

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

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WHAT'S THE STORY  
BEHIND ALL THOSE  
POEMS AT THE END OF  
THE HAGGADAH?  
WHO WROTE THEM?  
WHY DO WE SAY THEM?

The word Haggadah comes from the Torah command - "And you shall tell (*v'Higadeta*) your children on that day..." Although the minimal fulfillment of this mitzvah is a simple recounting of the going out of Egypt and explaining a few of the Pesach symbols, proper fulfillment requires much more.

Over the centuries additions have been made to the Haggadah to enhance this mitzvah. Many of these additions gained such wide acceptance that they became part of the Haggadah. One of those additions is the *Chad Gadya*. Another is '*Dayeinu*.' Rav Saadia Gaon (882 CE - 942 CE) included neither in his Haggadah, although he did recognize the existence of *Dayeinu*. Neither Rashi (1040 - 1105) nor Maimonides (1135 - 1204) included *Chad Gadya* in their versions of the Haggadah, although Rashi did include *Dayeinu*.

In the *Machzor Vitri*, Rav Simcha of Vitri, an important disciple of Rashi, includes sections which we don't say today. Although Rashi himself did not say them, they were said in Provence (Southern France) in his day.

The metamorphosis of the Haggadah concluded in the late middle ages, aided by the invention of the Printing Press, which enabled the basic Ashkenazic version which had

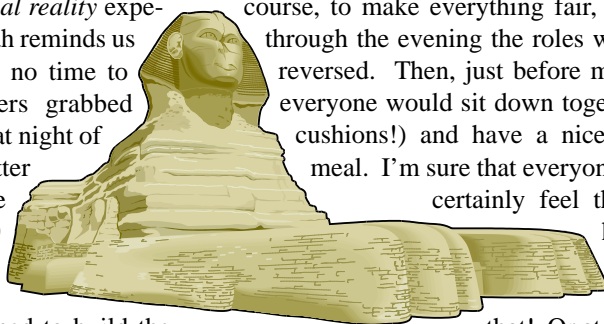
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## HIDDEN PERSUASION

"In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he were leaving Egypt, as it says 'And you shall tell to your son on that day'." ♦ Pesach Haggadah

### PHARAOH'S REVENGE...

The Seder is a *virtual reality* experience: The matzah reminds us of the bread that had no time to rise as our forefathers grabbed their belongings on that night of the Exodus. The bitter herbs remind us of the bitterness of the 210 years of slavery; the *charoses* resembles the mortar that was used to build the treasure cities of Pison and Ramses. But when all is said and done, and we rise from the table, **do we really feel that we have actually left Egypt?** Or do we feel our stomachs turning over from what might be called '*Pharaoh's revenge*' - four large glasses of wine and copious amounts of matzah, not to mention boiled egg with salt water followed by the main course of the Pesach meal!

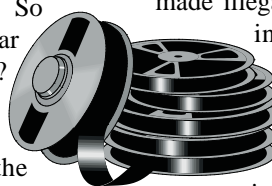


taskmasters, could come along and beat the living-daylights out of them! Of course, to make everything fair, halfway through the evening the roles would be reversed. Then, just before midnight, everyone would sit down together (on cushions!) and have a nice Pesach meal. I'm sure that everyone would certainly feel that they had 'left Egypt' after that! Or at the very least, couldn't we run a computer game called something like *VIRTUAL EGYPT*? The most sophisticated 3-D graphics would then transport us back to the Exodus.

And yet, the Torah, which sees to the very depths of the psyche, mandates very subtle observances to create the virtual reality of coming out of Egypt. It's a puzzle...

### READY WHEN YOU ARE MR. DE MILLE!

The Torah wants us to actually *experience* coming out of Egypt. So why don't we do something far more dramatic at the Seder? For example: Half the guests at the Seder could dress as Jewish slaves and start the evening by building a large wall with bricks and mortar. Periodically, the other half of the guests, dressed as Egyptian



### THE HIDDEN PERSUADERS

In the 1960s a new form of advertising was discovered and almost immediately made illegal. Madison Avenue advertising firms discovered that an image of their product on a single frame in a movie playing at 24 frames per second left a 'subliminal' message imprinted in the mind of the viewer. A message of which he was totally unaware. Because of its extremely sub-

*continued on back page*

## IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH?

<sdhds@sierra.net> (Nomi Levy) wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hi! We are some students from the San Diego Hebrew Day School. We are currently researching some things for a Haggadah we are working on in school, we have some questions and would like you to answer them for us.

