

הגדה של פסח
haggadah
THE KOL MENACHEM HAGGADAH

THE SLAGER EDITION

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Haggadah

THE KOL MENACHEM HAGGADAH

*With commentary and insights
anthologized from
Classic Rabbinic Texts and
the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

*Compiled and Adapted by
Rabbi Chaim Miller*

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with commentary from classic Rabbinic texts,
and the Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn.

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Dedication of the
KOL MENACHEM HAGGADAH

*The Kol Menachem Haggadah
is dedicated to
our dear friends*

DAVID & LARA SLAGER

and their children

Hannah and Sara Malka

NEW YORK / LONDON

*May the merit of
spreading words of Torah
illuminated by the teachings of Chasidus
to thousands across the globe
be a source of blessing
for them and their family
for generations to come.*





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Foreword

THE PASSOVER SEDER IS PROBABLY THE MOST universally observed of all Jewish practices, which has rendered its “script,” the Haggadah, a place in virtually every Jewish home. Often, the Seder is a deeply moving experience, even—or perhaps, especially—for Jews who seem to demonstrate little other affiliation to their faith. The informal home setting, the presence of family members spanning a number of generations, the sense of tradition and historical continuity that the Haggadah evokes, the striking qualities of the Passover customs and rituals, and the lively spirit (enhanced, no doubt, by four cups of wine), make the Seder an especially positive and vibrant experience. To this day I recall nervously reciting the Four Questions as a tiny child of two or three at our family Seder, the words of my late grandfather reciting the Haggadah still ringing in my ears: “*In each and every generation a person must see himself as if he had personally left Egypt...*”¹

Like much of Jewish tradition, the Haggadah text dates back to antiquity. While minor differences in liturgy have emerged over time, our Haggadah is virtually identical to the text used, for example, by Maimonides in the 12th century, and the core of the Haggadah is to be found in the *Mishnah*, compiled in the 2nd century CE.²

But the principle of recounting the chronicle of the Egyptian Exodus on the first night of Passover is as old as scripture itself. “*You shall tell it to your son on that day,*” states the Torah, “*saying, ‘It is because of this that God did for me when I left Egypt.’*”³ The Haggadah is simply a Rabbinical formula (the compiler of which is unknown), designed to ensure that we carry out that Biblical obligation correctly, by stressing the appropriate themes and relevant points. And, as anybody who has attended a Seder will testify, the

1. Below, p. 141.

2. For the historical development of the Haggadah see Rabbi M. M. Kasher, *Haggadah Sheleima* (Jerusalem 1967), pp. 17–9.

3. *Shemos* 13:8.

discussion is never limited to the printed text—“*Whoever discusses the Exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy.*”⁴

Leading a Seder can, at times, be quite a humbling experience. Besides the tension generated by the sheer length of the evening’s proceedings, and the presence of guests who might be hungry or somewhat disgruntled, the greatest challenge of the evening is the need to communicate. Not everybody is a naturally gifted storyteller, master of ceremonies, or teacher of children, but on this night, the head of every Jewish family is forced to take on all of these roles. The tools are at our hands: a rich and inspiring Haggadah text, the “hands-on” message of the Seder plate, and a host of Pesach rituals which arouse curiosity and invite commentary.

But what am I going to say? is the question on the lips of every Seder-leader. How will I capture the attention and the imagination of the guests, especially the children?⁵ What insights hold the key to bringing this experience alive, to making it personally relevant?

Faced with the challenge of “performing” for the evening and infusing meaning into this ancient story, many people amass a considerable collection of Haggados over the years. It is no surprise, then, that the Haggadah is the most published work in Jewish history.⁶

Therefore, no excuse is required to add one further contribution to this rich body of literature. I hope that this effort will make a meaningful impression on a variety of readers from different backgrounds, especially as it contains the thoughts of an especially

4. P. 53 below.

5. In 1987, the Rebbe suggested that every single child should have his or her own illustrated Haggadah, to capture his or her interest as much as possible at the Seder (see *Hisvadyos* 5747, vol. 2, p. 766).

6. Shmuel Wiener’s *Bibliographie der Oster Haggadah 1500–1900* already lists some 909 editions. Avraham Yari’s *Bibliography of the Passover Haggadah* (Jerusalem, 1960) refers to 2,717 different versions. T. Wiener cites a further 330 editions in his appendix to Yari’s work (*Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, vol. 7, Cincinnati, 1965).

The Chabad–Lubavitch Library in New York houses a significant collection of some 2,000 editions of the Haggadah published over the last 450 years, including Shmuel Wiener’s own collection of some 400 Haggados, acquired by the Previous Rebbe in 1894.

The first known print of the Haggadah was in Guadalajara (c. 1482). The only extant copy is in the National Library in Jerusalem.

great luminary whose impact on Jewish thought and communal life has been colossal.

The Kol Menachem Series

In 2001, I founded, together with Rabbi Meyer Gutnick, the Kol Menachem Foundation, dedicated to organizing the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn,⁷ and making them universally accessible and useful.

Our first project was a new edition of the Chumash (Pentateuch), with a running commentary anthologized from some eighty classic, Rabbinic sources, alongside a digest of the Rebbe's thoughts, entitled *Toras Menachem*.

The Chumash was warmly received by a broad cross-section of the Jewish community worldwide, including some of the leading scholars of our day. This was soon followed by a commentary on the Haftarah cycle (readings from the Prophets). A number of foreign language translations of the Chumash have since been initiated, of which the Hebrew and Spanish editions have now been published, in part.

Last year we published the first volume in a new series on the teachings of Maimonides (Rambam), aimed at introducing the reader to the Thirteen Principles of Faith in an intellectually stimulating and engaging fashion (an area which had received surprisingly little attention, even with the exponential growth of Jewish publishing in recent years). Again, this was very well received, encouraging us to expand our activities to further projects.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe's Literary Corpus

In the foreword to the Kol Menachem Chumash, I presented a brief review of the vast body of printed teachings of the Rebbe and how they came into being.

For whatever the reason may be, the Rebbe's immense religious and social contribution to Jewish communities worldwide has, in the public eye at least, eclipsed his intellectual and scholarly achieve-

7. For biographical notes on the Rebbe's life see Aryeh Solomon, *The Educational Teachings of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson 2000), pp. 307-40.

ments.⁸ People know the Rebbe as a great leader who inspired a generation of young men and women to selflessly dedicate their lives to Jewish communal work. His embracing, non-judgmental approach has been emulated by virtually every segment of Jewry, and he has thus been rightly proclaimed as “the man who turned Judaism outwards.”⁹ But, sadly, the same recognition could not be yet said for his scholarly achievements.

This is staggering when one considers that the Rebbe is, to my knowledge at least, one of the most published Rabbinic thinkers in history, with over two-hundred volumes of his writings, discourses, and correspondence in print.¹⁰ The Rebbe’s close aides relate that even while leading the Chabad movement, he spent the majority of his time isolated, in private study. He took virtually no phone calls, and private meetings with his followers, communal activists,

8. Thus while a fair amount has been written about the Rebbe himself and the Chabad movement, little attention has been given to evaluating his contribution to Torah thought. The only full-length studies are Solomon, *Educational Teachings*, and Rabbi Faitel Levin, *Heaven on Earth: Reflections on the Theology of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn* (Kehos Publication Society, 2002), and both works are confined to one aspect of the Rebbe’s thought. Brief but valuable insights can be gleaned from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Torah Studies* (Kehos, revised edition 1996), pp. viii-ix; Rabbi Alter B. Metzger, *Chasidic Perspectives, A Festival Anthology* (Kehos, 2002), p. vii; and Rabbi Yanki Tauber, *The Inside Story* (Va’ad Hanachos ha-Temimim, 1997), pp. xiv-xix.

In Hebrew: For a general overview see Rabbi Ch. Y. Eisenbach, *Raban Shel Yisrael* (Merkaz Chabad-Lubavitch, Tel-Aviv, 1988). A number of studies focus on specific contributions of the Rebbe’s scholarship: Rabbi Tuvia Bloy, *Klalei Rashi* (Kehos, 2nd ed. 1991); Rabbi Mordechai Menasheh Laufer, *Klalei Rambam* (Kehos, 1991); Rabbi Yehoshua Newhouser, *Ha-Tzafnas Pane’ach be-Mishnas ha-Rebbi* (Va’ad le-Hafatzas Sichos, 2002). A number of articles on specific contributions are found in *Sefer ha-Yovel Karnos Tzadik* (Kehos 1992), p. 641ff; and see also Rabbi Yehoshua Gross, *Ha-Rambam le-ohr Toras Kevod Kedushas Admur Shlita*, in *Kovetz Hadras Melech*, vol. 3 (Kolel Avreichim Chabad, 1985). Some articles in the biographical anthology *Raban Shel Yisrael* (Sifriyas Kfar Chabad, 2005) also touch on the Rebbe’s scholarship.

The first significant attention to the Rebbe’s thought from the academic community was a convention in New York University in 2005, entitled *Reaching for the Infinite, the Lubavitcher Rebbe—life, teachings and impact*.

9. A phrase coined by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.
10. No complete Bibliography has yet been compiled. For a partial list see Solomon, *Educational Teachings* p. 451ff.

or those seeking his counsel were scheduled for the late hours of the night.

The Rebbe's towering scholarly achievement was a weekly essay, which appeared regularly from 1969-1992,¹¹ each complete with as many as a hundred annotations and cross-references to the complete gamut of Rabbinic writings (now published in the thirty-nine volumes of *Likutei Sichos*¹²). His style is an unusual combination of penetrating analysis, lateral thinking, an acute attention to detail, alongside a tendency to gravitate towards theological and mystical themes. On studying these discourses in the original Yiddish or Hebrew, one is immediately taken aback by their sheer intellectual brilliance.

The Jewish people have, of course, been blessed with many great minds and incisive thinkers over the centuries, but it always struck me that there is something very unique about the Rebbe's intellectual path. At the risk of oversimplification I would say that it represents a convergence of two very different talents which, due to their conflicting nature, rarely coincide in one individual.

On the one hand, the Rebbe excelled in what we would call, in contemporary parlance, "left-brain" wisdom.¹³ He possessed a careful, sober mind and his arguments were always well-honed and eminently reasonable, making it his declared goal to reach an absolutely objective perspective. When analyzing a classic commentary on the Chumash or Talmud his first question was always: Is this what the text actually says, or is the author "reading in" his own ideas, however subtly, into the text? In the spirit of a search

11. With the exception of 1972 and 1975. Essays also appeared, in a less developed form, during the years 1958 and 1963. See Solomon, *Educational teachings*, pp. 24-25. I refer to them here as "essays," even though their published title is "*Sichos*" (talks), since in the vast majority of cases they represented an earlier talk that had been totally rewritten, often with much new material added by the Rebbe during the editorial process. In some instances, only a tiny fraction of the essay had been included in the earlier talk on which it was based.
12. Published by Va'ad le-Hafatsas Sichos (Kehos) from 1962 to 2001 (viewable online at <http://www.otzar770.com/library/>).
13. There is remarkable correlation between the contemporary classification of right- and left-brain wisdom, to the Kabbalistic concepts of *chochmah* and *binah*, the intellectual components to be found on the right and left side of the *sefirotic* tree. See below pp. 36-7; p. 122.

for objective truth, the Rebbe's own suggestions were often subject to self-scrutiny, and he was quick to point out their limitations and flaws, sometimes revising them at a later date if he found them, on reflection, to be problematic.¹⁴ Even more remarkable was his attention to detail. He would scrutinize a comment of *Rashi*, or a passage from the Talmud, down to the finest nuances of language and style. This would then be compared with a host of other textual variants, or similar source materials. Typically, at the outset of one of his essays, as many as fifteen or twenty textual problems may have been raised that require closure. While attention to detail is common in Rabbinic writings, the extreme to which it was taken in *Likutei Sichos* is extraordinary.¹⁵

The flip side of the Rebbe's intellectual approach is what you might call a "right-brained," holistic or mystical perception. In stark contrast to the detailed and careful logic of a left-brained analysis, the mystical talent enables a teacher to penetrate through the limitations of logic and worldly phenomena, uncovering deeper themes that unify many disparate conceptual or textual elements. This is typically an inspirational experience for the student, leading him to feel liberated from the confines of conventionality, as he is lifted to a more meaningful and true-to-home vantage point. Mystical ideas are also self-validating due to the very depth of their insight. Unlike conventional reasoning, which must constantly re-assert its authenticity in the face of never ending criticism and re-evaluation, mystical insight automatically dispels doubt, as light banishes darkness, leaving the student with a clarity of insight which has sometimes been compared to intellectual "vision," where ideas are simply "seen" to be correct and true. Much has been written about the Jewish mystical tradition, so I will not dwell upon it further here.

