



Haggadah Companion

BY THE GRADE 12 STUDENTS OF
KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL

2015/5775

Introduction Rabbi Stephen Berger

Did you ever wonder why we do all these strange things at the Passover Seder?

We spend so much time getting everyone settled around the table in their right places, having ransacked the bedrooms to provide everyone with the pillow, only to get everyone right back up again to ritually wash.... Twice. Why do we pass around an appetizer of something we normally garnish real food with and then dip it into salt water and eat? Why do we save a piece of matzah for dessert? Why do we play hide and seek with a piece of matzah? We open up the front door for invisible people and stop to make a sandwich at our fine meal. We eat with a pillow and lean when we eat. Why?

The answer is actually not so profound. The Talmud explains that the entire exercise is designed to keep the children around the table interested and to get them asking questions about what is going on. Learning is best understood and longest remembered if it engages the curiosity and interest

This is what we try to do everyday at King David High School. In order to leave a lasting impression, we seek to excite and challenge our teens to ask their own questions and seek out answers. But don't take my word for it. Peruse through this Passover primer. Our KDHS Grade 12 students wrote it. They chose and researched the topics that interested them most. After reading what they wrote, you are bound to have a new understanding of the relevance of the seder and hopefully some new questions of your own.

Chag Sameach,
Rabbi Stephen Berger

What did the Wise Son say? by Mia Kaye

“The Wise Son said ‘What are the testimonies, decrees, and ordinances which HASHEM, our God, has commanded you?’ Therefore the laws of the Pesach are explained to him: That one may not eat after the final taste of the Pesach Afikoman.” - Haggadah

Commentator Don Isaac Abarbanel, interprets the wise son as a sort of “Smart Alec”. This so called ‘wise guy’ child is arrogant in his ‘wisdom.’ He believes that he shows off the distinctions he can make between types of mitzvot. *‘But you teach him the subtleties down to the last detail in the Mishna.’* Abarbanel believes that the wise son should see that he appears wise in his own eyes, but there is still a lot for him to learn. There is twice as much wisdom in these laws as there is in his questions. His wisdom must grow as well as his humility.

Commentator Israel Eldad, has a unique take on the wise son that I connected with. One who thinks he possesses wisdom already will not bother to ask at all. The truly wise child asks questions that are genuine questions that do not make a mockery like the wicked child does, and definitely not superficially like the simple child. The wise child has the strength to know that he does not know everything. He then searches for the ‘true nature of the testimonies, decrees, and ordinances which HASHEM, our God, has commanded you’. Ironically, to the untrained eye the wise person might appear dumb because he is the one who has to ask and the son who does not even know how to ask, might actually appear smart like he “knows it all” because he does not bother to ask questions.

Yachatz by Josh Weidman

Yachatz is often one of the most questioned parts of the seder. Two questions always rise at my seders. The first being: Why are there three matzahs? Some commentators suggest that we have three matzahs to represent Kohanim, Levi'im and Yisrael. I like this idea, because having three matzahs representing hierarchal ranks of the Jewish people includes all the different types of Jewish people in the seder. However, because we break the middle matzah, which hierarchal rank of the Jewish people is represented by the broken matzah? Putting a name on which hierarchal rank of the Jewish people that is represented by the middle and broken matzah almost seems unfair. Between the three ranks I truly do not know who should be represented by the broken matzah.

Secondly, why do we break the middle matzah? Is it a symbol of the skimpy fare endured by our ancestors when they were slaves? Do we break it as a symbol of hospitality? The middle matzah might capture the image of our ancestors' position. They were caught between a rock and a hard place – between the bricks they were

forced to make and Pharaoh's hardened heart. They also were caught between Pharaoh's army and the sea. Another possibility is that the broken matzah reminds us that even when life is at its darkest, when the Egypt within which we dwell is the most oppressive, there still is reason to hope. We still have the other half of the matzah that we save for later. In the end, Pharaoh did let our people go. The sea did split. Our people did achieve liberation and redemption.