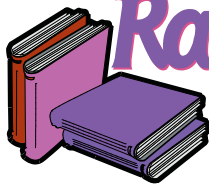
In the Dayenu it states:

1. Had He split the sea for us, and not carried us through it in dryness, it would have been enough.
2. Had He carried us through it in dryness, and not drowned our opponents in it, it would have been enough.
3. Had He drowned our opponents in it, and not provided our needs in the desert for 40 years, it would

have been enough.

Yet it wouldn't have been enough because:

1. Not carrying us in dryness would have drowned us or slowed us.
2. Had He not drowned our opponents they would have killed us.
3. Had He not gratified our needs in the desert we would have not survived.



# Ask the Rabbi

Students of the San Diego Hebrew Day School.

## PESACH

Dear Students,

I hope I don't get in trouble for doing your homework for you, but here are some answers to the excellent questions you have posed.

Basically, Hashem has many ways of achieving any goal, and is not limited to any one specific course of action. For example:

1. Had the sea floor not been *totally* dry,

it would have been enough. We could have escaped from the Egyptians even if our shoes had gotten a bit muddy.

2. Had the Egyptians not drowned, it would have been enough. They could have (and should have!) run away in terror at the sight of the sea opening up for the Jewish People! Their 'courage' in pursuing the Jewish People to the ocean's core was actually the greatest of all miracles. It showed Hashem's mastery over nature's every nuance ... even over the hearts and minds of thousands of individual soldiers.

3. Had Hashem not supplied us with Manna from heaven and water from a rock, it would have been enough. We had cattle to supply us with milk and meat, and enough money to buy food and water from the communities bordering the desert. As it was, the Jewish People engaged in trade with the neighboring nations during the 40 years in the desert, buying food and clothing. Good luck on your project!

Sources:

- Kol Bo, Rashbam, Ramban, Shlah,
- Tractate Yoma 75b



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We can't include all questions submitted in the column,  
but we do try to respond to everyone personally.

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been endorsed by the Ari z"l to be accepted even in Sephardic communities. The text is based upon the Haggadah of Rav Amram Gaon, who headed the Babylonian Yeshiva of Sura between 856-876 CE. This text was endorsed by Rashi. Rav Amram's Haggadah concluded with the after blessing on the fourth cup of wine. It did not include 'Chasal Siddur Pesach'.

The Shiblei HaLeket (Rabbi Tzidkayah HaRofei, Italy; 1230-1300) writes: "We are accustomed to recite 'piyutim' (Poetic Prayers) which are arranged with words of praise and thanksgiving." Seven 'piyutim' are customarily added to the Haggadah of Rav Amram Gaon, to make up the present day Ashkenazic Haggadah. They are:

'Chasal Siddur Pesach K' Hilchaso' by Rav Yosef Tur-Elam I (died 1040 CE).

'Az Rov Nissim' by Yannai, 9th century teacher of Eliezer Hakalir. A later custom reported by Maharil adds the words: 'Vayehi B'Chatzi Halayla' before the words 'Az Rov Nissim.'

'Ometz Gevurasecha' by Eliezer Hakalir, 7th century. Maharil cites the custom here, too, to precede with the words: 'U'vechein V'Amartem Zevach Pesach'.

'Ki Lo Naeh, Ki Lo Yaeh - Adir B'Melucha', author unknown but cited by 'Eitz Chaim', Rabbi Yaakov bar Yehuda of London (circa. 1285 CE).

'Adir Hu Yivneh Beiso B'Karov', author unknown.

'Echad Mi Yodeiya?', author unknown.

'Chad Gadya', author unknown.

The earliest known inclusion of Chad Gadya is in Sefer Rokeach (1160-1238). Although we don't know who actually authored Chad Gadya, tradition teaches that it is a very significant work and has great depth of meaning in its symbolism. Literally hundreds of explanations have been written on it. The Chida (1734-1806) writes that the Vilna Gaon (1730-1798) alone wrote more than 10 different explanations!

