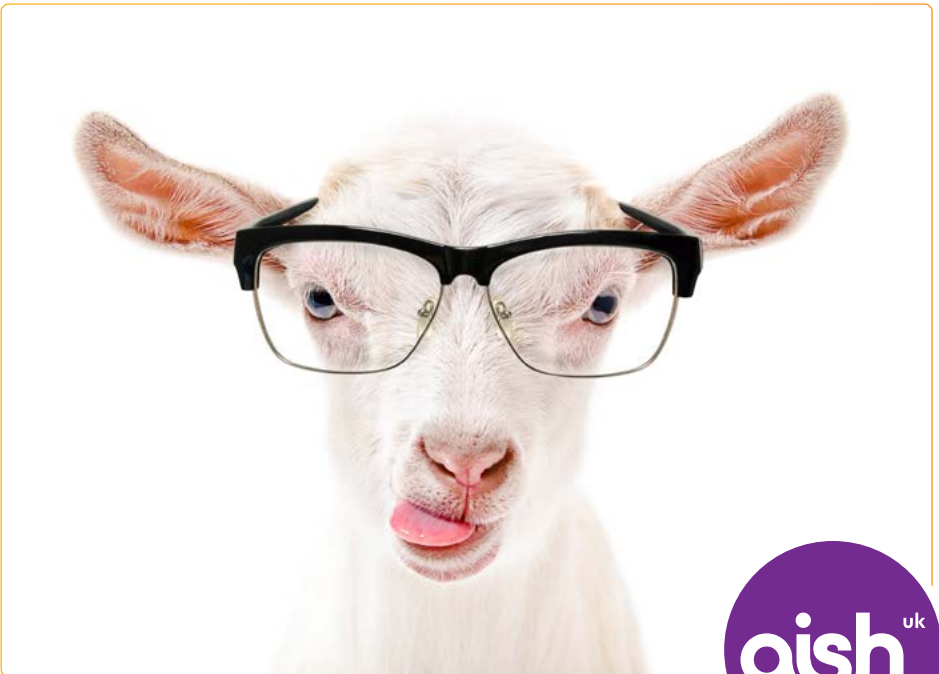
The goat, plucked from the jaws of death and now standing by witnessing the chain reaction unfold before it, a chain reaction its rebelliousness caused in the first place, suddenly feels very lost and alone. All it yearns for now is its master, its father, who bought it for two "Zuz".

The story of "Chad Gadya" is a direct parallel to the Jewish nation who were bequeathed to God as we stood at mount Sinai and declared 'we will do, and we will listen'. We are that young goat, acquired for two precious tablets (the ones with the Ten Commandments, not Apple) just as the goat was purchased for two 'Zuz'. Unfortunately, as the tale shows, as time passes we explore different paths and impulses, causing us to spend a lot of time



and effort searching for ways to find fulfilment. In turn we become blind to our true purpose and forget what our mission is in the world. As eras and civilisations wax and wane, we sometimes find ourselves cornered by a vicious ‘cat’, which we may or may not overcome. But then we put our trust in a ‘dog’ whose salvation simply doesn’t last. As life continues and we fall into a monotonous dance called “living”, we don’t seize the opportunity to stop and think about our real purpose. We lose focus and get blindsided by the sticks, fires and waters of this world. Some we perceive as posing a threat. Some we perceive as providing a solution. Yet ultimately, none of them prevail.

And so we specifically end the entire Seder with the song of ‘Chad Gadya’. To remind us that we can be our own script writers and direct a different tale. A tale that will hopefully be an inspiration and source of encouragement for when we feel a loss of confidence and faith in God’s eternal love and commitment to us. A tale that will proclaim – we are God’s beloved children. And our story is the Greatest of All Time.





p.58 **Ancient Egypt - the Exodus**

(Spin the Seder 2)



p.60 **Bnei Brak - the Five sages**

(Spin the Seder 3)



p.62 **Ur Casdim - Abraham's birthplace**

(Spin the Seder 3)



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(Spin the Seder 4)

EXPLORE THE JEWISH JOURNEY



p.66 **Padan Aram - Jacob and Laban**
(Spin the Seder 4)



p.68 **Pithom & Rameses - Slave cities**
(Spin the Seder 4)



p.70 **The Red Sea - Miraculous crossing**
(Spin the Seder 5)



p.72 **Mount Sinai - Giving of the Torah**
(Spin the Seder 6)



p.74 **Jerusalem - the Holy City**
(Spin the Seder 10)



Ancient Egypt



EGYPT

Nile

SIN
PEN

1



One of the most ancient civilisations in all of human history, the story of Egypt and that of the Israelites is closely intertwined throughout Scripture. From Abraham and Sarah's first descent there to escape famine in Canaan, to Joseph being sold into slavery - eventually leading to Jacob and his entire tribe moving there and settling in the north Nile Delta in a fertile region called 'Goshen'.

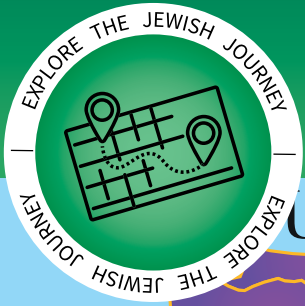
But our shared histories don't end there. Throughout the Book of Kings, and especially in the prelude to the destruction of the First Temple, the Egyptian empire's role as a regional power-broker is crucial to the unique way in which Israelite society develops.



In the Torah itself, the world of the pharaohs represents the consequences of unchecked power. The pharaohs of antiquity were self-styled gods, ruling supreme over the lives of millions. Many of the pharaohs, most notably Rameses II, were renowned builders, overseeing the construction of statues and temples that boggle even modern architects.

It is against the backdrop of a vast construction project that the idea of a limitless pool of slave labour begins to take shape...