The Rebbe excelled in both of these areas, demonstrating the extreme thoroughness that one would normally associate with an academic, and the elevated intuition of a mystic. What seems to be unprecedented is not merely the presence of these two talents

14. See, for example, *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Chukas Balak* 5746, par. 13.

15. See *Likutei Sichos* vol. 16, p. 533, where the Rebbe makes some brief notes about his attention to textual detail, comparing it with other schools of rabbinic analysis.

simultaneously, but the success in *integrating* them into a single outlook and approach.¹⁶

For example, a typical essay will begin with a strictly analytical discussion, isolating various problems with a text and highlighting the limitations of different solutions which have been proposed. At this point the reader's "left-brain" has already been well exercised, and very often strained, by the display of intellectual agility and textual mastery.

When the solutions come, however, they invariably arise from the "right-brain." In the majority of cases, the Rebbe will not jump straight into a mystical explanation. The first solution typically draws on *lomdus*, the conceptual approach to Jewish learning.¹⁷ A discussion of the rudimentary underlying principles of the text ensues, leading to a clarification of its conceptual underpinning, which is then skillfully applied to resolve all the earlier problems. I call this "rightbrain" because it is not a single, direct solution *per se*, but a deeper, holistic appreciation of the character of the text, an elevated viewpoint from which the earlier disparate points of confusion are now reframed into a unified scheme where each detail supports the general thesis.

This now provides the author with an ideal platform to launch into a mystical commentary. The conceptual approach, while not actually a form of mysticism, nevertheless shares the same qualities of a profound, far-reaching insight, and the ability to perceive things holistically. So after the *lomdus* has liberated the seemingly contradictory elements of the text from their prior atomistic state, harmonizing them into a single, cohesive system, mystical insight then takes this same process a stage further, raising the perception to a more spiritual, intuitive or even suprarational, viewpoint.

But, most remarkably—and this is the point I have been trying to bring out from the very start—our final, elevated point of reference does not eclipse the mosaic of details with which we grappled at the outset. On the contrary, now we see how a deeper, conceptual or mystical truth is accurately reflected in every detail. The text thus comes "alive," as all its disparate elements, which earlier were

16. See conversation between the Rebbe and Rabbi Moshe Grossberg in *Ha-Melech bi-Mesibo*, vol. 2, p. 259.

17. See Yosef Blau ed., *The Conceptual Approach to Jewish Learning*, (New Jersey: Yeshiva University Press, 2006)

sources of confusion, now “shine” as expressions of our freshly discovered thematic focus.

So, as an “academic-mystic,” for want of a better term, the Rebbe managed to bring some of the electricity, inspiration and inner unity of a Torah text to be felt palpably in the driest and most technical of details. The result is twofold. On the one hand, it enhances the reader’s appreciation of the text itself, whose sanctity and precision have now been underscored through highlighting a number of previously imperceptible “soul” qualities. And, on the other hand, Jewish mystical teachings, which often suffer from being elusive and vague, have been rendered much more accessible, as our detailed observations of the text now act as tangible “handles” through which rational beings such as ourselves can “grasp” the mystical truths that lurk beneath them.

With all this in mind, one can imagine the difficult task which we face when attempting to communicate the Rebbe’s Torah in its full, original glory. The convergence of technical, scholarly and mystical discourse in just a few pages, with the complicated symbiosis that exists between these different schools of thought, makes an accurate rendition or simplification of this material virtually impossible. Even when reading the original, a legally attuned reader might be confused by the mystical passages, and another reader might lack the ability to plow through the complex analysis. Add to that the sheer volume of the material, and we are left with a corpus which for many, both quantitatively and qualitatively, verges on the impenetrable.

It has therefore been most welcoming that the Rabbinic, scholarly community has acclaimed the Kol Menachem series as capturing at least a tiny glimpse of the profundity of the Rebbe’s Torah. But, in light of the above, I cannot stress enough that the reader is highly encouraged to tackle this material in its original form.

The Sources Available to Us

I will not repeat here what was stated in the foreword to the Kol Menachem Chumash concerning the delivery and publication of the Rebbe’s Torah, but a few words are in order concerning some sources which are particularly relevant to the Haggadah.

a.) *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*

In 1946, a number of years before he ascended to the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, the Rebbe published a commentary on the Haggadah entitled *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim* ("an anthology of explanations and customs").¹⁸ Rabbi Immanuel Schochet has discerned four general categories of comments that were included by the author: i.) Source references for the passages and practices mentioned in the Haggadah. ii.) Textual variants of the Haggadah with their various implications. iii.) A clarification of customs specific to Chabad tradition. iv.) Reasons and explanations for the passages in the Haggadah and for the laws and procedures of the Seder.¹⁹

Essentially, *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim* is an anthology of classical writings, ranging from the Talmud to the primary (Medieval) and later authorities.²⁰ A number of points, however, are noteworthy.

First, in quite a number of instances the author does offer his own highly original solutions and explanations. Second, despite the apparent straightforward nature of the work, there is much taking place "behind the scenes." In other words, the omissions here are just as significant as the comments that are included. Often, there will be a number of standard interpretations for a passage, but the Rebbe will select just one, presumably because he maintained that

18. Published by Kehos. (In its early printings the commentary bore a slightly different title, *Likutei Minhagim ve-Ta'amim*.) This was the first totally original work that the Rebbe authored. (*Ha-Yom Yom*, which appeared in 1942, was an anthology of the Previous Rebbe's teachings.)

Chasidim have noted an interesting parallel with the first Rebbe of Chabad, the *Alter Rebbe*, whose *Laws of Pesach*, composed while under the tutelage of his master Rabbi Dovber ("the Maggid") of Mezritch, was the first part of his *Shulchan Aruch* to be published, (a point noted by the Rebbe at the beginning of *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*). Likewise, the first work of the Rebbe concerned laws and customs of Pesach, and was composed while under the tutelage of his Rebbe and teacher, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch.

19. Forward to second edition of the English translation of *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim* (Kehos, 1985). See also S. Vitzhandler, *Haggadas Raban Shel Yisra'el* in *Ha-Tamim*, issues 7-8 (2001).

20. In later editions, additions and emendations were made. In the fourth edition (1963), which coincided with the 150th anniversary of the *Alter Rebbe's* passing, the Rebbe added a number of comments and anecdotes, the majority of which related to the *Alter Rebbe*.

this is the most relevant or satisfying. So what superficially appears to be a mere anthology can be seen, on closer examination, to be a critical evaluation of all of the Rabbinic literature pertaining to the Haggadah. In fact, this “esoteric” dimension of the Haggadah was brought to light in subsequent correspondence with Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin (1890–1978), editor of the *Encyclopedia Talmudis*, in which the Rebbe revealed some of the tremendously complex decision making that went into writing some of the passages.²¹

Many outstanding Torah luminaries were highly impressed with *Likutei Ta’amim u’Minhagim*, such as Rabbi Zevin,²² Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik (1886–1959)²³ and Rabbi Reuvein Margolies (1889–1971).²⁴ Each year, many Chabad scholarly journals offer an array of articles by senior scholars and their students, which

21. See *Igros Kodesh* vol. 2, p. 241; *ibid.* p. 260; and also below p. 159. For a review of the Rebbe’s general correspondence with Rabbi Zevin see Rabbi Shalom Wolpo, *Shemen Sason me-Chaveirecha* vol. 2 (1998), pp. 68–110.

22. In his *Sofrim u’Sefarim* (Tel Aviv: Avraham Zioni, 1959), Rabbi Zevin praises *Likutei Ta’amim u’Minhagim* as “a remarkable work, which is quite unique. It is suited for Jews of all backgrounds, Chasid and non-Chasid alike. If I was not concerned for the aversion of Chasidim to define a Torah text in secular terms, I would say that it is a scientific work of the finest caliber.” For the Rebbe’s response see *Igros Kodesh* vol. 18, pp. 487–8.

Rabbi Zevin, who possessed a large personal collection of Haggados, once told Rabbi Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi, the current Chief Rabbi of Kfar Chabad, that “on Seder night I use the Rebbe’s Haggadah” (*Sichas ha-Shavuah* (*Tze’iray Agudas Chabad*, Israel), issue 1005).

23. Rabbi Soloveitchik spoke of the Haggadah highly and used it at his own Seder (Wolpo, *Shemen Sason*, vol. 3 (2003), p. 169).

24. Rabbi Ashkenazi relates that, in his youth, on a visit to the Rambam Library in Tel-Aviv, he noticed that *Likutei Ta’amim u’Minhagim* had been mistakenly recorded in the library catalog as a work authored by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, the *Tzemach Tzedek* (1789–1866, who had the same name as the Rebbe). When Rabbi Margolies, the library’s director, was informed of the mistake, he remarked, “I was aware that the Rebbe is a great Torah scholar, but not to this extent. I was convinced that this was the work of an author from previous generations” (*Sichas ha-Shavuah ibid.*). (Incidentally, the Rebbe once remarked: “I am named after the *Tzemach Tzedek*, and so I try to emulate him”—*Ha-Melech bi-Mesibo*, vol. 2, p. 259). For the Rebbe’s relationship with Rabbi Margolies, see Wolpo, *Shemen Sason*, vol. 3, pp. 74–80.

For more on the Rebbe’s Haggadah see review of Meir Madan in *Machanayim* (1957, issue 32, cited (in part) in *Sichas ha-Shavuah*, issue 537).

attempt to decipher the underlying thought processes behind many of the Rebbe's comments.²⁵

Another important point is that *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim* pioneered a new genre of Haggadah which focused on the objective, scholarly analysis of Jewish law and custom, in contrast to the more subjective, personal insights which dominated most Haggados prior to this date. This precedent appears to have inspired later scholarly Haggados, such as *Iyunei ha-Hagadah*²⁶ and the encyclopedic *Seder ha-Aruch*.²⁷ In fact, even the original Artscroll Haggadah²⁸ was significantly influenced by *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*.

With the above in mind, I hardly need to emphasize that the current work is in no way intended to replace *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*, which stands as the standard, authoritative Chabad Haggadah.

b.) *Biurim*

As years passed by, passages from *Likutei Sichos* which discuss the Haggadah were appended to *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*, which was renamed *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim u'Biurim* ("an anthology of reasons, customs and explanations"). Reprinted a number of times, with an increasing number of pages, the complete version was printed by Kehos in 1995 in two volumes (1076 pages). In addition to commentaries on the Haggadah, the work also contains a considerable section addressed to an analysis of various Passover laws.

c.) *Communal Letters*

Throughout the entire period of his leadership, the Rebbe composed communal letters in connection with special dates during the year, including the festival of Pesach, addressed to the global Jewish community ("to the sons and daughters of Israel, wherever they may be found"). Written in a pastoral tone, and drawing richly on Jewish sources, these letters offer a frank and upbeat message,

25. See, for example, *Kovetz Ha'aros u'Biurim Oholei Torah* (archives to be found at <http://www.haoros.com>).

26. Rabbi Chaim Banish, Jerusalem 1988.

27. Rabbi Moshe Weingarten, 3 vols, Jerusalem 1991-3.

28. Rabbi Joseph Elias, 1977.

charged with Chasidic optimism, but never shying away from real issues and problems. All the letters have been published (in Hebrew translation from the Yiddish original, with an introduction) in *Igros Melech* (Kehos 1992), in two volumes.²⁹ The letters pertaining to Pesach are also to be found in *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim u'Biurim*.

d.) *Oral Commentaries on the Haggadah*

During the Rebbe's own Seder, he did not interrupt the proceedings to add any of his own commentary. Instead, for many years (1951–1970), he called a public *farbrengen* (gathering) on the second night of Pesach at around 1:30 AM, after most of the community had completed their own Sedarim, at which time he delivered his commentaries to the Haggadah.³⁰ This arrangement had the advantage of enabling an entire community of his disciples to be present, which clearly would not have been possible if the commentaries had been offered privately. From 1957 onwards, the crowd was also privileged to hear a *ma'amar* (Chasidic discourse) relating to Pesach.