*To our OHRNET readers  
Best Wishes from our entire staff to you and  
your family for a Chag Kasher V'Somayach!*

*Our next issue will be Parshas Tazria-Metzora.*

# K I D S T U F F

## N O ' K I D D I N G ' !

**T**he seder is over. You are about to settle back into your chair, when suddenly you are roused from your wine-induced reverie by everyone launching into the traditional rendering of *Chad Gadya*. “What are we doing singing nursery rhymes at a time like this?” — You think to yourself. “Here we all are energetically belting out a song that everyone sings, and no-one has the slightest idea of what it’s got to do with Pesach! Is *Chad Gadya* no more than what ‘I know an old lady who swallowed a fly’ would have sounded like if Burl Ives had been Jewish? Is it no more than a harmless ditty to amuse the children? Or does *Chad Gadya* have a secret meaning? A hidden depth of allusion beneath the surface...

Let’s look at the surface a second. *Chad Gadya* has ten stanzas. It goes like this:

**One kid.** One kid. That daddy bought for two zuzim.

One kid. One kid.

And came **the cat** and ate the kid that daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid.

And came **the dog** and bit the cat that ate the kid etc.

And came **the stick** and hit the dog etc.

And came **the fire** and burned the stick etc.

And came **the water** and doused the fire etc.

And came **the ox** and drank the water etc.

And came **the slaughterer** and killed the ox etc.

And came **the angel of death** and killed the slaughterer etc.

And came **The Holy One Blessed be He** and killed the angel of death that killed the slaughterer that killed the ox that drank the water that doused the fire that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid that daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid.

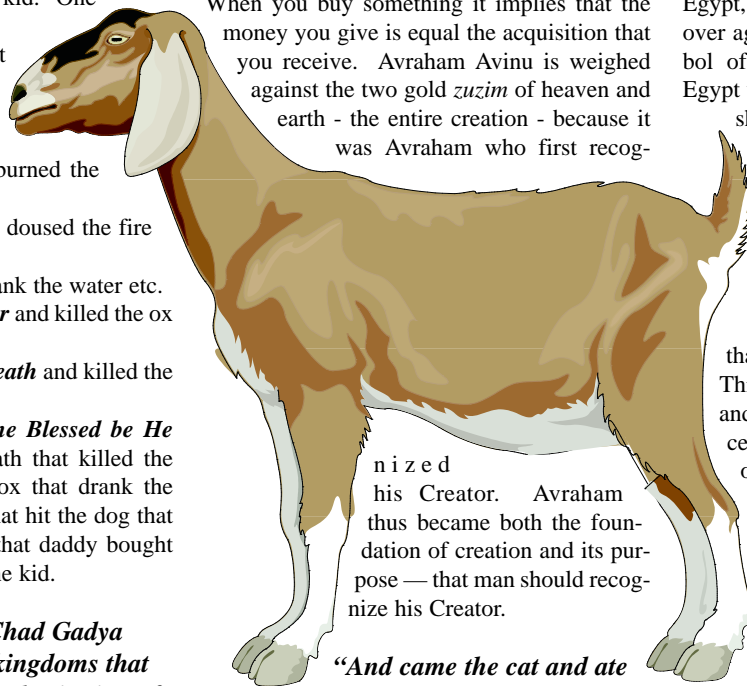
**The ten stanzas of Chad Gadya correspond to the ten kingdoms that will rule from before the beginning of time until the end of the world.**

They are:

- Hashem alone before the creation.
- The Babylon of Nimrod
- Egypt
- Yisrael until the destruction of the First Temple
- The Babylon of Nebuchadnezar
- Persia and Media
- Greece and Macedonia
- Rome
- Mashiach
- Hashem alone

**“One kid. One kid. That daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid”**

• Before the beginning of all things, Hashem reigned alone. His is the first Kingdom. Avraham Avinu is the *gadya* that ‘Daddy’ (Hashem) ‘bought’ for two *zuzim*. When you buy something it implies that the money you give is equal the acquisition that you receive. Avraham Avinu is weighed against the two gold *zuzim* of heaven and earth - the entire creation - because it was Avraham who first recog-



nized his Creator. Avraham thus became both the foundation of creation and its purpose — that man should recognize his Creator.

**“And came the cat and ate the kid that daddy bought for two zuzim.**

**One kid. One kid.”**

• Then came **the cat** - the *shunra*. The second kingdom is Babylon. Nimrod’s capital where he built the tower of Babylon was in the valley of ‘*shinar*’. The motivation for that tower came from a *sonah ra* - ‘an evil hater’- Nimrod who hated Hashem and his representative on this world Avraham Avinu. Nimrod came and ‘ate’ the *gadya* - Avraham Avinu. He threw him into the consuming fire of a fiery furnace. When Avraham miraculously emerged, he emerged as a new creation.