Bnei Brak



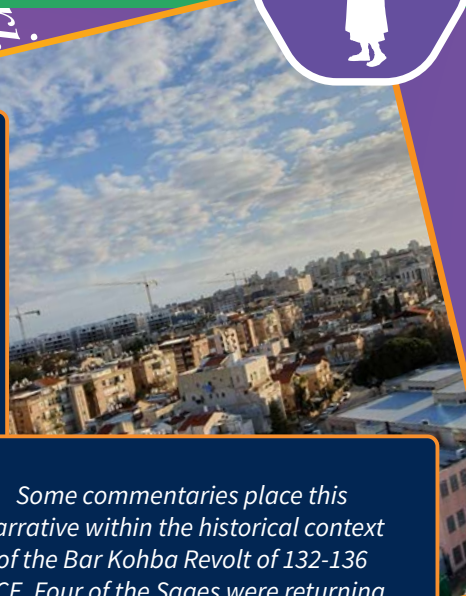


The 'Bnei Brak' mentioned in the Haggadah is not to be confused with the modern-day town of the same name. Rather, the town that would have hosted the five Rabbis' seder was closer to modern-day Hiria, a small town roughly 10km south of Bnei Brak and - crucially - close to the port city of Jaffa.

Some commentaries place this narrative within the historical context of the Bar Kohba Revolt of 132-136 BCE. Four of the Sages were returning from just receiving word that the Romans were sworn to destroy the Jewish people. They knew the only person that could lift their spirits was Rabbi Akiva, the spiritual leader of the revolt and an outspoken supporter of Bar Kohba himself.

The cryptic message passed to them by their students ("the time for the morning prayers has arrived") is interpreted by some as a coded signal to re-inspire the people in their uprising.

Seen in this context, the 'seder in Bnei Brak' forms a link in the same chain as the clandestine seder nights in the Warsaw Ghetto and Inquisition Spain.





Ur Casdim

Abraham's resistance to Nimrod's cult of idolatry is seen as one of the origins for the term 'Hebrew', meaning 'from the other side'. Either taken literally to mean 'from the other side of the river (Euphrates)', this term has been interpreted metaphorically to mean 'he who stood on the opposite side in his beliefs to the rest of society'.



Ur Casdim or 'Ur of the Chaldees' is mentioned in the Torah and identified by the sages as Abraham's birthplace. Located in the south of modern-day Iraq, tradition teaches that it was the site of a great theological showdown between Abraham and Nimrod, a tyrant king who ruled over the lands of ancient Akkad (Babylon).

Tiring of Abraham's monotheistic teachings, Nimrod had his nemesis cast into a fiery furnace (linked phonetically to the word 'Ur', which means 'fire'), but Abraham emerged miraculously unscathed.





IRAN



Persian Gulf



Haran

Abraham's journey to Canaan, which would become the Land of Israel, was a seminal moment, coinciding with the 'Covenant Between the Parts'. This covenant, sealed when Abraham was 70 years old, was the moment that God established him and his descendants as the chosen people. God also forewarned Abraham of the coming exile and slavery in Egypt.



The Torah recounts how in the wake of the story of the Tower of Babel, Terach made the decision to relocate his entire family from Ur Casdim (see previous page) to a city called Haran (now Syria).

With him were Abraham, Sarah and their nephew, Lot. It would be many years until Abraham received God's fateful call to leave his father's home and travel southwest into Canaan.





SYRIA

Euphrates

JORDAN

IRA



Padan Aram

Padan Aram is also known as 'Aram Naharayim', meaning 'Aram between the two rivers'. The origin of this name is due to its location between the region's two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

In the Haggadah, the 'Ha Lachma Anya' section is written in Aramaic, a language that was spoken by Jews during the years of exile, after the destruction of the first Temple. There are still Jewish communities today that use Aramaic!



Padan Aram was the city in which Jacob lived for more than 20 years of his life, having fled Canaan to escape Esau's murderous intent. Here he married Leah and Rachel and established the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's years in Laban's house set the stage for future exiles of Jews to foreign cultures and lands. As in the story of Jacob, Jews who maintained a strong connection to their heritage and past were able to thrive and continue the Jewish story.





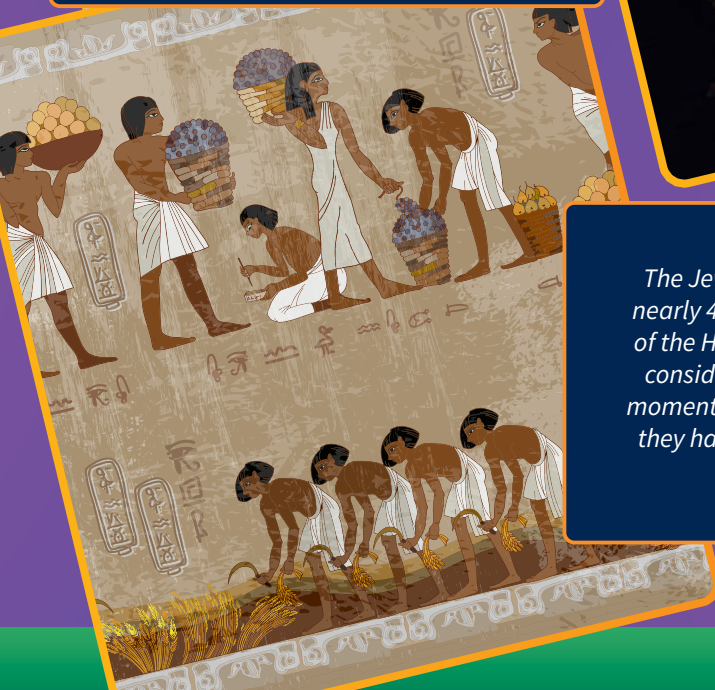


Pithom & Rameses



Pithom and Rameses are the two cities in Egypt that the Torah describes as the sites where the Jewish people were enslaved, and charged with the construction of huge, fortified storage cities.

Opinions differ as to the exact location of these construction sites. Rabbi Saadyah Gaon (10th century) cites the town of Fayum, which is 60 miles southwest of Cairo and therefore quite a distance from Goshen. Modern egyptologists suggest that the cities were located near the northeastern border of Egypt, close to the Nile Delta.



The Jews were enslaved in Egypt nearly 4000 years ago. This section of the Haggadah encourages us to consider the difficult and painful moments of Jewish history and how they have shaped our people over thousands of years.