Sephardic vs Ashkenazi seders by Maxim Barnett

As a child I always looked forward to Pesach seders. My mother comes from a Turkish-Sephardic background so we have always observed Pesach the Turkish-Sephardic way. As each year passed and we spent seders at other homes, I came to realize that the Passover seder can be celebrated very differently, not only between Ashkenazi and Sephardic homes, but also between different groups of Ashkenazim and Sephardim. The "Arab-Sephardim" from Arab lands such as Morocco, Yemen and Syria are vastly different from the Spanish-Jewish Sephardim and these differences make for very interesting customs. The most basic difference between Sephardim and Ashkenazim relates to kitniyot, which are eaten by Sephardim but not by Ashkenazi Jews. The literal translation of kitniyot is "little pieces," usually referring to legumes, but the term is used for several varieties of grain or meal that are not actually chametz but are still forbidden in the Ashkenazi tradition. These include rice, corn, millet, string beans, green peas and various kinds of dried beans, such as lentils, split peas, soybeans and chickpeas. For Ashkenazim, the rule also extends to the oils derived from these legumes, as well as such borderline cases as peanuts. The 13th-century codifier, R. Isaac of Corbeil, author of the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* (*S'mak*) points out that no authorities consider rice or lentils to be chametz, however the edict is intended to prevent any possible mix-up between food made of these items and real chametz. Even today, rice-eating Sephardim carefully sift through rice several times to make sure no wheat berries or other forms of chametz have been mixed in by mistake. Of course, today, one can buy "presorted for Pesach rice" in areas where there are large Sephardic communities. The kitniyot problem was further complicated by the fact that various kinds of grain were ground into flour or meal, making it even more difficult to distinguish them from one another. Interestingly, there were many in the Ashkenazi world, such as the Tosafist Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, who argued against the custom of prohibiting kitniyot, claiming that there was no valid reason for it. Eventually, however, the rule was adopted by all the Ashkenazi communities so that by the 17th century, even authorities such as Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Ashkenzi of Moravia, who had originally determined the prohibition on kitniyot to be objectionable and pointless, now admitted that he was powerless to abolish it in practice "unless all the great rabbis of the generation unite with me in abolishing it." Kitniyot became forbidden to Ashkenazim and this prohibition was waived only in situations of dire need -- famine or wartime -- and even then, only temporarily. One question worth asking is, given that Jews from so many places have now been gathered

in one country, why should we continue to observe customs such as kitniyot today? Can't the rabbis finally unify Jewish practice on such a basic point? The answer is that, from a halachic legal perspective, any custom accepted by a community over a significant period of time carries great weight. Time and again, rabbis defend a seemingly inexplicable practice with the reasoning that "this is a venerable custom, observed by communities since earliest times, and one is not to change it."

Ashkenazim and Sephardim have different seder plates. There are six symbolic foods that are placed on the Sephardic Passover seder plate, with the seventh symbolic food being either salt water, vinegar, lemon juice, or lime juice that is set apart from the plate in a small cup or bowl. Some Ashkenazim use only five symbolic foods, excluding the second maror known as the chazeret. Since Sephardim put all the symbolic foods of Passover plus the three matzot on the Passover seder plate, their Passover seder plate is usually bigger than the Passover seder plate used by the Ashkenazim, who use a separate plate for the three matzot. Sephardim also do not have anything in between their three matzot while the Ashkenazim have dividers between their three matzot so that the three matzot are each in their own compartments.

Most Sephardim follow the rabbinical opinion of Rabbi Isaac Ben Solomon Luria (the "Arizal") concerning the arrangement of the symbolic foods of Passover on the Passover seder plate while most Ashkenazim follow the rabbinical opinion of Rabbi Moses Isserlis (the "Ramah"), and arrange the symbolic foods of Passover in a slightly different arrangement. Interestingly, the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of The Netherlands use three Passover seder plates. They place three symbolic foods on each plate. In this case, the nine symbolic foods that are divided into groups of three for each seder plate comprise the following: maror, chazeret, karpas, roasted hard-boiled egg, zeroah, charoset, and the three matzahs.

Pesach differences also extend to how one runs the seder. Iraqi and Kurdistan Jews, for example, begin the seder with a dramatic dialogue whereby one of the children goes outside, knocks on the door and then answers the questions of the seder leader: "Where have you come from?" "Egypt." "Where are you going?" "To Jerusalem." "What are your supplies?" The child answers by reciting the Four Questions, thereby opening the seder. A similar custom is observed by Yemenite Jews, who perform a symbolic reenactment of the Exodus. The seder leader gets up from the table, throws the afikoman in its bag over his back like a knapsack, walks around the room leaning on a cane and relates to those assembled how he has just now come out of Egypt and experienced miracles. At Afghani seders, halfway through the reading of the Haggadah, the hostess gives each guest a thick, foot long scallion. When the singing of the "Dayenu" begins, each person bangs his onion over the head and arms of his neighbours. Nobody seemed to know the origin or rationale, but it is still practiced today.