Generally speaking, the Rebbe would finish speaking at around 4:00 AM, and the Chasidim would escort him home, singing a festive Chasidic melody such as *Mimitzrayim Ge'altanu*,³¹ or *Al Achas Kama ve-Chama*.³²

While a number of insights from these *farbrengens* were included in *Likutei Sichos* (and later in *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim u'Biurim*), the majority were not. They were later published in *Sichos Kodesh* and (in part) in *Toras Menachem, Hisvaduyos*,³³ from

29. A partial collection of the letters pertaining to the first half of the Jewish year (*Tishrei-Adar*) from 1949-1978, in English translation, is found in *Letters by the Lubavitcher Rebbe* (Va'ad le-Hafatsas Sichos 1979).

30. For more details about these *farbrengens*, see overview of Rabbi Michael Seligson in *Hiskashrus* issue 506.

31. Below, p. 214.

32. P. 130.

33. An ongoing project of Va'ad Hanachos Lahak to render all of the Rebbe's talks which do not appear in *Likutei Sichos* into Hebrew, with extensive annotations and cross-references. To date, thirty-four volumes have been published (1992–2006), covering the Rebbe's talks from 1950-1962 (viewable online at <http://www.livingwiththerebbe.com>).

During the years 1981–1992 Va'ad Hanachos Lahak published a Hebrew

students' notes. (See our foreword to *Chumash Kol Menachem* for the important distinction between publications edited by the Rebbe and those that were not.)

e.) *The Rebbe's hanhagos*

While his mother-in-law, Rebbetzin Nechamah Dina Schneersohn, was still alive (until 1970), the Rebbe conducted all the festival meals (including the Seder) in her apartment, in the presence of a number of guests. On Pesach night, Chasidim were able to enter after they had completed their own Seder at home.

On these occasions, it was possible to observe the precise detail with which the Rebbe himself observed the laws and customs of the Seder. These "*hanhagos*" were later collected and published in *Otzar Minhagei Chabad*,³⁴ along with all other extant source materials relating to Chabad festival custom. Below we will discuss the significance of the *hanhagos*.

f.) *Informal Discussions at the Festival meals.*

During the above-mentioned Festival meals, informal conversations took place between the Rebbe, his brother-in-law, Rabbi Shemaryahu Gurary,³⁵ and the other guests. Many of these discussions, which contained original Torah insights, were later published in *Ha-Melech bi-Mesibo*.³⁶ Naturally, the discussions at the Pesach meals often related to both the festival in general and to the Haggadah.

g.) *Other Chabad Haggados and Pesach anthologies.*

See Bibliography on p. 232.

rendition of each of the Rebbe's talks, shortly after they were delivered, later collected in 43 volumes of *Hisvaduyos* 5742–5752 (viewable online at <http://www.otzar770.com/library/>).

34. Rabbi Yehoshua Mondshine, Kehos 1996.

35. Rabbi Shemaryahu Gurary, also known as the *Rashag* (1897–1989) was the eldest son-in-law of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Rebbe of Chabad. He possessed an extensive knowledge of Chabad Chasidic thought and was a devoted follower of the Rebbe until his passing.

36. 2 vols., Kehos 1993.

The Structure of the Current Work

The Kol Menachem Haggadah is comprised of the following elements.

1.) *Hebrew text of the Haggadah*

We are publishing the Haggadah in two editions, one following *Nusach ha-Arizal*, the liturgical variant of the Haggadah used in Chabad communities³⁷; and another edition following the Ashkenazic text which is the most commonly used variant among English-speaking Jews.

2.) *English Translation*

A new translation has been prepared, which aims to render the meaning of the text with clarity, avoiding the use of archaic or overly formal English, so as to offer an easy read which remains loyal to the original text.

37. For a general introduction to *Nusach ha-Arizal* see Rabbi Nissen Mangel, introduction to *Siddur Tehillas Hashem* with English translation (Kehos).

The authoritative texts of the *Alter Rebbe's Nusach ha-Arizal* are *Siddur Torah Ohr* (Rabbi Avraham David Lavut, 1887; corrected version published by the Rebbe in 1941) and *Siddur Tehillas Hashem* (corrected version published by the Rebbe in 1956). See introduction of Rabbi Shalom Dovber Levin to *Hagahot le-Siddur Rabeinu ha-Zaken* (Kehos, 2006), and, at length, Rabbis Gedalia Oberlander and Nachum Greenwald (eds.), *Ha-Siddur* (Heichal Menachem, Monsey, 2003).

In 1987, the Rebbe instructed *Tze'iray Agudas Chabad (Tzach)* of Israel, who were in the process of preparing a new edition of the Haggadah (for children), to reproduce the liturgical text from the above sources, without dividing paragraphs, highlighting words, or adding additional punctuation marks (*Hiskashrus* (1998), issue 194). However, in Rabbi Yekusiel Green's *Haggadah for Pesach in the Light of Chasidus* (see Bibliography), which the Rebbe had seen before publication (see letter printed before the preface), changes were made to the text in all of these areas. This was also the case with *Haggadah for Pesach Annotated Edition* (Kehos, 2005).

Thus, while these minor enhancements to the text appear to have become accepted, and it is possible that the Rebbe's instruction to *Tzach* was specific to the occasion, we can glean at the very least from the Rebbe's instructions that the *Siddur Torah Ohr* and *Siddur Tehillas Hashem* remain the authoritative sources of the *Alter Rebbe's Nusach ha-Arizal*. Consequently, while we have followed the precedent of Green and Kehos, the reader should bear in mind that what is presented here is in no way intended to be an improved or corrected version of the *Nusach*.

3.) *Directions*

The directions in the Ashkenazic edition follow the prevailing customs in most communities, though the reader should note that a total uniformity of practice does not exist, and what is written here is intended as a general guideline.

While *Nusach ha-Arizal* is not, and was not intended to be, exclusive to the Chabad community, this nevertheless represents its current predominant usage. Therefore, the directions printed in the *Nusach ha-Arizal* edition follow contemporary Chabad practice.

The precedent for Chabad custom has largely been set down by the *Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch* and the Rebbe's codification of Chabad custom in *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*. We have not cited sources for the directions, as nothing new is printed here that is not to be found in other Haggados or basic Chabad sources.

Minhag Admur

After *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim* was printed, many additional details pertaining to the Seder rituals were observed in the Rebbe's *hanhagos* (see above). A doubt remains, however, whether these were a reflection of the personal spiritual stature of the Rebbe, or whether they were a type of worship which Chasidim could sensibly emulate.

Generally speaking, the Chasidic movement, especially Chabad, places much emphasis on adherence to the fine details of Jewish custom, and many additional nuances have been introduced into a host of Jewish observances.³⁸ Often, these practices are a reflection of Kabbalistic teachings. In many cases, the customs were not taught or instituted by the leader, but they were observed by his disciples who duplicated the practices in their own observance.

At some point during the previous Rebbe's lifetime, the Rebbe became concerned about the need to make a formal record of Chabad custom. Later, he divulged that, in a private conversation with his father-in-law (the previous Rebbe), he had bemoaned the fact that the leaders of Chabad never committed the unique customs

38. For a general introduction to Chasidic custom, see Rabbi Dr. Aaron Wertheim, *Laws and Custom in Hasidism*, English translation (New Jersey: Ktav, 1992), pp. 94-127.

of the movement to paper, since “there are many details that are practically relevant and people need to know what to do.”

Giving his tacit approval to the general idea, the previous Rebbe replied, “It’s really unfortunate that this was never done.”

“After this,” the Rebbe concluded, “whenever I saw my father-in-law, the Rebbe, follow a particular custom I made a note of it, and I understood from him that I should publicize those customs which were appropriate for communal observance (*hora’ah le-rabim*).”³⁹ As a result, authoritative publications appeared documenting those customs of the Previous Rebbe (and his predecessors) “which were appropriate for communal observance.”⁴⁰

However, in later years, after many additional *hanhagos* of the Rebbe himself had emerged, no further, updated compendium of customs was produced—and without such an authoritative document, who is to say which *hanhagos* reflect the Rebbe’s own unique, personal standing, and which, if any, are “appropriate for communal observance”? The Previous Rebbe once stated that such a question could only be clarified by “a person of profound inner integrity, who is deeply methodical, possessing a depth and breadth of mind.”⁴¹ It is therefore not surprising that the Rebbe himself discouraged the Chabad community from casually adopting his own *hanhagos*.⁴²

Nevertheless, at the very least, the vast body of *hanhagos* remains a point of interest and certainly needs to be preserved.⁴³ Furthermore, while the approach of most Chabad Chasidim to adopting the *hanhagos* is, quite rightly, conservative, some *hanhagos* have nevertheless entered common practice of many Chasidim. This is especially so during Pesach, since a generation of Chasidim were privileged to attend the Rebbe’s Seder, personally witnessing certain *hanhagos* to which they were inevitably drawn. As a

39. *Sichah* of 7th Adar II 5711 (*Toras Menachem, Hisvaduyos* 5711, vol. 1, p. 277). See also Levin, *Hagahos* pp. 17–19.

40. *Hayom Yom* and *Sefer ha-Minhagim Chabad* (see bibliography).

41. *Sichah* of Acharon shel Pesach 5700.

42. See, at length, Rabbi Tuvia Bloy, *On Customs and their Sources* [in Hebrew], *Pardes Chabad*, issue 18 (<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/pardes/tohen.htm>).

43. For a recent, exhaustive compendium of *hanhagos*, see Y. Granovetter and M. Siboni, *Ma’aseh Melech* (Brooklyn, 2007).

result, the 1999 edition of *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*⁴⁴ included a page by page digest of the Rebbe's *hanhagos* alongside the Haggadah text.

We have therefore included a number of the *hanhagos* in the current work (marked clearly in each case as "*Minhag Admur*"), but this is with the implicit understanding that no authoritative source has confirmed that they are "appropriate for communal observance."

4.) *Classic Questions*

As in our previous works, a prominent section entitled "Classic Questions," contains the thoughts of over one hundred important Jewish thinkers, from Talmudic times up to the twentieth century, that address issues of importance pertaining to the Haggadah and its observances. In preparing this commentary, we relied heavily, though not exclusively, on the sources cited by *Likutei Ta'amim u'Minhagim*. As in previous works, many passages are paraphrased, rather than translated, though there are numerous exceptions to this rule.⁴⁵

In the *Kol Menachem Chumash*, virtually every part of the Classic Questions was cross-referenced to a discussion in the *Toras Menachem* commentary (see below). In the Haggadah, however, the focus is slightly different. Here the intention of the Classic Questions is to present the reader with *core knowledge* of the Seder ritual and the Haggadah text, so that he or she will be well informed about the details of the evening's proceedings. Consequently, there is less common ground here between the two commentaries (Classic Questions and *Toras Menachem*), though in many instances there are cross-references (indicated by bold highlights in *Toras Menachem*).

44. *Heichal Menachem* (Kehos), Jerusalem.

45. The reader should also bear in mind the following.

i.) If the citation in Classic Questions has no given source, it is taken from the stated author's commentary on the Haggadah.

ii.) Sometimes, this may be from a Haggadah that was not composed by the author himself, but compiled from his writings.

iii.) In an instance where the author offers a number of interpretations, we may cite only one.