Crossing of the Red Sea

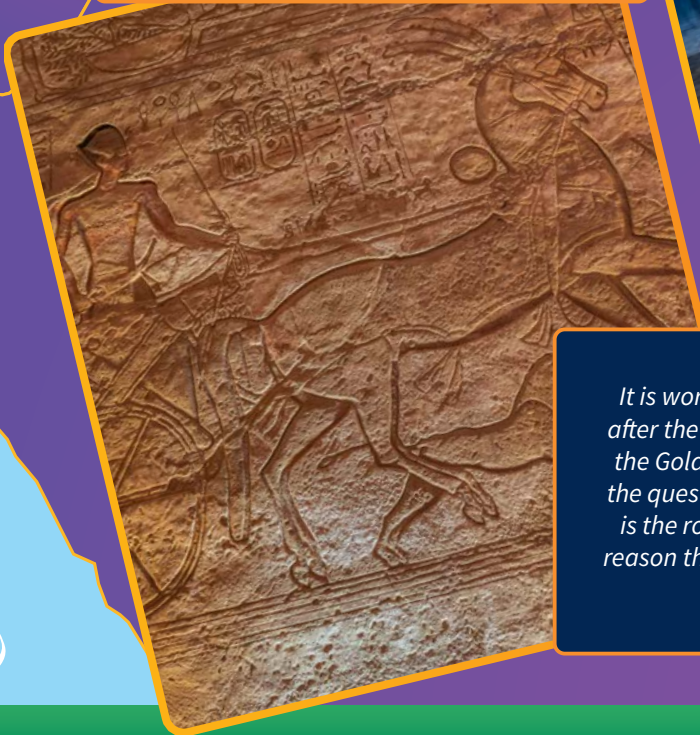


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The Torah presents the splitting of the Red Sea as the climax of the Exodus. It is described as the moment when God exacted a final judgement on Pharaoh and his pursuing army. Beyond this, the Israelites were so thankful to finally be free not just in name but in act, that they joined together in a joyous song called the 'Song at the Sea'.

The miracle was so great that it inspired the Israelites to have faith in God and Moses, striking awe into the hearts and minds of the entire nation.



It is worth noting that just 12 weeks after the splitting of the sea, the sin of the Golden Calf occurred. This raises the question: In Jewish thought, what is the role of miracles and is there a reason their effects sometimes appear to be short-lived?



Mount Sinai



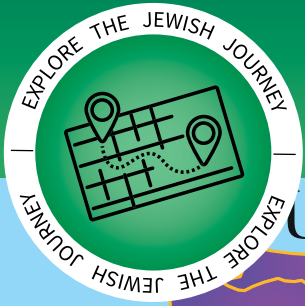
Mount Sinai was the location where God transmitted the Ten Commandments and the Torah to Moshe. The precise location may remain unknown, but the events that unfolded there have been part of an ongoing, unbroken narrative for thousands of years.

The Mount Sinai experience was highlighted by the revelation of God to the Jewish people. While at the splitting of the sea God performed an open miracle, at Mount Sinai, God communicated with each individual in the nation of Israel.



Judaism is the only known religion that claims a 'national revelation'. Namely, that God spoke directly to a group of hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of individuals at the same time. The Revelation at Sinai is therefore seen as the cornerstone of Jewish belief.

Why do you think the Torah was given in the middle of nowhere, in a desert?



Jerusalem





Jerusalem has been the epicentre of Jewish geography since the very beginning. The location of the Binding of Isaac, the site of the ladder in Jacob's dream, the capital established by King David and the city that hosted King Solomon's Temple. Jerusalem is the beating heart of the nation, then, now and for eternity.

The Pesach sacrifice was eaten in the homes and buildings near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This practice was in celebration of the commandment to rejoice in Jerusalem on the three pilgrimage holidays of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot.

The Pesach sacrifice commemorated God's protection of the Jewish homes on the night of the final plague of the firstborn in Egypt. It was eaten with a group, usually family members, and in proximity to the sanctity of the Temple Mount.

Also mentioned in the Haggadah is the 'First Fruits' ceremony celebrated on Shavuot when the Jewish people would gather to celebrate in Jerusalem. This offering was a selection of the seven species which bless the agriculture of the Land of Israel: Wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. The ceremony incorporated a thanksgiving offering to God for the produce that had grown in the previous year.





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Leading with Creativity (Spin the Seder 1)

p.80 **For the Children**

Leading with Curiosity (Spin the Seder 2)

p.82 **Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah**

Leading with Flexibility (Spin the Seder 3)

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Leading with Purpose (Spin the Seder 4)

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Leading with Irony (Spin the Seder 5)

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP



p.88 **Moses**

Leading with Humility (Spin the Seder 6)

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Leading with Faith (Spin the Seder 7)

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Leading with Empowerment (Spin the Seder 9)



Author of the Haggadah

LEADING WITH CREATIVITY

“The idea of mesorah [tradition] is often mistaken as a mere historical record of Jewish practice. That misunderstanding, combined with both the absence of historical uniformity of normative practice, and the gradual evolution of halakhah [Jewish law], can be misconstrued as compromising the authenticity of mesorah. Authentic mesorah is rather an appreciation for, and application of, tradition as the guide by which new ideas, challenges and circumstances are navigated. Our precious mesorah has thereby been the cornerstone of not only the preservation, but also the development of our religious and spiritual heritage. Mesorah is the bridge between our past and our future.” — Responsum of Orthodox Union panel.

Our beloved Pesach Haggadah is a book that prompts many questions. Our first and primary question might be, “Where did the Haggadah come from?” It is one of the few enduring Jewish texts whose author is entirely unknown, and that has tended to bother Jews over the millennia. We are used to being very aware of who our contributors are, as the legitimacy of a Torah interpretation depends as much upon the piety of its author, as it does upon the insightfulness of the idea itself.

It is true that much of the Haggadah is lifted straight from the legal requirements of the seder night as set forth by the Torah and Talmud. The asking of the four questions and the need to expound the answer; the arrangement of the four cups of wine through the seder; the explanation of the symbolism behind matzah, maror and the Pascal offering — these are all direct imperatives from earlier sources.

Nonetheless, there are amazing, and at times puzzling, additions to the text, which can only be described as an original contribution from the mind of the author. This “creativity” begins with the very first lines of the maggid

section inviting all to join the seder, written in vernacular Aramaic instead of Hebrew, for which there is no prior source. It continues through the memorable parable of the four sons, the immortal song “Dayeinu,” and includes dozens of other additions.