**“And came the dog and bit the cat that ate the kid etc.”**

• **“As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool to his folly.”** There can be no greater example of a fool returning to his folly than Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Despite all the plagues of Egypt, Pharaoh repeated his mistake over and over again. The *calba* - the dog - is the symbol of the third kingdom, the kingdom of Egypt which ‘bit’ the cat of Babylon. It overshadowed and outshone the kingdom of Babylon, even though there was never a direct military confrontation. Thus it only ‘bit’ but didn’t ‘eat’.

**“And came the stick and hit the dog etc.”**

• The stick is the staff of Hashem that Moshe used to ‘hit’ the Egyptians. This was the staff that turned into a snake and ate all the staffs of the Egyptian sorcerers. This was the staff that was raised over the Nile and turned it to blood and it was this staff that vanquished the might of Pharaoh. The staff symbolizes the fourth kingdom - the kingdom of Yisrael. Yisrael achieved tranquility with the building of the first *Beis Hamikdash*, when the staff - the scepter - of Yehuda held sway. Then came the fire...

**“And came the fire and burned the stick etc.”**

• When the Jewish People turned aside from the Torah and began to sin, a **fire** was dispatched out of Heaven. A lion of fire appeared to blaze through the *Paroches* - the curtain that divided the Holy from the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This lion of fire, in terrestrial form, took the shape of the Babylonian kingdom of Nebuchadnezar which ‘burned the staff’ of Yisrael. Nebuchadnezar became the instrument of Heavenly justice to punish The

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## SEDARIM TO EGYPT



## THE MISTS OF TIME

When we think about the vista of Jewish History it seems like an impossibly large canvas for us to relate to. It seems so remote. The events seem so distant from us. But we can relate to Jewish History in a way which makes it very real.

We can connect to our heritage without feeling that it's obscured by the mists of time.

# How? Watch!

Take the average Seder. At a typical seder there will be three generations at the table: A grandfather, a father, and a son.

Let's say that the average generation gap is 30 years. So a typical seder represents a span of 60 years of Jewish History.

But really if you think about it, there are

really not 3 generations at the table, but 7. Because the grandfather sitting at our table was possibly a grandson at his grandfather's seder.

And similarly, our grandson will probably be a grandfather at his grandson's seder.

*So our seder could contain in it as much as  $7 \times 30 = 210$  years!*

If you divide 210 years into the time elapsed since the first Seder (approx. 3300 years ago), you come out with the following calculation:

$$3,300 \div 210 \sim 14.$$

In other words, we just shrank the vast expanse of 3,300 years of history into just over 14 sedarim. That's all that separates us from the experience of leaving Egypt - as little as

# 14 sedarim!

**"And you shall tell your son on that day."**

The whole of Judaism is founded on 14 fathers **passing-over** the truth of the Exodus to 14 sons, witnessed by those 7 generations which each seder spans. Tradition is only 14 seders long.

• Written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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Jewish People. Nebuchadnezar razed Zion. The Temple was burned to the ground and Yisrael was lead into slavery. But fire can be doused by water...

**“And came the water and doused the fire etc.”**

• The sixth kingdom is that of Persia and Media, whose fortunes swelled like the waters of the sea, extinguishing the might of Babylon. “Their voices will roar like the sea.” Said the prophet Yirmiyahu, describing the torrent that was to be Media.

**“And came the ox and drank the water etc.”**

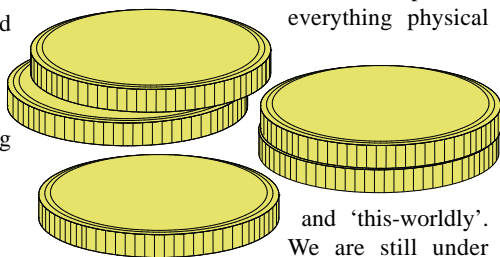
• Taurus the **bull** is the astrological force appointed by Hashem to steer the fortunes of Greece. In Jewish thought, Greece is associated with spiritual darkness - “And the earth was empty and void and **darkness** on the face of the deep.” (Bereishis 1:2) The Greeks tried to darken the eyes of the Jewish People, claiming that they had forfeited their unique connection to Hashem as a result of the incident of the golden **calf**. They said “Write upon the horn of a **bull** that you have no portion in the G-d of Israel. This **bull** of Macedonian Greece came and licked up the **water** that was Media.