5.) *Toras Menachem*

As the name suggests, this is a digest of the Rebbe's commentaries on the Haggadah, adapted for the English reader.⁴⁶ The commentaries have been compiled in a similar fashion to those found in the previous volumes in this series, but the reader is asked to bear the following points in mind.

i.) *Choice of Sources*

Any attempt at adapting the works of a great Torah luminary must obviously be painstakingly loyal to the original teacher. Thus, to a very great extent, the sources which I choose to draw on in all my works are a reflection of the Rebbe's own emphasis in his talks. For example, in the Chumash I gave a lot of attention to the *Toras Menachem* commentaries on *Rashi*, since this had clearly been a priority for the Rebbe himself. In fact, our projects in general are selected with this point very much in mind. The *Principles of Faith* was chosen because it is a recurring theme in the Rebbe's talks, and the current work was undertaken largely because the Rebbe spoke so much about the Haggadah and the themes of exile and redemption.⁴⁷

ii.) *Types of Commentary*

I would divide the commentaries presented here in *Toras Menachem* into four categories:

a.) *Textual-Historical*. Insights into the basic meaning of the Haggadah text, or the events surrounding the Egyptian exodus.

b.) *Jewish Law*. An in-depth analysis of the finer points of the festival laws and customs.

c.) *Personal Growth*. Lessons in life, drawn from traditional and Chasidic wisdom as it relates to the contemporary Jew.

46. In reference to publishing his own teachings in English translation, the Rebbe wrote: "As I have mentioned many a time, what matters is the content and not the literal translation. Therefore, you should ensure that the language is clear and the style appropriate, for the main objective is that the readers should appreciate what is written" (*Igros Kodesh* vol. 28, p. 267).

47. For the connection between Jewish leadership and the themes of exile and redemption, see below p. 57.

d.) *Mystical-Inspirational*. Insights which unravel the spiritual dynamics of the Haggadah, drawing especially from the wisdom of the Kabbalah.

In previous works, different threads in the *Toras Menachem* commentary were delineated visually by the use of highlighted frames set off from the main body-text. With the Haggadah, however, this has not been possible for typographical reasons. (It would have resulted in too many “boxes” on a relatively small page.) Therefore, somewhat regrettably, this attractive feature has now been lost. To partially compensate, at least, I have included in the Table of Contents a brief abstract of each insight to be found in *Toras Menachem*, along with a note as to which of the four above categories it seems to belong.

iii.) *Method of adaptation*

Generally speaking, the Rebbe’s commentaries on the Haggadah are esoteric and complex. On the other hand, an English rendition such as this is likely to have a broad audience, due to the sheer popularity of the Pesach Haggadah. I also had to bear in mind that, while it could be used as a text for study, the main use for this book will be at the informal setting of the Seder table. This created a considerable challenge of presenting some very hard material in a universally accessible form.

The result is that I have tried very hard to *communicate* the ideas here as much as possible, resulting in what one of our reviewers referred to as a “folksy” style. It really is a soul-wrenching experience to focus constantly on loyalty to the original text, on the one hand, and the need to relate to the reader, on the other, and I pray that there has been at least some degree of success. But if you do find some passages challenging at times, please bear in mind everything that I have said above. There is only so much one can distill the Rebbe’s wisdom without totally losing its richness.

Finally, to the credit of our excellent research department, even those readers who are familiar with many of the Rebbe’s insights into the Haggadah are likely to find a lot of new material here. And while we have only been able to present a tiny fraction of the Rebbe’s thoughts on each subject, there is definitely much food for thought in the following pages.

Acknowledgments

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the following people for their assistance in preparing this work. Most especially, Rabbi Itzick Yarmush, who stood at my side throughout every stage, from the initial research, through discussing and planning the commentaries, and then, after they were written, checking them carefully against the original sources. Dayan L.Y. Raskin⁴⁸ for checking the accuracy of the directions. I am also grateful to the following for their assistance: Rabbis Shmuel Rabin, Zvi Homnick, Mendy Lent, Mendy Angyalfi, Asher Lowenstein and Eli Shear; and to our proofreaders: Chaya Sarah Cantor, Yehudis Homnick and Laurence Saffer.

It is once again my pleasure and honor to dedicate this volume in the Kol Menachem series to **David and Lara Slager**. The Slager family have set a fine example to the Jewish community, both in their personal lives and with their outstanding philanthropic efforts towards an impressive array of causes across the globe. We are proud to have them as members of the Kol Menachem family, and wish David, Lara, and their precious children Hannah and Sara Malka, all the abundant blessings that they deserve.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt wishes to the backbone of our organization, **Rabbi Meyer Gutnick**, who, seven years ago, had the courage to invest in an unknown author, and since then has been an unfailing source of material support and moral encouragement. Motivated by a great love for the Rebbe, and recognizing the urgency of spreading his Torah teachings, Rabbi Gutnick has chosen to invest his own natural talent at “getting things done” into a very worthy cause. In the merit of this, and all his many other impressive philanthropic efforts, may God bless him, together with his dear wife Shaindy, and all their wonderful children and grandchildren, with *chasidische nachas* and only revealed and open goodness.

May we soon merit the true and complete redemption, when all the Jewish people will be totally free to observe God’s commands and study His Torah, and, “*Just as in the days when you left the land of Egypt I will show you wonders.*”⁴⁹

Rabbi Chaim Miller

Rosh Chodesh Adar II 5767

48. Author of *Siddur Rabeinu ha-Zaken im Tziyunim, Mekoros ve-He'oros* (Kehos 2004).

49. Michah 7:15.



הַא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָּא

דִּי אֶכְלוּ אֲבֹתָנָא

בְּאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why do we not recite a blessing before fulfilling the *mitzvah* of recounting the Exodus?

RIF: Because in Kiddush we already discharged this obligation when saying, “A memorial of the Exodus from Egypt” (cited in *Avudraham, Seder ha-Haggadah*).

RASHBA: We do not recite a blessing on a *mitzvah* that has no minimum *shiur* (prescribed amount). In this case, any amount of discussion would be sufficient to fulfil one’s obligation (*ibid.*).

ALTER REBBE: The solutions of *Rif* and *Rashba* are difficult to accept, because, in contrast to the rest of the

year when we can fulfil our obligation to remember the Exodus with a few brief words, tonight on the anniversary of the Exodus itself we are required to discuss it at length.

Rather, we do not make a blessing on reciting the Haggadah for the same reason we do not make a blessing on the *mitzvah* to recite *Bircas ha-Mazon* (Grace after Meals). Namely, because we do not make a blessing on a blessing. Thus, since the Haggadah is itself words of blessing, we do not make a blessing on it (*Sefer ha-Sichos* 5697, p. 219; see *Likutei Sichos* vol. 3, p. 1016).

TORAS MENACHEM

“Out of the straits I called upon God; God answered me with expansiveness” (Psalms 118:5). The very wide can only come after we have been constrained through the very narrow.

And it is this dynamic which the middle Matzah embodies. Poverty and redemption emerge from the same, single piece of Matzah to teach us that the tragic and the tremendous follow one after the other.

So even if you look around and see a fractured world with no remedy in sight, do not despair. In truth, Mashiach is just around the corner, and we will soon emerge from our trenches, with the help of “Yisrael from Okop.”

(Based on *Sichah* of 2nd night of Pesach 5720)

הַא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָּא — Here is the Bread of Affliction.

The precise significance of this passage seems, at first glance, to be rather confusing. The fact that it follows right after the heading “*Maggid*” (“Tell the Exodus story”), appears to suggest that with these few lines we start to recall the chronicle of our ancestors’ departure from Egypt.

But from both the *context* and the *content* of the passage, this is evidently not the case. According to Jewish law, the *mitzvah* of telling the Exodus story is carried out in response to the question of a child—the “*Mah Nishtanah*”—something which only occurs in the *following* section. So the context of these few



HERE IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION

that our ancestors ate
in the land of Egypt.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● **Did our ancestors really eat Matzah “in the land of Egypt”?** The Torah states that they ate Matzah after leaving Egypt (*Shemos* 12:39)?

AVUDRAHAM: From a personal experience of being imprisoned in India, Ibn Ezra testified that prisoners are fed Matzah, which is satisfying in small amounts because it is slow to digest. Thus, as slaves, the Jewish people were fed Matzah in Egypt.

SFORNO: The Egyptian slavedrivers did not allow the Jewish people time to bake leavened bread in Egypt, so they baked Matzah (*Devarim* 16:3).

MAHARAL: The assertion that the Jewish people ate Matzah in Egypt is not substantiated by Scripture, the Mishnah, or the Talmud (*Gevuras Hashem* ch. 51).

● **Why is this passage written in Aramaic, unlike the remainder of the Haggadah, which is in Hebrew?**

KOLBO: This passage was composed at a time when the spoken language of the Jewish people was Aramaic, and was thus phrased in a way that everybody would be able to understand. The last sentence, however, (“*next year we will be free men*”) was written in Hebrew so that the Babylonians would not understand it, since they may interpret it as a rebellion against the government (ch. 51).

LIKUTEI TA’AMIM U’MINHAGIM: The remainder of the Haggadah was composed in Temple times, as is clear from the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 116a). Therefore it was composed in Hebrew.

TORAS MENACHEM

lines, placed *before* the *Mah Nishtanah*, suggests that we have yet to begin telling the story. This notion is confirmed by the *content* of the text. Here we speak, not of redemption and freedom, but of our current, gloomy exile. People are hungry and need feeding. “*Now we are here...Now we are slaves,*” and it is only next year that we hope that the redemption will have arrived. Unlike the Exodus story which “*begins with shame and ends with glory*” (*Pesachim* 116a), the current passage ends, for the time being, in shame: “*now we are slaves.*”

So if this is not the Exodus story, then what is it? And why do we read it straight after announcing “*Magid,*” that we are about to begin the story?

A simple solution would be to propose that this passage is nothing more than a traditional invitation to guests: “*All who are hungry, let them come and eat! All who are needy, let them come and conduct the Pesach Seder!*”

But this cannot be the entire purpose of these lines, as, once again, the context proves otherwise. For why

כָּל דְּכַפִּין יִיתִי וַיִּיכּוֹל,
 כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וַיִּפְסָח.
 הַשְּׁתָּא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה
 בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָּא עַבְדִּין,
 לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין:

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● If we were redeemed then how could it be that “Now we are slaves”?

MAHARAL: People ask: What was the benefit of the Exodus to us, since we are now subjugated by other regimes? What difference does it make if the Egyptians or somebody else is persecuting us?

This is a foolish question. For when the Jewish people came out of Egypt a tangible, positive change

occurred to them, rendering them intrinsically free. The Jew now possesses an essential quality which means that he deserves to be free by virtue of who he is, and an essential quality is never lost due to something circumstantial, such as a subsequent exile (*Gevuras Hashem* ch. 61).

REBBE RAYATZ: The Egyptian Exodus opened up the spiritual “conduit” through which all future redemptions would flow (*Sefer ha-Ma’amarim* 5708, p. 164).

TORAS MENACHEM

would we only issue an invitation to guests now, after beginning the Seder and drinking the First Cup?

Rather, we declare, “Here is the bread of affliction etc.,” in order to pose—and answer—an important question that will be troubling the reader when embarking upon the Exodus story; a question so troubling that if it were to remain unanswered our ability to carry out the evening’s celebrations would be severely compromised. In fact, without a solution, we will be wondering whether there is any contemporary relevance to the Seder at all.

The question is: How can we celebrate *redemption* if we are now in *exile*? Or, to put it bluntly, the political freedom accomplished through the Exodus may be a fascinating and marvelous piece of ancient history, but its effects do not appear to have lasted. Jews are currently scattered around the globe, subjugated to regimes that are, in so many instances, hostile to the observance of Judaism, and, “in each and every

generation they rise against us to destroy us” (below p. 78). So why relive a past glory when right now we seem to be doomed once again?