Rest assured, our sages in every generation have extolled the brilliance of the Haggadah — indeed, more commentaries have been written on it than any other text in Jewish literature. Furthermore, those in the generations closest to its time of writing assumed that it would never have gained widespread acceptance in its time had its author not been someone of immaculate standing.

But there is something perfectly fitting about the anonymity of the Haggadah’s author. Perhaps the most ingenious feat of this text is its ability to balance the past with the future. It adheres to the necessary legal structure required for a “kosher” seder, while simultaneously presenting new and exciting interpretations to the story. And most importantly, it offers every family in history who has ever used a Haggadah with the ability to “stick to the script,” while providing endless opportunities to digress, meander onto tangents, and make applications to modern circumstances. In short, the author of the Haggadah has allowed us to partake in its ongoing authorship.

Precisely because we do not know who wrote the Haggadah, we are invited to enter the role as its co-authors. In doing so, we perpetuate an accurate sense of what Jewish mesorah, or “tradition,” actually means: not merely a recitation of what was, but a transmission of the spirit of our history into the future. While remaining true to the framework of the evening, we are not just given permission to engage in the conversation — it is demanded of us.



For the Children

LEADING WITH CURIOSITY

“Let there be no old folks in your house to give you wise counsel, and no young people to heed their advice.” — Abkhasian curse

21st century Western society stands at a crossroads with regards to deciding how to “empower” its youth. At the beginning of the 20th century they were often treated as exploited expendables with no rights, a form of cheap labour in the best of circumstances. Thankfully the post-WWII human rights movement saw to it that our most cherished and vulnerable members of society were given a voice and protection under the law. But by the 1990s we had gone to the other extreme, over-protecting our children from any hardship and afraid that too much discipline may cause them not to “like us.”

We have been bearing the fruits of those actions in the last decade, with the rise of safe spaces, trigger warnings, and student-led campus mobs determining university policies. Perhaps now more than ever, it is the young who feel they deserve to lecture the old, sometimes even correctly, on historical injustices carried out by previous generations. But this empowerment has its dark side. Youth may carry with it the polish of passion and idealism, but it lacks the meat and potatoes of wisdom and experience. We now turn to a 17-year-old well-intentioned girl for our cues on the technical details of the phenomenally complex field of environmental science.

Reason may dictate that we should not hand the reigns over so quickly to our youth. Any parent giving the car keys to their 17-year-old for the first time knows that. And yet, the prior model of “do not speak unless spoken to” seems to be a bad dream of a bygone era. What could serve as a model for healthy empowerment that would give younger people a sense of their own potential while grounding them in the humility of their obvious lack of experience? The answer, of course, is the Pesach seder.

The seder experience is unquestionably presided over by the elders of the family. They tell the stories and orchestrate the careful dance of removing seder plates and apportioning out bitter herbs. But if you look carefully, the night is led by the children. It is the children who set the pace and tone of the evening with their questions. It is their attention that we are ultimately trying to captivate. This dynamic is the paradigm of validating the dignity of the child without having to upend the rightful pecking order of the adults.

If we allow children to lead with their questions, then we implicitly send two messages: first, that their curiosities are important, that their quest for knowledge is worthwhile. And second, that in order to get answers they should ask the wiser and more experienced people in the room. There is no need to pretend that children have all the answers, and children naturally want someone to look up to. But they also want to feel like someone is paying attention.

The 16th century scholar known as the Maharal of Prague asked, why do we call the wise son “wise”? Surely wisdom is something that can only be acquired through life experience, so how is it possible for any child to be wise? He answers that by the nature of the child’s question, we can tell that one day he will *become* wise. The wise son does not merely ask what is obvious to ask, like the simple son who questions only the strange customs being performed in front of him. Rather, his questions touch on the abstract nature of all the commandments. From such a healthy desire to seek knowledge, he is guaranteed to achieve wisdom.

Our children do not need, nor are expected, to have the answers. We must give them the dignity of leading with questions. Let us hope we can respond wisely.



Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah

LEADING WITH FLEXIBILITY

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah's cameo appearance is one of the more perplexing entries into the Haggadah patchwork. Originally appearing in the Babylonian Talmud, this discussion about whether the Exodus should be mentioned at night seems to have no connection at all to Pesach. Obviously, on the night of the seder we are obligated to speak about the Exodus; the dispute mentioned here is referring to whether we must also recount the Exodus every other night of the year. So why bring it in the Haggadah?

Even more puzzling is that Rabbi Elazar's praise for Ben Zoma's Biblical insight is for naught. In Talmudic procedure, we always follow the majority, which means that legally we do not even rule according to Ben Zoma's insight. Not only is it irrelevant to the seder, it's also incorrect. What on earth is it doing here?

The solution to this riddle may be hidden within the story of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah himself. At the tender age of 17, he was already recognised as one of the leading scholars of the Jewish people. Amidst a crisis of leadership he was appointed as the successor to Rabban Gamliel to be the head of the Jewish high court. Although his lineage bolstered his prestige (he was a direct descendent of Ezra the Scribe), his youth and inexperience cast significant doubt on his leadership abilities. However, upon accepting the position his beard miraculously turned grey so that he would be regarded as someone befitting his knowledge and position.

Rabbi Elazar's leadership style was one of respectful progressivism. As a scholar and member of a distinguished family he admired the greatness of past leaders. But his youth allowed him the innovation and flexibility to

embrace new ideas. Under his direction, rather than confine legal proceedings only to the small group of rabbinic experts, he literally flung open the doors of the study hall, and judged everyone's opinion based on the merit of their arguments.

Hence Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah describes himself as "like a man of 70," venerated in wisdom and tradition. Nevertheless he possessed the open-mindedness to give credence to the lone opinion of Ben Zoma, who urged his contemporaries to fill their mouths with stories of the Exodus both day and night.

Ostensibly Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah's statement in support of Ben Zoma's opinion has been brought to emphasise the importance of speaking about the Exodus from Egypt. As in the previous paragraph of the four rabbis sitting in B'nei Barak, the affection for this origin story should grip us so fully that we no longer aware of the difference between night and day.

But with the additional context of Rabbi Elazar's history we can also perceive subtle points being drawn from this paragraph. It is teaching us that in the course of the quest for truth, even a minority opinion can illuminate a new perspective. Even an "elder" can defer to such an opinion. And in the dialogue of minds that we recreate with every Seder, if we exclude even one voice from the conversation, then we may perhaps have missed a gem.