**“And came the slaughterer and killed the ox etc.”**

• The **bull** of Macedonia met its demise at the hands of the **slaughterer** of Rome. No

other nation is stained so red with blood as Rome. Ruled by the warlike planet Mars, the kingdom of Romulus is the spiritual descendent of Esav, who was born covered in a mantle of red hair.

Rome stands for the power of the material world. He encapsulates everything physical



and ‘this-worldly’. We are still under the sway of Rome in the guise of its current cultural heirs.

**“And came the angel of death and killed the slaughterer etc.”**

• Immediately prior to the coming of Mashiach, there will be a tremendous confusion in the world. Everything will seem to have gone haywire. The natural order will be turned on its head: Age will bow to youth. Ugliness will be trumpeted as beauty, and what is beautiful will be disparaged as unattractive. Barbarism will be lauded as culture. And culture will be dismissed as worthless. The hunger of consumerism and the lust for material wealth will grow more and more, and it will find less and less to satisfy its voracity.

Eventually Esav/Rome/Materialism will grow so rapacious that it will become its own

**angel of death**. It will literally consume itself and regurgitate itself back out. But from this decay, the line of David will sprout, like a plant that springs forth from no more than dirt and earth. There will be three wars of confusion, and then the penultimate kingdom will rule — the kingdom of Mashiach.

**“And came The Holy One Blessed be He and killed the angel of death that killed the slaughterer that killed the ox that drank the water that doused the fire that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid that daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid.”**

• In the final chapter of world history, Hashem will remove the pall of spiritual poison from the world completely. He will take the ‘negative drive’ alias **the angel of death**, and slaughter it. Then Hashem will wipe the tear from every face, and He will return the Kingship to Himself. The circle will be complete. And then joy and simcha will reign as a mother rejoices over her children.

**Chad Gadya**. Just an innocuous nursery rhyme to send you off to sleep at the end of the Seder. Just a little nursery rhyme...which just happens to encapsulate **the whole panorama of world history from before the beginning of time...**

• Written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, based on *Ohr Yesharim* in the Haggadah ‘*Migdal Ader Hachadash*’

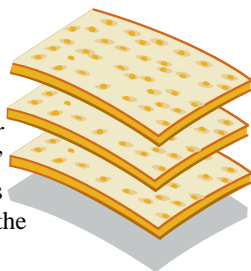
**Zevachim 79-85**

**THE HILLEL SANDWICH**

At the Pesach Seder we first eat *matzah* and *maror* (bitter herbs) separately and then we make a “sandwich” of the two which we eat after declaring that we do so as a way of recalling what the Sage Hillel used to do in the days of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

In Temple times the flesh of the *korban pesach* was consumed on the first night of Pesach along with *matzah* and *maror*, with all of these *mitzvos* being of Torah origin. Hillel’s opinion, which was disputed by his colleagues, was that the Torah instructed us to eat all three of these wrapped up together and that the conflicting tastes simultaneously experienced did not nullify each other since all were obligatory in the same degree.

After the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, however, we have no opportunity at all to eat the *korban pesach*, and the mitzvah of eating *maror* today is only of rabbinic nature. Should we start off eating *matzah* and *maror* as a sandwich we will not fulfill the Torah mitzvah of eating *matzah* even according to Hillel because its taste will be considered nullified by the *maror* which is only a rabbinic obligation. We therefore begin by eating them separately to assure proper fulfillment of the mitzvah of *matzah*, and only afterwards do we combine them to recall how Hillel did these *mitzvos* in Temple times when both were equal Torah obligations.



**SETTING A STANDARD**

**“And if you offer a blind animal as a sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer a lame or sick one, is that not evil? offer it to your governor - will he be pleased with you or will he show you favor?”**

This Divine rebuke delivered by the Prophet Malachi (1:8) is mentioned in our weekly section in regard to offering the innards of a sacrifice on the altar without first cleansing them from the wastes inside them. It is used in other places in the Talmud as well for setting a minimal standard of propriety in the

Divine service and is sometimes even extended to other areas of religious practice.

Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi Cycle.

The message is concise and clear - do not show less respect for the King of kings than you would for your own earthly ruler.