In order to make this point, the Haggadah begins: “Here is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Egypt.” This declaration was not intended to be literal (for as *Maharal* has shown, our ancestors did *not* eat Matzah as slaves in Egypt), but rather, satirical. The Haggadah is essentially bemoaning the apparent failure of the Exodus: “Do you really think that our ancestors ate Matzah of redemption? No! We see in retrospect that their freedom was short-lived; their ‘Matzah of redemption’ was really Bread of Affliction, because the effects of the redemption have now been reversed and it is as if they never left Egypt at all. In hindsight we see that when they ate that Matzah on their departure from geographical Egypt, they were really still “in Egypt,” metaphorically speaking.

All who are hungry, let them come
and eat! All who are needy, let them
come and conduct the Pesach Seder!

Now we are here; next year we will
be in the Land of Israel. Now we are
slaves; next year we will be free men.

TORAS MENACHEM

“You say this is Bread of *Redemption*? Can’t you see that the redemption failed, and it is for us Bread of Affliction!

“And what is the proof? That there are so many poverty-stricken Jews who cannot afford to eat, or to carry out a Seder: ‘*All who are hungry, let them come and eat! All who are needy, let them come and conduct the Pesach Seder!*’ If we have truly enjoyed redemption then why are our brothers starving?

“In short, how can we possibly celebrate the Seder when, ‘*Now we are here...Now we are slaves?*’”

A formidable question, indeed.

To fathom the answer, let us briefly address a theological problem which arises from the above discussion. If God is absolutely perfect, and He personally came to redeem us, then how could it have turned out to have been an imperfect redemption which was later annulled?

Apparently, we need to draw a distinction between God’s redemptive power and our ability to receive and internalize those energies.

When we came out of Egypt, God illuminated our souls, imbuing us with faith and a desire to be religious, but these emotions soon dissipated. However, this is not to be perceived as a failure on God’s part. Obviously, He could have transformed us into angels if He had so desired, but, in God’s eyes, the truly great person is one who struggles with his darker side, overcoming and ultimately mending his own weaknesses and flaws. So He granted us the spiritual

illumination required to liberate ourselves, but He left “the ball in our court.”

The redemptive energy that began to shine at the Exodus never ceased, which is why we find a requirement to take the Exodus to heart every single day: “*In each and every generation—and likewise each and every day—a person must see himself as if he personally left Egypt*” (*Pesachim* 116b; *Tanya* ch. 47).

But we have *to want* to be good people; to take that inspiration and make a concerted effort to refine our far-from-perfect personalities. We cannot blame God for our troubled history, only ourselves, since “*we were exiled from our land because of our sins.*”

So the answer to our troubling question, how we could celebrate redemption while still in Exile, is that “*Next year we will be in the Land of Israel...Next year we will be free men.*” The Exodus from Egypt was the time when God first began to grant us the redemptive powers to heal ourselves and the world around us, and He has never stopped doing so. We merely have to take advantage of this gift, and then “next year we will be free men.”

Tonight’s activities are therefore extremely pertinent and relevant to our present condition. For if every day God helps us to emerge from our internal—and external—battles, then certainly on this auspicious day, when He redeemed us for the first time, we ought to refocus on redirecting ourselves to a life of sincerity, dedicated only to what is right and holy.

(Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 17, p. 80ff;
Sichah of 2nd night of Pesach 5726).

- ▶ THE MATZOS ARE COVERED AND THE TRAY IS PUSHED A LITTLE TO THE SIDE. THE CUP OF WINE IS FILLED FOR THE SECOND TIME.
- ▶ THE FOLLOWING IS ASKED BY THE CHILDREN, STARTING WITH THE YOUNGEST SON, (AND REPEATED BY THE ADULTS) WITH YIDDISH TRANSLATION.

סידור אדה": מסלקין
הקערה עם המצות
לצד אחר, ומוזגין לו
כוס ב', וכאן הבן
שואל מה נשתנה:

מדה-נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל-הלילות.

טאטע איך וועל בא דיר
פרעגן פיר קשיות ←

וואס איז אנדערש די
נאכט פון פסח פון אלע
נעכט פון א גאנץ יאר?

שְׁבֹכֵל-הַלֵּילוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אַפִּילוּ
פְּעַם אַחַת, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים:

די ערשטע קשיא איז ←

אלע נעכט פון א גאנץ
יאר טונקען מיר ניט איין
אפילו איין מאל, אבער
די נאכט פון פסח טונקען
מיר איין צוויי מאל. איין
מאל כרפס אין זאלץ-
וואסער, דעם צווייטן מאל
מרור אין חרסת.

שְׁבֹכֵל-הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ אוּ
מִצָּה, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מִצָּה:

די צווייטע קשיא איז ←

אלע נעכט פון א גאנץ יאר
עסן מיר חמץ אדער מצה,
אבער די נאכט פון פסח
עסן מיר נאר מצה.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why do we fill the Second Cup now?

RASHI: This will encourage the children to ask the question: “Why are we pouring a second cup of wine before the meal? We don’t normally do that” (*Pesachim* 116a).

ALTER REBBE’S SHULCHAN ARUCH: The children’s interest will thus be aroused, leading them to ask the *Mah Nishtanah* (*Orach Chaim* 473:40).

● Why is a young child chosen to ask the *Mah Nishtanah*?

LIKUTEI TA’AMIM U’MINHAGIM: A parent loves a small child unconditionally, not because of the child’s talents or qualities. We thus encourage a small child to say the *Mah Nishtanah* to bring to light God’s unconditional love for the Jewish people, as in the verse, “Israel was a youth and I loved him” (*Hoshea* 11:1).

For this reason, our custom is that even the adults say the *Mah Nishtanah*—and they preface it with the words “Father, I wish to ask you Four Questions,” even if their father is no longer alive—since God’s

unconditional love as a Father extends to all Jews (see *Sichah* of 2nd night of Pesach 5712).

● “Tonight we dip twice”—Don’t we dip the Sandwich also, which makes three times?

TUREI ZAHAV: The Maror and the Chazeres (bitter herbs in the Sandwich) are counted as one “dip,” since in both cases we are dipping the same thing: bitter herbs (*Orach Chaim* 475:6).

● Why does the *Mah Nishtanah* not include a question about the Four Cups of wine?

MAHARAL: The Four Cups of wine are a Rabbinic *mitzvah*, and in the *Mah Nishtanah* we only ask questions about Biblical commandments, (or Rabbinic enactments that are appended to Biblical commandments). Thus: 1. Matzah is a Biblical requirement; 2. Maror is essentially a Biblical requirement (though it only has this status in Temple times); 3. Dipping is carried out with Maror; 4. Leaning is carried out when eating Matzah (*Gevuras Hashem* ch. 52).

- THE MATZOS ARE COVERED AND THE TRAY IS PUSHED A LITTLE TO THE SIDE. THE CUP OF WINE IS FILLED FOR THE SECOND TIME.
- THE FOLLOWING IS ASKED BY THE CHILDREN, STARTING WITH THE YOUNGEST SON, (AND REPEATED BY THE ADULTS) WITH YIDDISH TRANSLATION.

WHY IS THIS NIGHT different from all other nights?

ON ALL OTHER NIGHTS we do not dip
even once, but on this night we do so twice!

ON ALL OTHER NIGHTS we eat Chametz
or Matzah, but on this night only Matzah!

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why do we say the *Mah Nishtanah*?

ALTER REBBE'S SHULCHAN ARUCH: The *mitzvah* of reciting the Haggadah should be carried out in response to questions that are posed, as the verse states: "When your son will ask you...You shall say to him, 'We were slaves, etc.'" (Devarim 6:20-21; 473:14).

● How do the Four Questions allude to the future redemption?

REBBE RASHAB: *Dipping:* The spiritual purification (like "dipping" in a ritual bath) was not completed in the earlier exiles; but with this final exile we will "dip twice": the purification of the body and the revelation of the soul.

Matzah: During the earlier exiles our worship of God involved our Godly soul (Matazah) and our animal soul (Chametz), but following this final exile we will use only the Godly soul, for the spirit of impurity will depart.

Maror: During the earlier exiles there were various forms of envy (symbolized by green) between Torah-scholars. After the final exile only "bitter greens," a sharp envy: "Each pious man will be scorched by the 'canopy' of his fellow" (Bava Basra 75a).

Reclining: Eating without leaning alludes to a diluted form of spiritual pleasure. In the future, everyone will lean, reaching the highest levels of pleasure (*ha-Yom Yom* 19th Nissan).

TORAS MENACHEM

מה נשתנה — Why is this night different?

Why are the child's questions such a focus of the Pesach observance in particular? (See *Classic Questions*.)

Because the Exodus from Egypt was the birth of the Jewish nation (see Ezekiel ch. 16), and therefore it is an appropriate time to stress Jewish education. In fact we find that the Haggadah itself takes its name from the principle of education, from the verse,

"You shall tell (*ve-higadeta*), your son" (*Shemos* 13:8; *Pesachim* 116b).

Interestingly, according to the *Arizal's* Haggadah, the first of the Four Questions concerns the custom of dipping. When we consider that the remaining questions focus on requirements of Jewish law, it is striking that the *first* question should concern a matter of mere custom. This points to the importance of making Jewish custom a priority in Jewish education.

שֶׁבֶכַל-הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלֵינּוּ שְׂאֵר
יְרָקוֹת, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה מְרוּר:

שֶׁבֶכַל-הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלֵינּוּ בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵינּוּ
וּבֵין מְסַבִּין, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כִּלְנוּ מְסַבִּין:

► THE SEDER PLATE IS RETURNED TO ITS PLACE AND THE THREE MATZOS ARE PARTIALLY UNCOVERED.

◀ די דרײַטע קשׂיא איז

אלע נעכט פון א גאנץ יאר
עסן מיר אנדערע גרינסן,
אבער די נאכט פון פסח
עסן מיר ביטערע גרינסן.

◀ די פערטע קשׂיא איז

אלע נעכט פון א גאנץ
יאר עסן מיר סײַ
זיצענדיקער הייט און
סײַ אנגעלענטערהייט,
אבער די נאכט פון
פסח עסן מיר אלע
אנגעלענטערהייט.

טאטע איך האב בא דיך
געפרעגט פיר קשׂיות,
יעצט גיב מיר א תירוץ.

סידור אדה״: ומחזירין
הקערה ומגלין מקצת
הפת, ואומרים עבדים וכו׳:

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● According to the Kabbalah, why are there four questions?

ARIZAL: Because there are four spiritual worlds between us and God—*Atzilus* (Emanation), *Beriah* (Creation), *Yetzirah* (Formation), and *Asiyah* (Action)—and each question corresponds to one of the spiritual worlds.

TORAS MENACHEM

Living, as we do, in a secular world, educating our children in the path of Torah and *mitzvos* is no easy matter. Since there is a limit to how many do’s and don’t’s a child might be willing to listen to, a parent might be tempted to choose his or her battles wisely and make the mandatory parts of Judaism the focus of the child’s education. Certainly the Biblical precepts are important, and Rabbinic law too is endorsed by a Biblical mandate; “but perhaps,” a person may think, “it would be counterproductive to subject my child to even more discipline, just to enforce the observance of the customs?”

This would be a grave error indeed, as the *Mah Nishtanah* shows. The child’s first question concerns, not Biblical or Rabbinic law, but Jewish custom, because it is the customs which arouse the children’s interest the most. And, practically speaking, customs greatly enrich the “flavor” of Judaism, helping the child to foster a strong Jewish identity which is so crucial in protecting ourselves from the “inferiority complex” of wanting to imitate others.

The customs are just as much a part of Judaism as all the other laws, and there is immense pedagogic value in preserving them, down to the tiniest detail.

(*Ma’amar* of 11th of Nissan 5740, s.v. *ki yishalcha*; *Likutei Sichos* vol. 32, p. 189, note 32; vol. 1, p. 244ff)

ד' קושיות — The Four Questions.