World history is a rollercoaster of ups and downs and Jewish history is no different. The Haggadah does not begin with the exodus but rather traces us back to where it all began. Context is key, and anyone who has been involved in Jewish study will have heard of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, our founding fathers and mothers. Life was not easy for them by any means. They broke new ground, they challenged everything they knew and everyone around them.

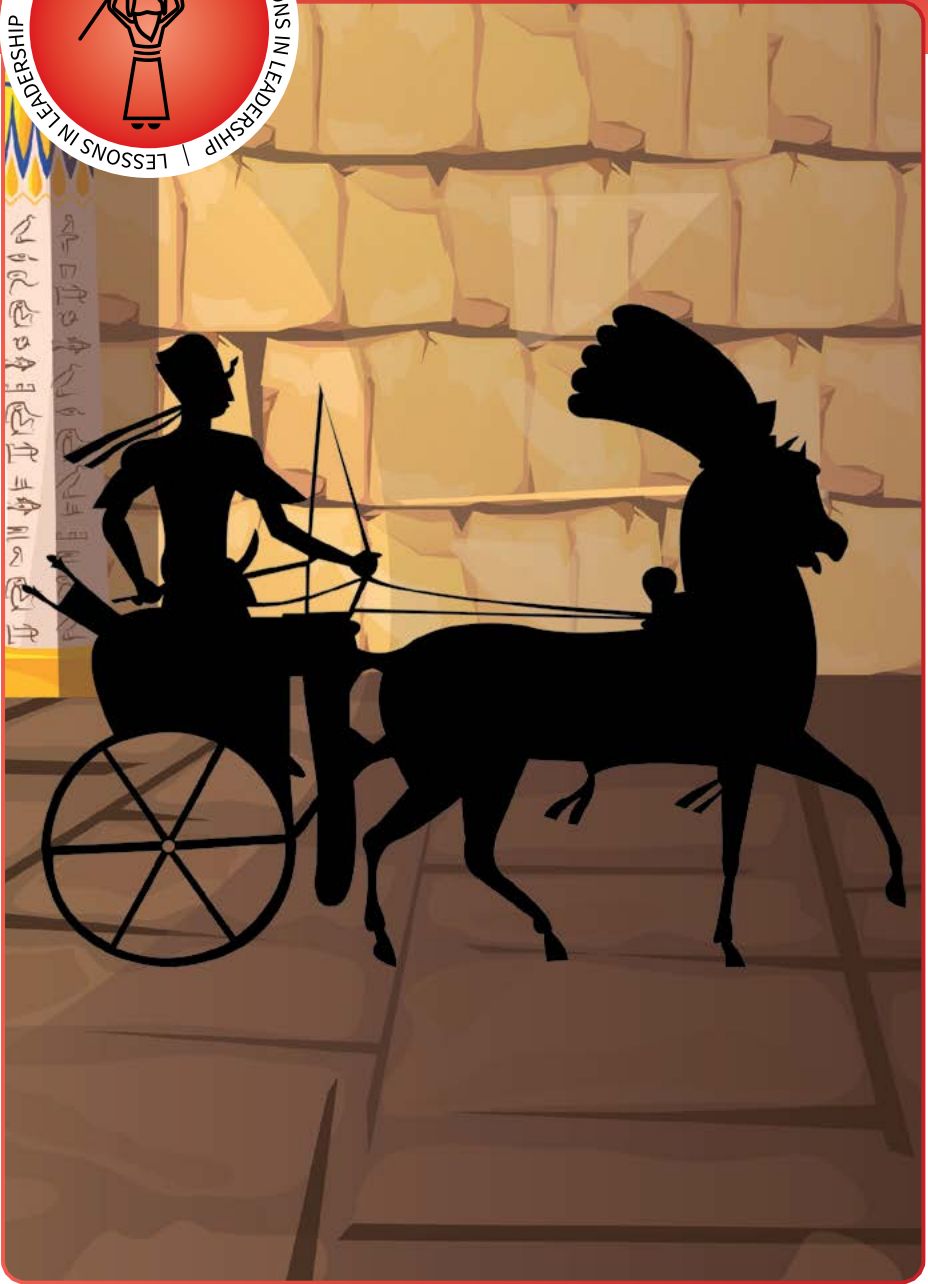
Focussing in on Jacob, the final of the three Patriarchs, we find that he had a lifetime of struggles.

Jacob dreamt of a ladder connecting heaven and earth with angels passing between these two worlds. The occurrence of this rather unusual dream was after he had left home and was on the way to live with the treacherous Laban. Many things have been written about what this dream can teach us, but a consistent

theme is the joining of our world with what the heavens represent. Jewish texts have always emphasised the value in living 'before God' in every part of our lives. As Jacob was going to live alongside his idolatrous relatives and busy himself shepherding, this dream was directing him to take God, spirituality and Torah values with him. Godliness can be present in everything, and core to our mission is elevating all aspects of our lives.

Jacob was given an additional name – Yisrael/ Israel, representing his triumphant battles with negative forces present in the world. Our world is by its very nature a fractured and imperfect place, but that is exactly how God chose for it to be. We are 'Bnei Yisrael', the children of this quality of 'Israel', grappling with our challenges, just like Jacob did, and seeing the Divine significance in all that we do and are.

What challenges have you had to face in your life, and did you change because of them?



Pharaoh

LEADING WITH IRONY

Jewish history is replete with irony. One of these ironies is that the truest enemies of the Jewish people were among the greatest teachers of the keys to our people's survival. Haman of the Purim story taught that when a poisonous indiscriminate hatred of one group of people can lead one to plot and carry out the complete annihilation of that group, we will have glimpsed that if this hatred were replaced with passionate indiscriminate love for others, 'oh what a world it would be!'

Another enemy of the Jewish people was Bala'am the prophet. Bala'am set out to curse the Jewish people, but instead of curses, he expressed words of blessing. What is incredible about the Bala'am narrative is that what unfolds in the episode is only known to us, the readers of the story in the Torah. The episode was not reported to the Jewish people until after it occurred. The Israelites were completely unaware that God was intervening and befuddling Bala'am's genocidal plan.