In Turkish-Jewish custom, every Pesach somebody would dress up, pretending to be Moses, and try to convince the seder guests to come with him out of Egypt. This always ends up in a big, enjoyable debate over absolutely everything. Another custom is to pass the seder plate over the tops of the seder guests heads. Of course, when it came to passing the plate over the tops of the children's heads, the seder-plate holder would always pretend that he was going to drop the plate, leaving the children laughing. While some Ashkenazim have the custom of reserving the recitation of The Four Questions for the youngest child at the Passover seder table, many Sephardim do not. Instead, all participants at a Sephardic Passover seder chant The Four Questions in unison.

Another difference between Sephardim and Ashkenazim pertains to the Afikomen. Ashkenazim have the custom of hiding and "stealing" the Afikomen, whereas Sephardim do not have this tradition. The text of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Haggadot is basically the same, although there are some minor differences. I very much enjoy these differences and would be sad to see them disappear, but, sadly, I think that this is what will happen over time. Ashkenazi and Sephardi customs will disappear and be replaced by a more uniform custom. As for me, I plan to continue on with my family's Turkish-Jewish tradition, just as I was raised. I want to sing the concluding songs in Ladino to keep my grandfather's customs alive. I want to pretend to be Moses and make my children and grandchildren think and debate. I want to pass the seder plate over the tops of everybody's heads and pretend to spill it on my children to make them laugh like I did. I hope my grandchildren will want to do the same.

Freeing Our People and Ourselves by Ira Adilman

The extremely significant event explored throughout the Haggadah is the freeing of the Jewish People. The Jews were enslaved by Pharaoh and lived excruciating and intolerable lives. They were forced to work ruthlessly in the scorching hot sun day after day while getting whipped and abused mercilessly. The picture I drew represents the anguish felt both internally and externally by a slave. Although the man in the photo did not build the entire pyramid himself, from an emotional standpoint he feels as if he must carry an entire pyramid everywhere he goes. He is carrying the pyramid each step he takes because that is how isolated and imprisoned he is.

Rabbi Michael Strassfeld has an interesting commentary on the freeing of the Jewish slaves. He says after we were freed the Jews had the possibility to become distrustful of any larger society, never seeking relationship or partnership with others. But to believe and act in those ways would be to become Pharaoh —hateful and wary of the stranger. As he quotes from the Torah, "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens. You shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Rabbi Strassfeld explains how the freeing of the Jews is so important because it reminds

us we must always be accepting of others. If we were not to accept strangers as our own, we would become Pharaoh.

The Alexander Rebbe has an interesting commentary regarding the freeing of the Jews. He says a significant purpose of the seder is not to only reflect on the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt, but to reflect upon what we might be enslaved to today. The seder is meant to be a very personal experience, where we use our ancestors past to reflect upon our own problems. Similar to how the Jews were slaves to Pharaoh, we as individuals might be enslaved to a higher power as well. You can be enslaved to your work, your superiors, and even technology.

After reading many interesting commentaries on the freeing of the Jews, it gave me a new perspective on things. I really like and connected to what Alexander Rebbe said about the seder being a personal experience. This seder I am going to stand up and give a speech based on the ideas Alexander Rebbe taught, because I feel it is important to reflect upon what we may be enslaved to today. I am enslaved to technology. Technology is something that has extreme power over me. If I do not have my phone with me, I feel like I'm naked. The fact I cannot think straight without having some form of technology in front of me really scares me. I think it is important for this year in particular for me to reflect on the things I might be enslaved to today.

The Deeper Meaning of Matzah by Kai Balin

The almost inevitable answer someone will give when they explain the reasoning for Jews eating matzah on Passover is that when God and Moses freed our people out of Egypt, the Jews were quickly leaving Egypt and did not have time to let their bread rise. Simply put, time was the biggest constraint on the Jews. Time, or lack of it, prevented them from having the ability to make bread on their trek out of Egypt. But matzah is something with much greater symbolism than just a cracker that is placed on our seder table to remind us of our ancestors being in a rush to flee from the Egyptians.