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# INSIGHTS INTO THE HAGGADAH

Contributed by members of the Ohr Somayach family

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*The essential goal of the Pesach Seder is to communicate the story of the going out of Egypt. The following is a compilation of insights on the Haggadah. We hope they will enrich your Pesach Seder.*

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## ♦ PESACH

The Torah calls Pesach “*Chag HaMatzos.*” But we call it “*Pesach.*” Why is this so? Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains as follows: The word *Matzos* and the word *Mitzvos* are spelled exactly the same in Hebrew. Thus “*Chag HaMatzos*” can be read “*Chag HaMitzvos,*” meaning that by leaving Egypt and receiving the Torah, the Jewish People now have the opportunity to earn **great reward** by doing the *Mitzvos*. *Pesach*, on the other hand, means Passover: Hashem “passed over” the houses of the *Bnei Yisrael*. By calling it *Pesach*, we emphasize the good that Hashem has done for us. Our Sages teach us not to serve Hashem with an eye to the reward; rather we should serve Him out of a sense of love and gratitude. By calling it **Pesach** we de-emphasize the reward that each *Mitzvah* brings, and instead focus on the good that Hashem has done for us.

• Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## ♦ KARPAS

The Talmud explains that by beginning the Seder meal in an unusual way, with a vegetable instead of with bread, the children will be curious and ask, “Why are we beginning the meal with a vegetable instead of bread?” Once their curiosity is aroused, they will be more attentive to the story of the Exodus. Why a vegetable? Just as a vegetable serves as an appetizer, so too the unusual things we do this evening are meant to whet the children’s curiosity.

• Rabbi Yehuda Albin

## ♦ THE FOUR QUESTIONS

According to the Abarbanel, the son is pointing out a contradiction: On the one hand, we recline like free people and dip our food like aristocrats. But, on the other hand, we eat “bread of affliction” and bitter herbs. Are we celebrating freedom here, or are we commemorating the slavery? The answer is **both!** “We *were* slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem, our G-d, took us out from there with a ‘strong hand’...” Tonight we experience the **transition** from slavery to freedom.

• Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb

## ♦ “AND IF THE HOLY ONE,

...Blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, we and our children and the children of our children would still be under the domination of Pharaoh in Egypt.”

“**K**iddush Hashem” — Sanctifying the Name of Heaven by giving up one’s life — is not a *Mitzvah* that every Jew has the opportunity to fulfill. And so it was that in Auschwitz a debate arose amongst the religious inmates: What is the correct form of the Bracha for this *Mitzvah*? “*Baruch Atah...L’kadesh Shmo B’rabim*” (*Blessed are You...Who has commanded us ‘to sanctify’ His Name in public*), or “*...Al Kiddush Shmo B’rabim*” (*...Who has commanded us ‘concerning the sanctification’ of His Name in public*). The Rabbi was asked, and he answered: For a *Mitzvah* that one can do on someone else’s behalf, one says “**Al**”. But for a *Mitzvah* that one can only do oneself, like putting on *Tefillin* one says “**L**” — “*L’haniach Tefillin.*” Since giving up one’s life is not something that one can do on someone else’s behalf, the correct form of the *Bracha* is “*L’Kadesh Shmo B’rabim.*” **When a person looks death in the face and is concerned as to the exactitude of the Bracha he will make as he exits this world — this is someone who can never be enslaved.** Once Hashem redeemed us from Egypt, our oppressors may dominate our bodies, but our souls can never again be enslaved.

• Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

## ♦ THE WICKED SON

What does he say? “What does this drudgery mean to you!” The wicked son’s question is a quote from the Torah: “When your children will **say** to you...what does this drudgery mean to you!” The key to his wickedness lies in the word “say.” He doesn’t ask a question at all; rather, he “**says.**” Therefore...*You should take the shine out of his teeth and say, “It’s for this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt.” “For me and not for him.”* The word “him” is in the third person. Since the wicked son’s question is rhetorical, it gets no direct response. To whom, then, is the father speaking? To the son who “doesn’t know how to ask a question.” He, like the wicked son, asks no questions. Therefore, he is in danger of developing into a “wicked son” himself. The father looks at this son and warns him, “**for me and not for him...** Don’t let his sarcastic smirk fool you ... Had he been in Egypt, he would have assimilated into Egyptian society, and would not have been redeemed.” • Rabbi Gavriel Rubin