Bala'am praised the Jewish people's humility, modesty, and other wonderful traits. Internally, the Jews often saw themselves as weak, incapable, and promoted a lackluster spirit filled with complaints and frustration, yet here was Bala'am reminding the Jewish people of their greatness and of their special qualities. Perhaps it is not coincidental that our sages identify Bala'am as one of Pharaoh's key advisors - one who argued most strongly for a coordinated campaign of mass enslavement against the Israelites.

Pharaoh too played a role in teaching the Jewish people about our unique traits. He criticized and rebuked the Jewish people for being stubborn and refusing to adhere to his decrees whose purpose was to control the rapidly growing Jewish population in Egypt.

The trait of stubbornness or the better known title of the Jewish people being a "stiff-necked people" has proven to be a core factor in Jewish survival and refusal to give in, give up, and lose hope.

Pharaoh also enabled the Jewish people to gain experience for the future exiles of how to maintain our national identity as a minority population in a foreign land. The pressures, seduction, and schemes Pharaoh and his citizens instituted to draw the Jewish people toward assimilation and integration into Egyptian society largely failed and the Jewish people adhered to their faith, heritage, and identity. For the rest of history, we have been able to thrive and maintain our values and worldview no matter the context.

At the Seder we speak about the empires and dictators of each period in our people's history who threatened to annihilate and assimilate us, but with God's assistance we continued to survive and in many cases thrive. Our enemies have ironically taught us numerous lessons and reminders about our most salient traits as a people, those aspects of the Jewish people which have illuminated the world for thousands of years!

What aspect of the Jewish people do you appreciate and identify with the most?



Moses

LEADING WITH HUMILITY

The Dayeinu text is though provoking and powerful. We are asked to recognise and appreciate the good fortune in each step of the journey from Egypt to Israel. This recognition is directed towards God and despite Moses being present significantly in the Torah, in the Haggadah he is basically absent. Given his almost total centrality to the exodus story, this is somewhat surprising. Where did Moses go?!

Moses knew about his abilities and unique connection to God but he didn't become arrogant. He was not self-righteous. Humility in the eyes of the Torah does not mean the denial of who we are or what our strengths may be, but rather the recognition that those gifts come from God. On that basis no one is any more special than anyone else. Moses was not better than everyone just because he had profound prophecy and spirituality.

Moses was hesitant to lead as he wanted to ensure he was the best option for the Jewish people. The sages point out that his

conversation with God at the burning bush dragged on for an entire week - so hesitant was he to accept the mantle of leadership! He always made space for others and for God. Indeed, on one of the few occasions his leadership was challenged, his response was typical: 'If only the entire nation were prophets [like me]!'

The Haggadah is a night to experience the forging of the Jewish people, each of us as individuals and together as a nation. Other occasions will require highlighting special personalities, but at our core, the Jewish people has a direct covenant with God and this is our focus on seder night. This incredible connection with the Creator, this gift we have, can only be properly recognised and understood when we take a step back from our busy lives and reflect and dwell upon it. Humility is an essential step to creating the space to bring God into our lives.

What do you think Moses would say about his absence from the Haggadah?

Points to ponder:

- Moses argued with God about his suitability for the role as leader.
- Moses is referred to in the Torah as the most humble of men.



Miriam

LEADING WITH FAITH

After recounting the bulk of the Exodus experience, we turn to song. The Hallel prayer is a fixture of Jewish festivals and it represents our wonder and excitement for what God has done for us. It is often said that music is the voice of the soul, and here too on Seder night we break forth into song to help express the re-enactment of this incredible and wondrous event.

The Torah tells us that the Jews sang at the shores of the Red sea, as they finally felt free from their Egyptian oppressors. We are told that the women initiated this, led by Miriam. Not only did they use their voices, but they had

been mindful and hopeful enough to bring with them musical instruments as they *expected* to reach this point of redemption and joy.

Miriam casts an interesting figure throughout the Exodus story. She insists her parents continue to have children, despite the decree from Pharaoh to kill all Jewish new-born males. From this courageous insistence, Moses is born. She boldly approaches Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, to ensure Moses is raised properly. As noted above she was clearly a leader amongst the Jewish people and in her merit the Jews had a constant supply of water in the desert.

Points for the table to ponder:

- What were the Jews thinking and feeling when they crossed the Red sea and saw the Egyptians drown?
- Is there a time when it's appropriate to take things for granted?
- When we stop daily to appreciate all the good that we have, however small, we start to look at the world differently. We see joy and happiness as opposed to sorrow and discontent.
- If we choose to be grateful to others for what they do, even if it is part of their job, we both strengthen our relationships and find them more enjoyable.

We start off as babies seeing the world revolving purely around ourselves. As we grow up it can sometimes be difficult to admit the roles that others play for us, and even harder to say thank you. Often, we don't like to feel dependent on others or vulnerable to having needs. This can cause us to de-emphasise recognising small acts of goodness.

Jewish texts discuss the fundamental significance of being grateful for everything we have. Living with this mindset, as opposed to just paying lip service to it, has the capacity to change us as people. If we can shift perspective, drop any sense of entitlement or taking things

for granted, we open up a whole world of opportunity to feel great and blessed about every little thing that comes our way.

It is understandable to see vulnerability or reliance on others as a weakness, but this feeling can be harnessed to help us grow. When we accept and embrace our deficiencies, we actually increase our potential to thrive as we recognise how much we gain when we partner with others, and with God. From this vantage point we are then able to embrace God in a deep and powerful way as the source of all that goodness in the world.



Rachel

LEADING WITH HOPE

Rachel is known in the mystical sources as the 'mother of Israel'. This notion draws on the tradition based on a prophecy in the book of Jeremiah describing the eternal cry of Rachel the wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel's cry is over her "sons", a metaphor for the entirety of the Jewish people who were sent into multiple exiles out of the Land of Israel. Rachel's cry is a prayer and hope that all of her children will return to their "borders", the home of the Jewish people. Until that day comes and her hopes are realised, Jeremiah explained, she refuses to be comforted.