That is not to say that time is not an important factor. When you appreciate or want something, you have to act on it immediately. God knew He had to push the Jews out quickly, or they would sink right back into what they were accustomed to and maybe never leave Egypt. Are there changes you need to make in your life? The Torah is teaching us to act on them immediately because if you wait any longer, you're at risk. Eighteen minutes is already too long. Think about it.

Instead of just thinking of matzah in this biblical way, Rabbi Tom Meyer looks at matzah in a different perspective...

"Matzah represents the bare essentials – it is bread without the yeast or the puffing up. matzah is pulling back and seeing what real freedom really is. What do you really need?"

What is most essential in life? Are we chasing a lot of luxuries that aren't essential? When you answer that question and figure out what the essentials are, you pull back from the ego. Not totally – because we can still eat regular bread the rest of the year. You can enjoy the extras if you know what your bottom line is. Real freedom is knowing your bottom line.”

To me this idea behind matzah is extremely important to internalize. Here in the western world, the mentality most middle to upper class individuals have is to consume constantly. A culture has been instilled into most of us where enough is never enough. It is supported by the endless sales and advertisements that are everywhere to anyone living in modern society or with an internet connection. Freedom may be knowing your bottom line, but it seems that there are large numbers of people in society that do not know what their bottom line is.

Matzah is also a symbol of getting out of the ego. It appears to me that we are living in a society where our ego and sense of self is bigger than our hearts. We use social media to brag about what we have and when we do use our heart to do a good deed, we then use social media to boast about how good a person we are. Humility is an important trait but in today's society it has almost disappeared. We are always aiming to outdo our peers in how much more extravagant one can be over the other rather than competing with our peers for who can live the more ethical-filled lifestyle.

Even if it is for only one week a year, matzah is put on our seder table to take a step back from always possessing a craving desire to want more. We are free people. We get to go to work and school everyday and get to live a life free of anything remotely close to slavery. That in itself is luxurious enough and makes it hard to remember to be grateful for all that we have on a daily basis. So when that matzah is passed around at the seder table, this year, for me, it will be like staring at a mirror of my reflection. Did I really need to buy my 5th pair of jeans? Did I really need to post what I was having for dinner last night on Instagram? Will I really need that third car in my driveway? These are all reflections we can make during Passover that can have a humbling affect on how we conduct ourselves for the future.

Vehi She'amda by Marissa Jampolsky

Vehi She'amda is a text that we read and often sing during the Passover seder. This song speaks of how many people and groups have sought to destroy the Jewish people

and reminds us that it is God's blessing and the Torah, which has saved us and kept us surviving. Every generation of Jews has faced someone who wants to destroy us but our relationship with Hashem is why we have always have, and will come out of it, alive. This song is a reminder to all Jews that as many times as others try and destroy us we can survive it.

This song, as interpreted by Rabbi Yehudah Prero is declaration of the promise made by God to the Jewish people that we will always be saved. This promise has been proven to be true time and time again as the Jewish people have faced many who have tried to destroy us, and we are still here today. God promised to Avraham "The nation that enslaves you will also be judged by me". This promise is not only relevant to Jews in the time of Avraham but also today.

Another interpretation of Vehi She'amda focuses on the word "Vehi" which translates to "and it is", referring to a promise made by God to Avraham, to take our forefathers out of Egypt. This source explains that the word "Vehi" is an allusion to the Torah and that each Hebrew letter in the word references a part of Judaism's oral law. Vav (6) refers to the six tractates of Mishna (the oral tradition of the Torah), Hei (5) stands for the five book of Moses, Yud (10) refers to The Ten Commandments and Aleph (1) represents God. This interpretation of "Vehi" focuses on the reason the Jewish people have always survived is due to our connection to the Torah.

These commentaries speak of how the Jewish people have survived due to our relationship with God and all that comes with that. To me, Vehi She'amda is a reminder of the miracle of the existence of the Jewish people. There have been so many who have oppressed our people and tried to annihilate us but we are still here. The song helps me to realize how much our people have been through and reminds me to appreciate our history and our ancestors who have fought for our survival. When the Greeks tried to kill Judaism because our people wanted to continue on with our traditions, we survived. When Haman wanted to wipe out all the Jews in Persia, we survived and had him and his descendants hanged instead. When Hitler attempted to "exterminate" the Jews, he may have killed many but as a people we survived and are still here today. The song should be seen as a reminder to all of the Jewish people how strong we are. It is also a time to look back and see how although we no longer have prophets who can speak to God we are still being protected as demonstrated throughout our History. Even to this day we face many who are against us; groups like Hamas, but we are still surviving. God is still saving us from our enemies' hands. I find this song a good time with my family to discuss how it truly is a miracle how our people have survived for so long, with so many against us and to be grateful that we are here.