While one question would, in theory, have been sufficient to enable us to respond to a child’s inquiry (see *Classic Questions* on previous page), nevertheless, the universal Jewish practice is to ask *Four Questions*.

Nothing in Torah is haphazard or incidental. In this case, *Arizal* taught that there is immense significance to the notion of Four Questions: they are a reflection of the fundamental infrastructure of the spiritual cosmos which, according to the Kabbalah, is divided into four spiritual worlds (see *Classic Questions*). Unlike many Jewish practices which typically focus on manipulating one particular spiritual force or emanation, the *Mah Nishtanah* encompasses the entire Chain of Emanation stretching from God down to man.

It seems rather peculiar, however, that we relate to even the highest of the spiritual worlds here by a ritual of question-asking. True spirituality is all about revelation and illumination, whereas questions represent concealment and a lack of clarity, so how could we draw down illumination from above with *questions*?

A number of different solutions could be offered.

a.) Technically speaking they are not *questions*, but *inquiries*. A *question* represents concealment, a tendency to be critical and hostile to the truth. An *inquiry* is merely a request for further illumination.

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

The matzos are uncovered since the Exodus story is to be recited over "Lechem Oni," bread over which many things are declared (Pesachim 115b).

ON ALL OTHER NIGHTS we eat any kind of vegetables, but on this night bitter herbs!

ON ALL OTHER NIGHTS we eat sitting upright or reclining, but on this night we all recline!

► **THE SEDER PLATE IS RETURNED TO ITS PLACE AND THE THREE MATZOS ARE PARTIALLY UNCOVERED.**

TORAS MENACHEM

b.) The Four Questions do not emanate from the Four Worlds themselves, but from forces of evil (*kelipos*) which correspond to the Four Worlds. For example, the highest world, *Atzilus*, is in a state of absolute surrender to God. An example of the corresponding *kelipah* would be a person who is totally surrendered to God *but he is proud of the fact* (see *Ohr ha-Torah, Vayikra* vol. 2, p. 566).

c.) Questions are a symptom of the relative concealment of one spiritual realm compared to the realm above it.

"The Ba'al Shem Tov once said that he could refute even the most brilliant Torah insight. This is because the Torah journeys down from spiritual world to spiritual world, and in each location it takes different expression....Each world yearns to be influenced by its superior, for it lacks some quality which is filled by the higher world....Likewise, the Torah takes on a different expression in each world corresponding to the qualities of that world, and so the idea as it exists in any particular world must possess some inherent weakness or flaw, whereas in the higher world that problem does not exist. But there is nevertheless another problem to be found in that higher world, which is solved in an even higher world, and so on.

"Since the Tzadik of the generation is connected to all worlds, he is able to tell us what is lacking in one world, and how that void is filled by the world above it (Ginzei Nistaros, Ohr Yisra'el p. 41).

d.) The Festival of Pesach is characterized by great Divine revelation *"With great awe...the revelation of the Shechinah"* (p. 105). Since this holiness is showered on us from above, we must make some effort, at least, down below, in order to internalize it. So the four inquiries represent the human contribution: an interest and a willingness to absorb something higher.

(Based on a discussion at the Rebbe's 2nd Seder 5730)

ד' קושיות בליל שני — *The Four Questions on the Second Night.*

After the Four Questions have been fully answered on the first night of Pesach, why is the child required to ask them again on the second night?

Because questions and incorrect presumptions, which enhance the clarity of the final conclusion are themselves considered to be an integral part of the Torah. Thus we find that the requirement to make a blessing before studying Torah applies even if one studies only an incorrect presumption or opinion, never reaching the final conclusion, because even this has the status of "Torah." Furthermore, even after studying the final answer, we can still go back and learn the questions and incorrect presumptions, since they, too, form part of the sacred Torah text.

In Judaism, questions are as much a part of the text as the answers themselves, such that they must be repeatedly studied and emphasized.

(Based on *Sichah* of night of *Simchas Torah* 5736, par. 25)

הלילה הזה כלנו מסבין — *On this night we all recline.*

At the time of the Exodus we can appreciate how Jews might have asked the first three of the Four Questions. Matzah and Maror were Biblical commands at that time, and, according to the *Ba'alei Tosfos*, even the "dipping" was fulfilled by dipping blood on their doorposts (*Da'as Zekeinim* to *Shemos* 12:8). But where do we find they fulfilled the precept of leaning, which was a later, rabbinic enactment?

However, this too is hinted at by the *Midrash Rabah*: The *Midrash* bases an account of Moshe eating his Paschal lamb on the verse, "While the King was reclining at his table" (*Shir ha-Shirim* 1:12).

(*Sichah* of 2nd night of Pesach 5730).



עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעָה בְּמִצְרָיִם

וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם
בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה.

וְאֵלּוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● **Why were the Jewish people punished with Egyptian exile?**

MIDRASH: “Moshe returned to God and said, ‘O God! Why have you mistreated this people?’” (*Shemos* 5:22). Moshe said to God: I took the Book of *Bereishis* (Genesis) and I read it. I observed the deeds of the generation of the Flood and how they were judged fairly; and the deeds of the generation of the Dispersion, and of the Sodomites, how they were judged fairly. But what did *this* people do that they deserved, more than the generations that preceded them, to be enslaved? (*Shemos Rabah* *ibid.*)

SHALOH: We find that all three of the Patriarchs gravitated at some point away from their home towards settling in Egypt. This was in order to rectify the sin of Adam, for which he was sent away from his home in the Garden of Eden. (The parallel between

Egypt and the Garden of Eden is indicated by the verse “like the garden of God, and like the land of Egypt” —*Bereishis* 13:10). And this, too, is the inner reason why the Jewish people were exiled in Egypt: to become spiritually refined, purified and cleansed from the soul-contamination which persisted from the days of Adam (*Maseches Pesachim*, discourse 6).

● **“God took us out from there.” How urgent was this?**

TZROR HAMOR: The Jewish people were living in Egypt for an extended period, during which time they were strongly influenced by the surrounding culture....If God, in His kindness, had not shattered the forces of impurity and taken the Jewish people out at that moment...they would have been trapped there forever (commentary to *Shemos* 12:40).

TORAS MENACHEM

וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה — *God, our God, took us out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm.*

Why does the Haggadah stress that “God took us out from there with a strong hand”? What is the message behind this strikingly anthropomorphic metaphor?

To understand exactly how God took our ancestors out of Egypt we first need to explain why they were exiled there in the first place. According to **Shaloh**, we are to view the events in Egypt as a form of spiritual repair for Adam’s sin: “*The Jewish people were exiled in Egypt to become spiritually refined, purified and cleansed from the soul-contamination which persisted from the days of Adam.*”



We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt,

but God, our God, took us out from
there with a strong hand and with an
outstretched arm (after *Devarim* 6:21).

If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not
taken our ancestors out of Egypt, then we,

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

We say the
following so as
to “begin with
shame and end
with glory”
(*Pesachim* 116a).

TORAS MENACHEM

Suffering can indeed bring about a purification of the soul, but *too much* suffering has the opposite effect of numbing the soul. So when the Egyptians persecuted us excessively (see below p. 90), the Jewish people became cold and indifferent to their God and, instead of gaining from the experience of exile, they became corrupted by it. If history had been left to run its course, the purpose of the exile would never have been fulfilled; instead of the intended spiritual refinement and purification, permanent and irreparable corruption would have occurred (see *Tzror Hamor*).

But despite the necessity of the Exodus, it was, in a sense, a perversion of celestial justice. The Heavenly Court had “sentenced” the Jewish people to a term of spiritual “rehabilitation” in Egypt, and there was no reason to sanction their freedom until the exercise had borne its fruit. Even when it became clear that this “sentence” had proven ineffective and the Jewish people were never going to be rehabilitated in Egypt, the Heavenly Court insisted that justice must prevail: The Jewish people will only come out when they deserve to come out, when their spiritual refinement and purification is complete.

So this was one of those cases where harsh justice had proven to be counterproductive to the overall good. God therefore chose to override the court’s decision, and set the Jewish people free. A complete spiritual refinement would just have to wait for another day.

And this is the meaning of the Haggadah’s statement, “God took us out from there *with a strong hand*.” An extra stamp of Divine authority was needed to overturn what, in hindsight, had become a catastrophic verdict from the Heavenly Court.

(Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 17, pp. 87-8)

וְאֵלֹהֵי לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת-
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם — *If the Holy One, blessed be
He had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt...*

How could the Haggadah assert that if God “*had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, then we... would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt,*” when God had promised Avraham unconditionally that his descendants would be freed after a fixed time: “*They will enslave and oppress them for 400 years*” (*Bereishis* 15:13)?

The Torah teaches us that even when a slave is freed from bondage he may nevertheless choose not to leave, saying: “*I love my master...I will not go free*” (*Shemos* 21:5). Having become accustomed to the “conveniences” of enslavement—freedom from any financial responsibility; all basic needs catered to, *etc.*,—the slave is sadly reluctant to regain once again the dignity of personal autonomy.

With this in mind we can appreciate that scripture’s promise to let the Jewish people free after four hundred years poses no contradiction to the notion that

אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הֲרִי אָנוּ וּבָנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי
 בָּנֵינוּ מִשְׁעַבְדִּים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרַיִם.
 וְאֶפִּילוּ כָלֵנוּ חֻכְמִים כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים כָּלֵנוּ
 יוֹדְעִים אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה, מְצֹוֹה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר
 בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. וְכָל־הַמְרָבָה לְסַפֵּר
 בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הֲרִי זֶה מִשְׁבָּח:

TORAS MENACHEM

“we...would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt,” because, in all likelihood, *the Jewish people would have themselves returned to Egypt*, especially upon encountering difficulties in the desert.

It is only because “the Holy One, blessed be He” *actively* took us out of Egypt, illuminating our souls with a desire to serve Him, that we managed to stay out of Egypt. The scriptural promise of a four-hundred year exile would have been sufficient to end our physical servitude, but we needed God’s personal help to rid us of the slave mentality so as to ensure that we would choose to remain free.

In fact, even with this Divine assistance, we still find that the Jewish people longed to return to Egypt (see *Bamidbar* 11:4-5; 14:4), so we can imagine that without the miracle of the Exodus, they would have had no qualms in actually returning.

It is only because “God took us out from there” that we stand here as free men today.

(Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 17, p. 88)

מִשְׁעַבְדִּים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרַיִם — *We would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.*

The Haggadah seems to be stating the obvious here. If God “*had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, then we...would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.*” Clearly, if we had not left, we would still be there. What insight is the Haggadah trying to teach us?

One of the most sophisticated concepts to be found in any study of *halachah* is that of *peulah nimsheches* (a legally ongoing event). This is where an event which has ceased from the onlooker’s perspective, is

nevertheless from a legal perspective considered to be repeating itself every moment.

While there are many examples of this phenomenon, the most pertinent to our case relates to the principle of *hekdesh*, consecrating property for use in the Temple. Jewish law permits a pledge of consecration to later be annulled, which—explains the *Rogatchover Ga’on*—indicates that the initial act of consecration must have been a legally ongoing event: “*Every moment it is consecrated anew, for the fact that the vow of consecration could be annulled at any moment shows that it is constantly being renewed by his initial declaration*” (*Tzafnas Pane’ach, Arachin* 4:28). In other words the law perceives it as if the person’s verbal declaration of consecration is being uttered every second, thereby maintaining the object’s consecrated status. Annulling the vow is thus merely a case of decreeing that the ongoing “speech” should cease.

In the current passage, the Haggadah teaches us that the Exodus, too, is a *legally ongoing event*. “If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt,” *i.e. in an ongoing fashion that continues to this day*, “then we...would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.”