The backstory to this prayer of Rachel traces the narrative of Jacob's return from his stay with Laban, the father of Rachel and Leah, his two wives. Rachel faced infertility for years before Joseph was born, in contrast to her sister Leah who was the mother of six out of the twelve sons of Jacob. Finally, Rachel gave birth to her second son Benjamin, but tragically passed away in childbirth. As fate would have it, Rachel was not buried in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, but in a gravesite of her own near the city of Bethlehem. Today, Rachel's burial place is known simply as 'Rachel's Tomb' and

thousands of people flock to this site every year to pray and connect.

The prophecy of Jeremiah is unique for another reason and herein lies the powerful message of the night of Pesach. Jeremiah would become known as the "prophet of doom". He was a prophet during the years leading up to the destruction of the first Temple and the subsequent Babylonian exile. Yet, hidden within the gloomy chapters of Jeremiah's prophecies, the passage containing Rachel's eternal cry of hope and optimism heralds a message of redemption despite the darkness of exile.

The Pesach experience requires us to rewind the clock of history to the darkest moments of our collective memory. How did our ancestors hang on and find the strength to have hope when all else seemed lost? Rachel is the paradigm of Jewish history for never giving up on the children of Israel and their final redemption. Pesach beckons us to embrace optimism even when the current realities couldn't be further away.

How do you stay positive and hopeful in the face of uncertainty and instability?



Amram & Yocheved

LEADING WITH EMPOWERMENT

Amram and Yocheved were the parents of three incredible Jewish leaders: Miriam, Aaron, and Moses. Despite winning the 'child' lottery, they did not enjoy a rosy family life. By all accounts, Yocheved gave birth to the children at an advanced age, Amram balanced a life of public service, and to boot the harsh enslavement of the Jewish people had only just begun. In the aftermath of Pharaoh's decree to slaughter the Jewish first born males, Amram and Yocheved decided not to bring any more children into the world. Despite the implications of the decision, the fear was real, and perhaps more than anything, Amram and Yocheved were trying to be the best parents they could be to Miriam and Aaron by shielding them from the pains and difficulties of the time.

As with Amram and Yocheved, there was no guidebook for successful parenting in the midst of an oppressive enslavement. Yet, we see how each of their children flourished and accomplished incredible achievements in their lives. One characteristic that links all three of their children is the trait of caring for others. Miriam from the youngest age ran after the basket of her baby brother to keep a close eye on where he would end up. This concern would not end there, as we see her play a role in assisting other Jewish women through the process of delivering babies under stressful

and dangerous circumstances. Aaron served as the kohen gadol, the head priest who wore a breastplate bearing the symbols of the unified twelve tribes of Israel, a sign that the nation's hopes and desires were on his mind and heart at all times. And finally Moses - the paradigm of concern for the safety and security of others: striking the Egyptian who had been beating a Jewish slave, dispersing the crowds harassing Tzipora at the well in Midian, and standing up to Pharaoh to pave the path of rescuing the Jewish people from Egypt.

Yocheved and Amram did a great job as parents, but there is something more for us to gain from this narrative. What makes the parent-child relationship paradigm of Amram and Yocheved and their three children unique is that it incorporated more than just a top-down model of parenting. There were open lines of communication where humility ruled the conversation and children respectfully challenging their parents' position or actions was welcome. One moment in particular was when Miriam challenged her father's decision to separate from Yocheved and not bring any more children into a cruel world. On an objective level, Amram was right, but he was open to listening to his child. As a result, what happened next put the wheels in motion to enter the next state of Jewish history.



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(Spin the Seder 1)

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(Spin the Seder 2)

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(Spin the Seder 5)

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(Spin the Seder 6)

SEDER GAMES & ACTIVITIES!



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(Spin the Seder 7)

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(Spin the Seder 8)

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(Spin the Seder 8)

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(Spin the Seder 8)



THE OBJECT GAME

(Kadesh)

Wine can be used to degrade or elevate. As Jews, our job is to engage with physicality, while imbuing it with holiness.

How to Play:

- Each person around the table picks a random object from the house e.g. a box of tissues
- Choose which person's object to start with.
- The person to their left has to suggest how it could be used in a positive way.
- The next person to their left has to suggest how it can be used in a negative way.
- Keep on switching (positive / negative) until the ideas run out or everyone has had a go.
- Now pick the next object and repeat.

Examples:

- **A KNIFE** – to cut and prepare food for others / to inflict pain.
- **A BOX OF TISSUES** – to stop a bleeding finger / to stuff in someone's mouth to shut them up.

'Any tool can be used for good or bad. It's really the ethics of the artist using it'

– John Knoll

SEDER CHARADES

(Maggid)

How to Play:

- Ask participants to mime a scene from the seder (e.g. putting blood on door posts)
- Other participants have fun guessing what scenes are being acted out.





CUSTOMER SERVICES: HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

(Maggid)

How to Play:

- One person picks up an imaginary phone (spoon) and states: 'Customer Services – how can I help you?'
- Another participant has to imagine himself in a certain Pesach themed problem scenario, requesting help.
- The Customer Service rep has to guess what the problem is.
- The Client should be elusive.

Examples:

e.g. Splitting of the Red Sea

CUST SERVICE REP: *Customer Services, How can I help you?*

CLIENT: *There must be a leak, I'm all wet.*

CUST SERVICE REP: *Where do you think the leak is coming from?*

CLIENT: *I don't know, it's everywhere! There's water all around me!*

CUST SERVICE REP: *How deep is it?*

CLIENT: *It's up to my nose, I don't think I can take any more of this... Oh, wait, one minute! It's all gone!*



e.g. The plague of blood:

CUST SERVICE REP: *Customer Services, How can I help you?*

CLIENT: *I want my money back*

CUST SERVICE REP: *Er, for what, sir?*

CLIENT: *My washing machine, obviously. It's not working.*

CUST SERVICE REP: *What seems to be the problem?*

CLIENT: *My clothes are coming out dirtier than when I put them in.*

CUST SERVICE REP: *What do they look like after the wash?*

CLIENT: *Red, all red!*



JUST A MINUTE... OF THANKS!

(Dayeinu)

Instead of thanking God for the whole 'shebang'; we break down all that He has done for us and show gratitude for each and every step.

How to Play:

- Choose a participant to list as many things that they are grateful for. But...
- **NO DEVIATIONS, REPETITIONS OR HESITATIONS ALLOWED.**
- Another participant counts how many they managed to list in one minute.
- The next participant is challenged to beat their score.