The picture I drew is a representation of all of the ideas expressed in these commentaries. It shows a Torah, with a fist in the middle and sparks around it. The image shows how our connection with the Torah (and God) is what has kept us

surviving. The fist on the Torah scroll is to represent how we have fought through all of our oppression with the help of the Torah and God. The word that is written on the scroll "Vehi" connects back to how it is Torah that has saved us. The sparks on the scroll are to show how the Jewish people possess a spark and that has helped us to survive.

Karpas by Isaac Pekeles

Karpas is the part of the seder in which the participants dip a green vegetable (that isn't Maror/bitter) into salt water. The action has a number of different significances. In days of yore, extravagant banquets began with dipped appetizers. It was a sign of comfort and indulgence and would typically signify an upbeat night to come. As slaves obviously could not take part in such banquets, this luxury is a sign of our freedom. Considering the seder is a night for the children, the act of adding a dipping ritual is in part to incite questions about the nature of freedom. But the freedom should not be taken for granted; the dip in question symbolizes the tears that it took to obtain.

The vegetable used to dip in Karpas is conventionally of lowly origin such as parsley, celery or roots. Yet, such a vegetable becomes an integral part of the feast. It serves as a reminder that the lowly slave-nation ultimately became the Chosen People. This growth came from the slavery, as commemorated by the clever word play in the name Karpas. Karpas' meaning when spelt backwards alludes to our people's time in Egypt: "Sixty myriads of Jews at hard labour". Thus Karpas embodies the duality of slavery and freedom that is the cornerstone of Passover.

Maimonides once defined the "crushing labour" of slavery as "an endless and purposeless work" put onto the Jews by the Egyptians. Today, people naturally gravitate to what is familiar. Routine is enticing as it provides a safe, reliable blueprint for people's lives. In our crazy, constantly changing and sometimes quite scary world, I understand the appeal. Yet routine is a double-edged sword. It allows people to overlook their purpose and slyly locks in a sense of discontent. The slavery of keeping up a routine that might not serve one's true purpose, I believe, is the modern "endless and purposeless work".

Contemporary media in the western world portrays this "crisis of purpose" often. Men and women of all ages become unsure of themselves, their careers, their families and their futures. Movies have them solve their problems by having affairs or travelling the world or overcoming a hardship. But why let this crisis happen in the first place? This is the brilliance of Karpas: in its own way, it's a yearly reminder to re-evaluate the purpose of one's routine.

As established, Karpas symbolizes the transition from slavery to freedom. As our ancestors physically transitioned, we too can mentally transition. This year, I invite you

to think about your routines as you dip the vegetable into the saltwater. What does routine mean to you? And more importantly, is it enslaving with purposeless work or is it your freedom, the springboard to a purposeful life?

The Four Sons by Daniel Milton

The Pesach Haggadah is filled with works from Rabbis of the past allowing us to recollect the events that took place in the Hebrews' Exodus from the Land of Egypt. The Four Sons are an aspect of the Haggadah that is commonly analyzed. Each son asks a question to his father about the Exodus, and the father responds in a rather simplistic, straight-forward manner – or so it seems.

The wicked son asks, "Of what purpose is this to you?" The Haggadah explains that by exclaiming the words "to you" the son is separating himself from the community of the Hebrews. The Haggadah then says, "blunt his teeth and tell him: "it is because of this that *Hashem* did so for me when I went out of Egypt." It goes on to further say that if he [the wicked son] had been there, he would not be redeemed. However, can we really judge the conclusion that is made about the wicked son in the Haggadah from this one statement "to you"?

R' Yerucham of Mir points out that in the context of the Torah a sufficient answer has already been given to not need the wicked son's question. "You shall say, "It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and He saved our houses" (*Shemos 12:27*). So what is the reasoning for having two answers for the same exact question? By this, the Torah is telling us that sometimes one must pay attention to the tone and nuance of the question being asked. Because there is a parallel passage given in the Torah, one can analyze the difference between the two messages and the context that each is given in. As a result, the proper conclusions can be drawn about what was being said.