Why was it necessary for God to make the Exodus an ongoing activity? This can be gleaned from the case of *hekdesh*. The reason why a verbal stream is required to continuously render an object consecrated is because the very notion goes against the grain. Mundane, physical objects do not, as a rule, become “holy,” any less than a rock stays in the air when it is thrown upwards. So to maintain holiness in a physical object requires ongoing input.

our children, and our children's children
would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

Even if we were all men of wisdom, people
of understanding, and knowledgeable in
the Torah, we would still be obligated to
tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

And whoever discusses the Exodus
from Egypt at length is praiseworthy.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● **“We would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.”**
How is this feasible?

LIKUTEI TA’AMIM U’MINHAGIM: It does not mean that we would still be slaves to the same Pharaoh, because he would be long dead. Rather, we would be slaves to another king of Egypt who, in accor-

dance with the ancient Egyptian custom, would also be called Pharaoh (see *Rashi* to *Tehillim* 34:1).

Although today's leaders of Egypt are not called Pharaoh, perhaps if the Jews had not left the country, Egypt would still be the same superpower and continue to call their kings by the name Pharaoh.

TORAS MENACHEM

Likewise, the notion that we have been redeemed from Egypt, never to return, goes against the grain of the natural course of history—for who is to say that a similar scenario might not repeat itself again? It thus requires an ongoing Exodus. So, ultimately, the Exodus was not merely a past event which had a profound effect on the future, but a phenomenon that *shapes* history on a day-to-day basis.

(Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 5, p. 174ff;
Sichah of 2nd Night of Pesach 5724)

וְאִפְלוּ כָּלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים — *Even if we were all men of wisdom, etc.*

At first glance, this statement is hard to comprehend. The requirement to discuss the Exodus on the night of the 15th of Nissan is a Biblical commandment, so why would one imagine that scholars would be exempt? Even if they *know* the story already, Biblical law requires them to *relate* it verbally on that night.

Most of us are willing, at some point or another, to engage in behavior that violates our beliefs and convictions. This weakness, of course, is the cause of all sinful behavior. We *know* what the upright and moral

thing is, but *doing it* is another story. The Sages referred to this general phenomenon of cognitive dissonance as “Egypt,” *Mitzrajim*, since it represents a constriction (*maytzar*) or blockage between the mind (what we ought to do) and the heart (what we are excited and motivated to do).

How do we “leave Egypt” and ensure a consistency between mind and heart? Perhaps the answer is to have a crystal-clear understanding of our principles. Maybe our hearts sway from what is right because we do not fully appreciate *why* it is right?

In response, the Haggadah says: “*Even if we were all men of wisdom, people of understanding, and knowledgeable in the Torah, we would still be obligated to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.*” Even if our minds appreciated the ethics of the Torah *perfectly*, a certain blockage (*maytzar*) between the mind and heart would remain. Even if we were so wise that we were careful never to sin, our *Mitzvos* would still be somewhat half-hearted, because *understanding* does not necessarily engender *excitement*.

The only way to truly “leave Egypt,” to bridge the chasm between mind and heart, is through a *suprarrational* commitment to the Torah. So long as

מעשה בְּרַבִּי אֶלְיָעָזֵר וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְרַבִּי
 אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־עֲזַרְיָה וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא
 וְרַבִּי טַרְפוֹן שֶׁהָיוּ מְסַבִּים בְּבֵנֵי בְּרַק, וְהָיוּ
 מְסַפְּרִים בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם כָּל־אוֹתוֹ הַלַּיְלָה עַד
 שֶׁבָּאוּ תַלְמִידֵיהֶם וְאָמְרוּ לָהֶם: "רְבוֹתֵינוּ, הֲגִיעַ
 זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שֶׁל שַׁחֲרִית":

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● **Why does this incident appear here?**

ABARBANEL: Because it proves what the Haggadah has just stated: 1. Even if we were *all men of wisdom* etc. we would still be obligated to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. 2. And whoever discusses the Exodus from Egypt *at length* is praiseworthy.

CHIDA: This incident demonstrates that two types of Jews whose ancestors were not enslaved are nevertheless required to recount the Exodus story. They are: a.) members of the Tribe of Levi (*kohanim* and levites); and, b.) converts.

In this case, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah and Rabbi Tarfon were *kohanim*, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua were levites, and Rabbi Akiva was from a family of converts (*Simchas ha-Regel*).

● **Is it surprising that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah and Rabbi Akiva discussed the Exodus all night?**

IMREI SHEFER: Yes. These two Sages maintain that the Paschal lamb may only be eaten until midnight, and Rabbi Eliezer states further that there is no obligation to discuss the Exodus after midnight. Nevertheless,

TORAS MENACHEM

observance is contingent on our own intellectual appreciation of Judaism, only so much enthusiasm will percolate through into the heart. But when we act out of dedication to a Higher Authority, then our passion to do the right thing will be insatiable.

(Based on *Sichah* of 2nd night of Pesach 5721; *Ma'amar* s.v. *Kimay Tzayscha* 5719)

רְבוֹתֵינוּ הֲגִיעַ זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שֶׁל שַׁחֲרִית
 — *Teachers! The time has come for reciting the morning Shema.*

Taken at face value, it seems that if it were not for the students' announcement here, the rabbis would

not have stopped to recite the morning *Shema* at all. How is such a notion conceivable?

According to the Jerusalem Talmud a person whose life is dedicated to Torah study (*toraso umnaso*) is exempt from reading the *Shema* (*Brachos* 1:2).^{*} Since relating the story of the Exodus is a form of Torah study, these full-time scholars were exempt from reciting the *Shema*, and did not plan to stop studying. The students, however, had not reached this level of *toraso umnaso* and were thus required to exempt themselves from the Seder and recite the *Shema*.

On an ordinary night, that is what would have happened: the Sages would have continued to study and the students would have said the *Shema*. But on

^{*}The Babylonian Talmud appears to contest this ruling, stating that a person who is dedicated to Torah study is obligated to interrupt his studies in order to recite the *Shema* (*Shabbos* 11a. This view is echoed by the Code of Jewish Law, *Orach Chaim*, end of ch. 106.) However, it could be argued that there is no difference of opinion here: the Jerusalem Talmud simply refers to a person whose level of dedication to Torah study is of a higher caliber (see *Likutei Sichos* vol. 17, p. 357ff). [Thus, in the Haggadah's discussion here, the Sages were on this higher level, whereas the students were not.]

Upon reaching
this passage the
Rebbe Rashab
exclaimed, "A
fine gathering!"
With these words
he actually drew
these tzadikim
back into this
world to the
extent that he
actually could
see them with
his eyes
(Sichah of 2nd
Night of Pesach
5712).

I T ONCE HAPPENED that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon were reclining at a Seder in Bnei Brak. They were discussing the Exodus from Egypt that entire night, until their students came and said to them: "Teachers! The time has come for reciting the morning *Shema!*"

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

in practice, we see that these two Sages continued to discuss the Exodus all night.

● **Why are the Sages cited in this order? And why are we informed that the Seder took place in Bnei Brak?**

LIKUTEI TA'AMIM U'MINHAGIM: Rabbi Akiva was the Rabbi of Bnei Brak, where this incident occurred. Nevertheless, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua are mentioned before him, since they were his teachers.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah is also mentioned before Rabbi Akiva, due to his esteemed lineage and his status as Nasi (leader of the Supreme Court).

While Rabbi Tarfon was also one of Rabbi Akiva's teachers, he later became his colleague of equal standing. So being that the Seder occurred in Rabbi Akiva's town, Rabbi Akiva is mentioned first.

● **Why did the students interrupt their teachers at the *earliest* time to recite the morning *Shema*, when many hours of the morning still remained?**

REBBE RAYATZ: The *Shema* is intended to bring a person to appreciate God's unity: "*Hear O Israel, God is our God, God is one.*" According to the Kabbalah, this is achieved progressively: the evening *Shema* brings a person to perceive a lower level of unity (*yichudah tata'ah*), whereas the *Shema* recited the following morning lifts a person to a more profound appreciation of unity (*yichudah ila'ah*).

After listening to their teachers, the students exclaimed that they had already, *while it was still night*, been uplifted to the level of the morning *Shema*. They were effectively saying: If your goal is to inspire us then you have completed your task! (*Sefer Hasichos* 5704 p. 88).

TORAS MENACHEM

Pesach night, a person is not merely required to study about the Exodus, he must *discuss* it, i.e., share it with his students. So, in this case, the teachers could not remain aloof on their own, higher level of Torah study; they were forced to focus downwards, towards the level of the students. And now, finding themselves closer to the students' level, *the teachers became obligated to recite the Shema, just like the students.*

With the above in mind, we can appreciate how this incident offers support for the previous passage of the Haggadah, "*Whoever discusses the Exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy*" [see *Abarbanel*]. At first glance, the Haggadah's choice of proof seems peculiar: Here we have a case where a Seder was *halt-*

ed to do something else *more important*. If anything, this highlights more the greatness of saying *Shema* as a *mitzvah* which takes priority over the need to "discuss the Exodus at length," something that hardly belongs here in the Haggadah, a text aimed at bringing to light the greatness of the Exodus.

However, based on the above we can appreciate the Haggadah's intention in citing this incident, since here we learn an important clarification of what it means to "*discuss the Exodus at length.*" Tonight the story must not merely be recounted in a way that we find personally engaging; it must be focused directly at the level of our students and children.

(Based on *Sichah* of 2nd night of Pesach 5725)

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן-עֲזַרְיָה:

הָרִי אֲנִי כְּבֶן-שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, וְלֹא זָכִיתִי שְׂתֵאמֹר
 יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם בְּלִילוֹת עַד שְׂדַרְשָׁה בֶן זֹמָא,
 שְׁנֵאמַר: "לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ
 מִצְרַיִם כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ."

"יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" — הַיָּמִים.

"כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" — לְהֵבִיא הַלִּילוֹת.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● **Why did Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah say, "I am like a seventy year old man"?**

TALMUD: When Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was asked to become head of the Academy, he went and consulted his wife.

She said to him, "But you have no white hair!" (He was eighteen years old that day).

A miracle occurred for him and eighteen rows of hair on his beard turned white. That is why Rabbi

Elazar ben Azaryah said, "I am *like* a seventy-year-old man (*Brachos* 27b).

RASHI: He meant, "I already look elderly," but he was not really old. He began to look aged on the day that Rabban Gamliel vacated the leadership and he took office, and on that day Ben Zoma expounded this verse (*Brachos* 12b).

ARIZAL: If one adds the age that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah reached in his former incarnation to his present eighteen years, it makes a total of seventy.

TORAS MENACHEM

הָרִי אֲנִי כְּבֶן שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה — *I am like a seventy year old man.*

Why did Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah bemoan that despite having reached old age he "did not merit" to fully fathom the law, when in fact he was not old at all (see *Talmud*)?

The answer is that spiritually speaking he *was* old, as *Arizal* writes that he carried fifty-two years from a previous incarnation. And that is why he miraculously sprouted white hair (as the *Talmud* states), to demonstrate that this spiritual seniority had permeated his conscious, bodily existence to the extent that even his hair was old.

The Kabbalah teaches that, like Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, most of us are incarnations of souls that lived in previous generations (see *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* ch. 20). So the lesson from this passage of the Haggadah is that, as latter generation Jews, we have an elevated spiritual potential by virtue of the good deeds performed by our "former selves," in previous incarnations. And since only good persists, but not evil, we have only to benefit from our souls' past history.

No wonder, then, that we will be the generation to finally bring Mashiach, since we are charged with the spiritual potential from all our illustrious forefathers.

(Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 1, p. 246ff)

RABBI ELAZAR BEN AZARYAH SAID:

**QUICK
INSIGHT**
Presumably,
this is what
Rabbi Elazar
ben Azaryah
actually said at
the previously
mentioned Seder
in Bnei Brak
(Likutei Ta'amim
u'Minhagim).

I AM LIKE a seventy-year-old man and I did not yet merit [to find a Scriptural proof, that in addition to the daytime obligation] to mention the Exodus from Egypt [there is also an obligation to mention it] **every night**—until [today, when] Ben Zoma demonstrated a proof from the following verse:

“That you should remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life” (Devarim 16:3).