THANK YOU/ GRACIAS/תודה

(Lefikach - Hallel)

This paragraph of 'lefikach' includes many words of thanks and praise.

Hebrew is replete with different words to describe the wonderful things in the world.

How to Play:

- Each person is challenged to find a different way to express their thanks.
- Think out of the box how you could do this: try and use different English synonyms in English for 'thanks', but also try to include different languages, acting or mime.





ANAGRAMS

(Shulchan
Orech)

Have some
fun whilst
the meal is
served and
eaten.

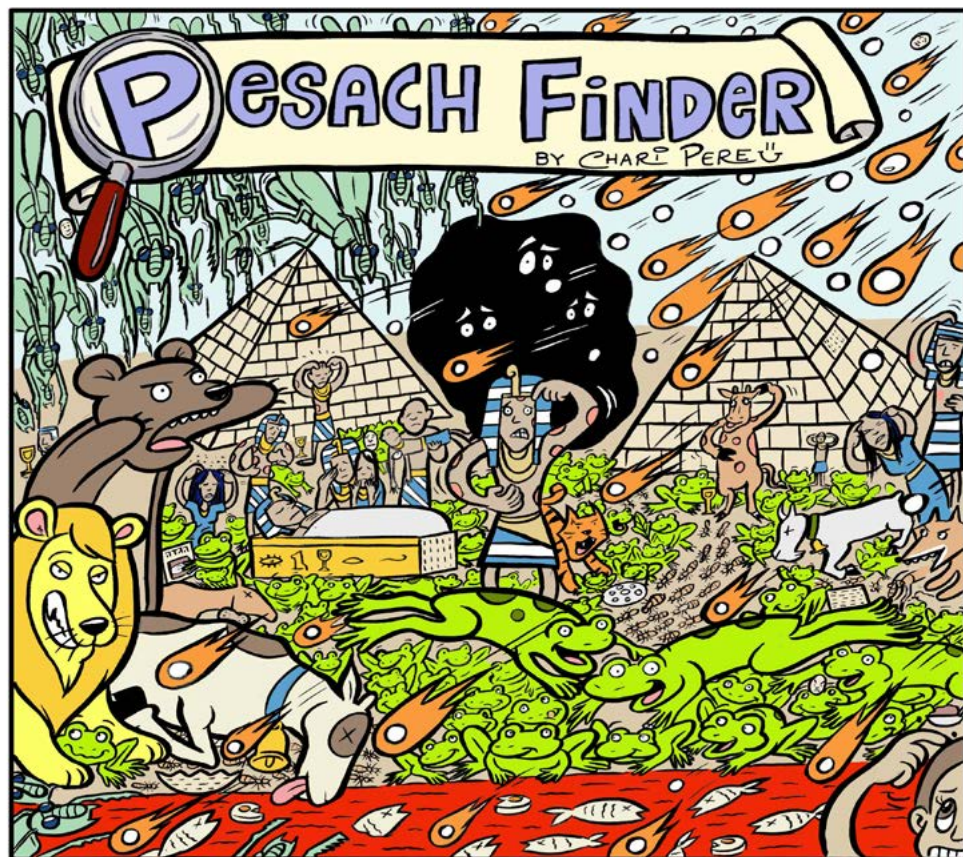
Answers:

1. Seder Plate.
2. Red Wine.
3. Ten Plagues.
4. Seder Night.
5. Charoset.
6. Let My People Go.
7. Eliyahu Hanavi.
8. Four Questions.
9. Paschal Lamb.
10. Pestilence.

CAN YOU UNSCRAMBLE THESE PESACH-RELATED WORDS AND PHRASES?:

1. **LEADER STEP**
2. **NEW RIDE**
3. **PEANUT LEGS**
4. **GREED THINS**
5. **RACE SHOT**
6. **PEEL TEMPLE GOO**
7. **ALIYAH NAIVE UH**
8. **FOUR QUIET SONS**
9. **A BALL CHAMPS**
10. **ECLIPSE NET**

PESACH FINDER



CAN YOU FIND THE FOLLOWING SEDER ELEMENTS AMONG THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT?

- | | |
|---|--|
|  4 CUPS OF WINE |  1 KARPAS |
|  3 MATZAHS |  1 BOWL OF CHAROSET |
|  1 AFIKOMAN |  1 MARROR |
|  1 HAGGADAH |  1 SEDER PLATE |
|  1 EGG |  4 SONS |

HAPPY PESACH

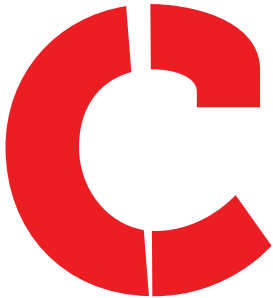


DINGBATS

(Shulchan Orech)

SAY WHAT YOU SEE TO DISCOVER THE WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PESACH STORY, SEDER NIGHT OR THE HAGGADAH:

1.



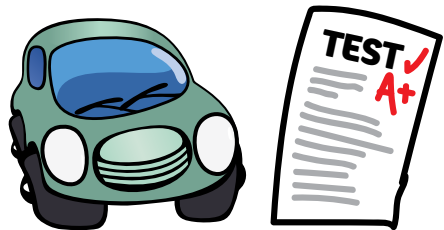
2.

PASS
LAMB

3.

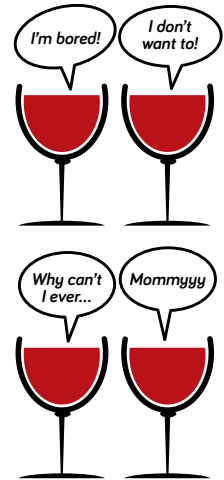
BORN ←
BORN
BORN
BORN

4.



5. **BUBONIC,**
SEPTICAEMIC,
PNEUMONIC,
ASYMPTOMATIC,
ABORTIVE,
CELLULOCUTANEOUS,
MENINGEAL,
LYMPHADENITIS,
THROMBOCYTOPENIA,
PLEOCYTOSIS

6.



7.



8.

WAIT!
SIT!
LISTEN!
GO! **JUMP!**
STAND!
LOOK! **FETCH!**
QUIET! **STOP!**

חג שמח



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