R' Yitzchak Waldshein comments that the wicked son was not even asking a question; it was a statement in the guise of a question. His only intention was to mock his father's beliefs. Therefore he should have his teeth blunted and told upfront that he would not have survived in such a land.

The phrase "blunt his teeth" as R' Yehudah Leib Chasman mentions, stands for something both external and internal. We all -- even the wicked -- have a neshama (soul) that screams out to do good. Only when he excommunicates himself has he denied the basic principle of Judaism. Although, deep down, even the wicked son realizes there is no basis for such actions, and by simply blunting his teeth can you correct these actions. R' Chasman is also referring to the inner wickedness, one's Yetzer Harah – an inclination to do wrong. It is this wicked drive within oneself propelling us to do wrong. However,

by blunting our teeth to the desires that the Yetzer Harah pursues, we are able to see the true light that our neshama attempts to show us.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks uses another paradigm for the wicked son. During the time of the compilation of the Haggadah, the Romans were parading through the Middle East, slaughtering full villages to eventually destroy the Temple and the morale of the Jewish People. With this destruction came distrust and a loss in the collective Jewish identity. The Midrash speaks of a story happening at the time of the Babylonian exile in the days of the prophet Ezekiel:

So you find that Israel saw to free itself from the yoke of its oath in the days of Ezekiel. Men from among the elders of Israel came “to seek the Lord” [Ezek. 20:1]. They said to him [Ezekiel], if a slave is purchased by a priest, may he eat *teruma* [food set aside for priests]? He replied, he may. Then they asked, if the priest sold him back again to an Israelite, has he left the priest’s domain? He said to them, he has. Then they said [to Ezekiel], so it is with us. We have left the domain of Hashem and we shall become like the heathen nations. (*Tanhuma, Nitzavim 3*)

To summarize this quote, some Jews of the community argued that when they were enslaved in Egypt, Hashem had rescued them, and were then considered “His possession” – so to speak – and were subjected to following His laws and statutes. However, when the Babylonians and the Romans destroyed the Beis Ha’Mikdash and took the Jews as their property, they were no longer dwelling in the domain of Hashem. This is the excuse that assimilated Jews used to excuse themselves from the community and its obligations. Because Hashem had left the Jews, this was the rationale for them to no longer adhere to His laws.

Unfortunately it is the same nowadays. Jews find it an easy choice to selectively decide what parts of Judaism they keep and respect. No longer is it an obligation to do anything, and therefore the beams that hold up the foundations of Judaism are slowly crumbling under our feet. Yet, we feel as a society it is the next person’s job to observe the laws and keep the beams propped up.

Perhaps many of the Jews of the 21st century represent the wicked son. Not only have we separated ourselves from the collective goal of bringing Mashiach, but also the Yetzer Harah inside us has complete control of our actions, putting our temporary happiness above true happiness. However, by blunting our teeth, in both of the senses that R’ Yehudah Leib Chasman claims, we can learn to understand and follow our obligation, asking questions where necessary and taking ownership of our responsibilities. As a people, our goal is to create community, not avoid it.

Mah Nishtanah by Naomi Shaw

Every year during the Passover seder, we pass down a series of traditions. One of these traditions is “Mah Nishtanah”. These questions are traditionally asked by the youngest at the table. However, even if a child is not present at the table, the questions still have to be asked. This signifies the importance of asking the four questions. It is traditional to tell the story of leaving Egypt to future generations. The four questions introduce the themes of slavery and freedom. The questions mention four symbols: Matzah, Maror, Dipping, and Reclining. While two of these symbolize slavery, the other two symbolize freedom.

The first question we ask during Ma Nishtana is “On all nights we need not dip even once, on this night we do so twice!” This serves as a symbol of freedom. Years ago, people used to struggle to even afford one sauce to dip their food in. Two would have been extravagant. Nowadays, we are very accustomed to dipping. We have an assortment of sauces that we do not give any second thoughts. So in addition to dipping twice to carry on the tradition, we should start different traditions that will set the seder apart from other nights. For example, it could be using a different, expensive set of dishes or using a special tablecloth. By including things that we do not use throughout the year, Passover will become a night that feels different from other nights and we can internalize the original intent of the dipping.