[Ben Zoma explained that if the verse would merely have stated,] “the days of your life,” there would already be a sufficient proof for a daytime obligation [to mention the Exodus]. The fact that the verse stresses “**all** the days of your life,” indicates a further obligation [to mention the Exodus] **in the evenings**.

TORAS MENACHEM

כל ימי חייך — *All the days of your life.*

Here, the Haggadah points to the greatness of the Exodus from Egypt, that even after leaving Egypt, there is a legal obligation to remember the Exodus from Egypt, “all the days of your life,” both by day and at night.

The reason for this is because the Exodus from Egypt is “a major foundation and strong pillar within our Torah and our faith” (*Sefer ha-Chinnuch, mitzvah 21*), which introduced the entire concept of “redemption”—that Jews left the state of slavery and became intrinsically free (see p. 166). Furthermore, as noted above (p. 52), the Exodus is an ongoing event.

In practical terms, Exodus means a freedom of the soul from the confines and “imprisonment” of the body (and the world in general), so as to achieve a total unity with God through observance of Torah and its commandments. Since this theme is so central to

Torah and Judaism, there is a directive to “remember the day you left Egypt *all the days of your life*,” to the extent that “*In each and every generation, and likewise each and every day, a person must see himself as if he personally left Egypt*” (*Tanya*, ch. 47).

In this daily obligation, there are two levels:

- a.) “A *daytime* obligation”—when the light of God shines we must attempt to break out of our internal constraints.
- b.) “In the evenings”—even in a time of darkness, when the light of God does not shine, during the darkness of Exile, there can *and must* be the “Exodus from Egypt.”

By Divine providence, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was appointed leader of the Jewish people on the same day as he discovered the above insight (as *Rashi* states). This points to the fact that the goal of a true Jewish leader is to connect “all the days of your

וְחֻמֵּי אֲזַמְרִים:

“יְמֵי חֵיִךְ” – הַעוֹלָם הַזֶּה.

“כֹּל יְמֵי חֵיִךְ” – לְהַבִּיא לִיְמֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ:

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● How are we to understand Ben Zoma’s view, that the Exodus won’t be mentioned in the future?

RASHBA: The *mitzvah* of recalling the Exodus could more accurately be described as a verbal declaration of miracles which God has performed for us, so as to

remind us of His providence and to strengthen our trust in Him. Thus, according to Ben Zoma, when we will recall the miracles of the future redemption, which will be of a greater magnitude than those of the Exodus, we will achieve the goal of this *mitzvah* to an even greater extent (*Chidushei Agados* *ibid.*).

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life” of every single Jew in this physical world with redemption from limitations in general, and with the theme of global redemption. And this form of leadership is especially pertinent “in the evenings,” during the time of Exile.

Therefore, it is precisely on the day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah ascended to lead the Jewish people that he was enlightened with this idea.

(*Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemos* 5752)

כל יְמֵי חֵיִךְ לְהַבִּיא לִיְמֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ — “All the days of your life,” includes also an obligation to mention the Exodus in the Messianic Era.

Our view of the Exodus from Egypt tends to be colored by the historical events that followed. We know that soon afterwards, the Jews worshipped the Golden Calf, were forced to wander in the desert for forty years, and even after conquering the Land of Israel they were later exiled from it. So we tend to perceive the Exodus as a “high point” in Jewish history which was later followed by several “lows,” such as the state in which we find ourselves now, after the destruction of the Temple. Recalling the Exodus thus instills us with hope that we will once again return to a “high point” with the final redemption through Mashiach.

At the time of the Exodus, however, this was not how the Jewish people perceived the matter. They certainly did not see themselves as enjoying a special moment of Divine kindness which would inspire them through the later difficulties that were to follow. Rather, they hoped that God would take them imme-

diately to their final destination, where the Temple would be built and they would live forever in a state of peace and spiritual bliss.

Indeed, this was God’s very intention, as the Midrash teaches: “If the Jewish people had waited for Moshe [to descend the mountain], and not performed that act [of worshipping the Calf], there would not have been any further exiles” (*Shemos Rabah* 32:1).

In the Zohar we find the theme elaborated further: “When the Jewish people left Egypt, God wanted to make for them a land...and build for them a Temple... But they angered Him in the desert which led to their deaths, and God brought their children into the land. The Temple was then built by man, which is why it did not last” (*Zohar* III 221a).

Our initial reaction to these sources, that God intended the Exodus from Egypt to be a final redemption, is that we are reading here of a plan which unfortunately did not materialize. Plan ‘a’ was an immediate and permanent entry into the Land of Israel; plan ‘b’ was what actually happened—three further tragic exiles before the final redemption will ultimately materialize. Upon the failure of plan ‘a,’ the ideal scenario, it became necessary to resort to plan ‘b.’

By looking at the events from this perspective, we naturally perceive the Exodus and the final redemption as two distinct entities, one partially successful, and the other perfect and eternal. We are thus left with a problem that when the imperfect redemption is surpassed by a perfect one, what will be the point in continuing to recall the previous, imperfect redemption?

THE SAGES SAID:

“The days of your life,” would be sufficient to include the current era.

[The fact that the verse states] “*all* the days of your life,” includes [also an obligation to mention the Exodus] **in the Messianic Era.**

TORAS MENACHEM

However, there is another approach to understanding these texts which helps to reconcile the difficulties mentioned above. Namely, that the Exodus and the final redemption are two elements or phases of *one single process*.

It is not the case that the original plan to enter the land and build a permanently enduring Temple was aborted and replaced with an alternative course. Rather, the original plan is still in effect, only it has suffered various hiccups and delays along the way. The Exodus from Egypt and the future redemption are thus one and the same thing: the Exodus was that moment when God decided to start bringing us to our land and give us a Holy Temple forever, and it is a decision that He never revoked. (He may have changed His mind about how quickly the promise is to be fulfilled, but the promise itself was never retracted.) Thus, while the route may have been more tortuous than expected, the period between His first redemptive act and the complete fulfillment of that plan can only be described as the consummation of one single process.

Viewed from this perspective, our entire history is actually a process of “leaving Egypt” or “heading towards complete redemption,” which are both essentially the same thing.

(From Rambam: *Principles of Faith* 8 & 9,
[*Kol Menachem* 2007], p. 328ff)

🕒 **להביא לימות המשיח** — *An obligation to mention the Exodus in the Messianic Era.*

Why did the Sages maintain that we will mention the Exodus from Egypt—an incomplete redemption which was followed by many national catastrophes—after the final, permanent redemption has arrived? Does it make sense to mention an inferior “product” when one is in possession of a superior one?

The Egyptian Exodus symbolizes the Jew who is

distant from God but makes a sincere, concerted effort to come closer. For, in Egypt, the Jews were steeped in idolatry, but they nevertheless fled from their homes into a barren desert, trusting that God would take care of them.

The final redemption, on the other hand, represents the Jew who is close to God and finds it easy to serve Him. For the striking change that we will find in the future era is that of global transformation, from a world dominated by corruption to one that is totally free of evil and sin. In the microcosm, this represents the Jew who has transformed his natural, animalistic urges, to become totally pious; a person who positively enjoys the worship of his Creator.

The age-old question is: Who is greater? Our spiritually compromised friend who tries hard to be better—the spiritual warrior? Or the pious saint who is enraptured and enthralled with the worship of God?

There is, of course, no straightforward answer. The saint is definitely more spiritually “beautiful” and must surely please His Creator greatly. But the warrior demonstrates more effort and dedication: he still retains strong ties to the unholy and the profane, and yet he repeatedly tears himself away from the pleasures of this world to do a *mitzvah*. So both types of Jew have their own irreplaceable contribution to make.

Therefore, in the future, when we will all be saints, there will remain a need to perpetuate the “warrior” type of service in our daily lives, so that its unique quality will not cease to be. Of course, we will not be able to actually fight the evil inclination, for evil will then be something we only read about in history books; but we will at least be able to mention the superiority of a warrior-type service. Therefore, the Sages maintained that, in the future, we will continue to mention the Exodus from Egypt, the symbol of the spiritual warrior, on a daily basis.

(*ibid.*, pp. 326-7)

בְּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם

בְּרוּךְ הוּא, בְּרוּךְ שֶׁנִּתֵּן תּוֹרָה

לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

כְּנֶגֶד אַרְבַּעַת בְּנֵי דְבָרָה תּוֹרָה:

אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד תָּם,

וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינֵנו יוֹדֵעַ לְשֵׁאוֹל:

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why do we bless God at this point?

AVUDRAHAM: A *darshan* (one who expounds a text in public) usually begins: "In the name of God..." Since we are about to read a passage which expounds upon scripture, we too begin, "Blessed is God."

SHIBOLEI HA-LEKET: We are now about to recite four verses where the Torah instructs us to tell the Exodus story to our children. Since telling the story is a Biblical commandment, we should, in principle, make a full blessing (see p. 42). Since this is not done in practice, we say the word "Blessed" here to allude to the concept of a blessing. And we say it four times, corresponding to the four verses that follow.

MALBIM: In times gone by, the head of the household would say, "Blessed is the All-present One," and everybody would respond, "Blessed be He!" Then he would say, "Blessed is He who gave etc.," and everybody would respond again "Blessed be He!"

● Why is God referred to as "All-present"?

MIDRASH: Because He constitutes the place of the world, but He is not limited to its place (*Bereishis Rabah* 68:9).

● Does the Torah actually mention Four Sons?

RASHI: No. The Torah mentions in four different places that one must tell the story of the Exodus to your son. From the different context in each case, the Haggadah derives that we are speaking of four different types of sons.

● Why do the Four Sons appear here in a different order than their verses in the Torah?

AVUDRAHAM: They are listed here in order of intelligence. The Wicked Son, though rebellious, is highly intelligent, and the Simple Son has some wisdom, at least.



BLESSED IS THE ALL-PRESENT ONE!

BLESSED IS HE! BLESSED IS HE
WHO GAVE THE TORAH
TO HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL. BLESSED IS HE!

THE TORAH SPEAKS OF FOUR SONS:
ONE WISE, ONE WICKED, ONE SIMPLE,
AND ONE CLUELESS.

TORAS MENACHEM

ברוך המקום... ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל
— *Blessed is the All-present One!... Blessed is He
Who gave the Torah to His people Israel.*

Why is God referred to here in particular as the “All-present One”? And why does the Haggadah choose to give its fourfold blessing here when introducing the Four Sons, and not, for example, when speaking of the Four Questions, or the Four Cups?

The answer is because the core of the blessing, “Blessed is He *who gave the Torah to His people Israel*,” belongs here, in reference to the Four Sons. For while the Four Cups and the other parts of the Seder are mere *details* within the Torah, the goal of teaching our children is a *general* theme of the Torah itself. By way of illustration: a.) In our most central prayer, the *Shema*, we emphasize “*and you shall teach it to your children*.” b.) In the blessings on Torah study we stress, “*May we and our children and the children of Your entire people... be students of the Torah*.” c.) And “*after three generations the Torah seeks its home*” (*Bava Metzia 85a*).

To underscore this point further, God is referred to here as “the All-present One,” i.e. how He expresses himself in this physical world. For in the heavens above there are no children, since the angels cannot be fruitful and multiply. Only down here can the crucial imperative of “*you shall teach it to your children*,” be fulfilled.

(Based on *Sichah* of 2nd Night of Pesach 5730)

כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה — *The Torah speaks of Four Sons.*

In a Torah scroll, if one letter is missing, regardless of what letter it may be, it compromises the sanctity of all the other letters. Thus, the fact that *the Torah* speaks of Four Sons, means that: a.) All Four Sons are *crucial* to the Jewish people as a whole. b.) All Four Sons, regardless of their standing, are *equally* important, just as every letter is crucial to the Torah, regardless of what letter it may be.

Our job, then, is to positively influence all Four Sons, i.e. to bring “blessing” to all of their lives