## ♦ “AND THE ONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO ASK”

The Chida — Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai — in his commentary “*Simchat HaRegel*” on the Haggadah, explains that there are three ways one can fulfill the *Mitzvah* of the telling of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Ideally, the story should be told in the form of **question and answer**. The Talmud derives this from the Torah’s description of *Matzah* as “*Lechem Oni*” — the bread over which a person **answers**. The second level is to tell the story even if nobody asks. This is derived from the verse “and you shall **tell** your son on that day...” You should **tell** him, even if he doesn’t ask. Thus, the procedure of question and answer is **preferable**, but *not absolutely necessary*. (This is a rare example of *L’chatchila* and *B’dieved* in a Torah *Mitzvah*.) The third level is this: Even if a person is alone, he must speak about the going out of *Mitzrayim*. This is what Rabban Gamliel teaches when he says that one must “say” three particular statements as the bare minimum to fulfill the *Mitzvah*. Thus, there are three possible levels on which to perform the *Mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The Chida adds: When introducing the fourth son The Haggadah uses the word “**and**.” This teaches us that even if someone has other sons that fit into the first three categories, he should **also** pay attention to the one who does not know how to ask. This is an important lesson for those who are tempted to make the Haggadah an intellectual display which goes over the head of the youngest or least knowledgeable.

• Rabbi Ephraim Yawitz

## ♦ “AND IT IS THIS...”

...Which has stood for our fathers and for us; for in each and every generation they stand against us to destroy us, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu rescues us from their hand.”

Exactly what “**This**” refers to is not immediately clear. Is it the promise made to Abraham, mentioned previously? Or that “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* always rescues us from their hand?” Here is a third possibility — a unique insight into the phenomenon of anti-Semitism: **This**, that “in each and every

## ♦ HALLEL

*In our lowliness, he remembered us... and redeemed us from our oppressors. He gives food to all flesh... Praise G-d of the heavens!* These last four phrases of “*Hallel HaGadol*” can be seen as paralleling the four cups we drink tonight. Over the first cup we make *kiddush* and declare, “You chose us from all the nations.” Why did G-d choose us? The Sages explain that Hashem chose the Jewish people because of their humility. “**In our lowliness**” — in our humility, “**He remembered us**” and chose us. The second cup goes together with the Haggadah, where we tell how Hashem “**redeemed us from our oppressors.**” *Bircas Hamazon*, where we recognize that “**He gives food to all flesh**” is said over the third cup. And with the fourth cup we sing Hallel...“**Praise Hashem of the heavens!**”



• Rabbi Yehuda Samet

generation they stand against us to exterminate us” — **This** is what has stood for us. Hard as we may try to forget our Jewishness and adopt the ways of our host nation, sooner or later they rise against us, remind us of our uniqueness, and awaken our commitment to Judaism.

• Rabbi Shlomo Zweig, in the name of his father’s father

## ♦ “AND THEY EMBITTERED THEIR LIVES”

During a scholarly lecture, a simple person asked Rabbi Yonason Eybeschitz the following: The Torah says, “*and they embittered their lives,*” but the cantillation symbol that the cantor reads is a **happy** tune! The simplicity of his question amused the more erudite listeners. “Excellent Question!” said Rabbi Yonason. “Hashem told Abraham that his offspring would be in exile for 400 years. But in fact we were in Egypt for only 210 years. Why was this? Since the Egyptians “embittered their lives,” Hashem had pity on us and shortened the exile by 190 years — surely a cause for song! “By the way,” said Rabbi Yonason, to the astonishment of his listeners, “the cantillation symbol, ‘*Kadma V’Azla,*’ hints at this idea by its exact numerical value: 190.”

• Rabbi Yehoshua Karsh

## ♦ THE FESTIVE MEAL

One of the unique aspects of the Seder is that we interrupt the saying of the Hallel with a meal. Why is that? The *Netziv* explains as follows: The purpose of going out of Egypt was to receive the Torah. With the Torah we gain the ability to serve Hashem not only through “spiritual” means, such as Torah study and prayer, but through “physical” *Mitzvos* as well, such as marriage, enjoying Shabbos, eating *matzah*, *maror*, and the Pesach offering. We eat in the *middle* of Hallel in order to praise Hashem for sanctifying and elevating our physical existence. Even “mundane” things like eating are elevated when we do them in the service of Hashem.

• Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

tlety, the message managed to *sneak* under the defenses of the consumer and plant itself into his subconscious. And without knowing it, the next time he was shopping, for some unknown reason, he had this overpowering attraction to *Fidofeed* over his usual brand of dog food...

Subtlety can be a far more powerful hidden persuader than the overkill of knock-you-over-the-head pyrotechnics. *By means of the seemingly subtle experiences of the Seder, the subliminal spiritual message sneaks under the defenses of the coarser aspects of the physical make-up and lodges itself in the depths of our souls.*

*“The soul experiences reality on a very fine and non-material plane.”*

### READY, SET...

You often hear people complaining at the *Seder*: “*You mean we have to eat all of this matzah in under four minutes?!...*” “*If I have another glass of wine, I’m going to fall into the charoses!...*” “*You mean I have to eat all that matzah again just because I forgot to lean?!...*” “*Whaddya mean we have to finish the afikomen by midnight in exactly 45 seconds time?!...*” Why are we so particular to fulfill the physical dimension of the *Seder* to the letter? Would it really make so much difference if we had two grams less of matzah or if we ate the meal before the bitter herbs? After all, we’re still commemorating the Exodus, aren’t we?

### MACHINE CODE FOR THE SOUL

The answer is that the Pesach night experience is a *Seder*. *Seder* means order. A precise sequence of events. It’s like

machine code for a computer. The order of the code has to be precise to effect the subliminal spiritual experience of coming out of Egypt. Just as in computer machine code one zero too many or too little will make all the difference between the program running or crashing, so too the *Seder* operates within precise parameters. It’s a *Seder*. It has to be in this order. With a *zero* here. With a *one* here. And no other way.

So when you are singing *Chad Gadya* at the end of your *Seder*, and all you feel is that you would like a large glass of Alka-Seltzer, remember that whether you sense it or not, the *Seder* has put into your soul a spiritual program which will run every time you say in the Shema:

*“I am Hashem, your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d.”*

The Torah is able to penetrate to the very depths of the human psyche. It wants us to experience the Exodus as a spiritual rite of passage on the deepest level. The soul experiences reality on a very fine and non-material plane. Things that impress and affect the body are rejected by the soul as indigestible. Keeping to the very precise formulation of the *Seder* allows its subtle experiences to reach beyond the coarseness of the physical - to elevate and enlighten the soul.

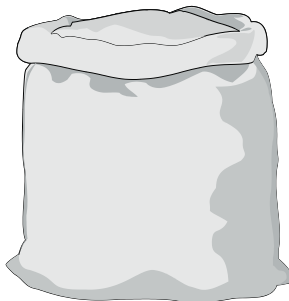
• *Written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair based on a lecture by Rabbi Zev Leff*

# Seeds of Eternity

Many people observe the Pesach Seder. This is so, regardless of their affiliation or observance of other *mitzvos*. Jews who build no *Sukkah*, who don’t know when Shavuot is, faithfully assemble year after year to tell about the going out of Egypt. Recounting the Exodus is a *mitzvah* deeply rooted in the consciousness of even the ‘least’ conscientious Jew. Why?

The answer lies in the very first Pesach seder in history.

After a full year in the desert, the Jewish People celebrated the Pesach festival. They offered the Pascal lamb and ate *matzah* and *maror*. But when it came time to tell the Pesach story, whom did they tell? To whom did they recount the acts, the wonders, the Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm? Everybody was there! Everyone saw it with their own eyes! Even babies in their mothers’ womb reached prophetic awareness during the splitting of the Red Sea!



Only one person — *Moshe Rabbeinu* — had children who did not personally experience the going out of Egypt. Moshe’s children, Gershom and Eliezer, were in Midian at the time of the Exodus. Moshe, therefore, was the first person in history to pass on the Pesach tradition to children who didn’t know about it first-hand. He was the first to plant the seed of redemption in the heart a new generation.

*Moshe Rabbeinu* excelled in the ability to imbue his actions with lasting significance. With his ‘golden touch,’ he impacted eternity with every undertaking. He led us out of Egypt, never again to become a slave nation. The Torah he taught us echoes across eons. And had Moshe been the one to lead us into the Land of Israel, we never would have been exiled from it.

Because *Moshe Rabbeinu* inaugurated ‘*Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*’ — the telling of the going out of Egypt — it remains a *mitzvah* forever rooted in the hearts of the entire Jewish People.

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