During Passover, we eat matzah in order to remember that our ancestors baked their dough into unleavened bread. Matzah symbolizes the bare essentials of life. It allows us to see what real freedom is and to open the questions of “what do you really need?” or “what is most essential in life?” In society today, we chase after luxuries that aren’t necessary for survival. We chase the latest technology, the best jobs and universities, and the nicest clothes or houses. However, is this really freedom? Does freedom mean having the choice to chase after our desires and material gains? Is that really freedom?

After we eat the matzah, we eat maror which are bitter herbs. On Passover, we ask why we eat maror, because on all other nights we eat regular vegetables. These bitter herbs are a symbol for slavery and serve as a reminder. They remind us to reflect on the bitterness of our slavery in Egypt because if we did not, we could be tempted to return to the source of our enslavement. Soon after the Israelites left Egypt, they began to romanticize their affliction and complain about life in the desert. They remembered that they ate full servings of bread and fish in Egypt. This caused them to forget about the bitterness of slavery. If we fail to remember our enslavement, we might not appreciate the wonder of freedom and how vital freedom is.

The final question is “On all other nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!” This is supposed to remind us how royalty and nobility used to eat and on this night, we are entitled and expected to act as royalty. Reclining throughout

the seder is a symbol of freedom. We are supposed to see ourselves as if we have just left slavery, which is why we recline to the left while eating. It indicates our freedom. By participating in these four traditions, we are passing on the traditions to future generations and beginning the discussion and rediscovery of the exodus from Egypt.

Why do we choose to slaughter a lamb instead of another animal? By Noam Rozen

When we lived in Israel it was once mandatory for each family to bring a Passover Sacrifice and to slaughter a lamb for their Passover meal. Symbolically, the sacrifice dates back to the original sacrifice the Israelites made before the tenth plague in Egypt. During the story of the Exodus from Egypt, Moses directs all the Israelites to slaughter a lamb, paint their doorways with its blood and have the family consume the sacrifice. But why does God specifically want a lamb out of all other creatures? The Stone Chumash contains commentary that may answer this question. Ramban suggests that God chose only lambs or sheep for this offering because they were Egyptian deities. "The use of these animals as offerings would demonstrate conclusively the total subjugation." In his commentary, Ramban believes that God chose the sheep or lamb in order to assert dominance over the Egyptian deities and the Pharaoh (Rameses). Although this reason may seem sufficient on its own, further meaning can be derived from the selection of a lamb as an offering.

The Chizkuni offers interpretation on the timing of the sacrifice. The Torah states that the lamb should not be slaughtered "until the fourteenth day" (12:6). The Chizkuni suggests that the intentions behind waiting four days to kill the sheep "so that the Egyptians would see their gods tied shamefully and disgracefully in the homes of the Israelites and would hear the sheep squealing with no one to save them." He also explains that God wanted the slaughtering to occur in the evening, during the time when the Egyptians would be returning home from the fields. If this is truly the case, the Israelites showed a lot of chutzpah and commitment to God. It could not have been easy for slaves to go against the will and desires of their Egyptians "masters" by doing this.

In order to find the significance of the lamb, sheep or ram in Judaism, we must look at other instances in the Torah where a lamb was slaughtered. The earliest and well-known example is the binding of Isaac. God wanted to test Abraham's devotion to him, and so he commands Abraham to take bind Isaac to the altar and sacrifice him. Willing to fulfill God's every request, Abraham does as he is asked. But when Abraham is about to sacrifice his son, God recognizes that Abraham has passed his test, and he sends a ram to be sacrificed instead of Isaac. This story has God sparing the life of Abraham's son and this will ultimately be replayed when we also see God sparing the lives of his Israelite

children, by 'passing over' the Jewish homes marked with the blood of the sacrificed lamb during the tenth plague and only killing the first born sons of the Egyptians.

Another more significant example in the Torah is the one of Joseph and his multi-coloured robe. Joseph's brothers are jealous that their father shows favoritism towards him because he is born from the woman that he originally loved (Rachel), so they decide to stage his death and sell him into slavery. In order to depict to Jacob that a wild animal killed Joseph, they tore up his robe and also slaughtered a lamb and covered the robe with its blood. The symbolism behind the slaughtering of this lamb and the slaughtering of the lamb in Egypt is that the first lamb is slaughtered to facilitate Joseph's sale. This starts the Israelites descent to Egypt. The second lamb ultimately symbolizes the Exodus and ascent from Egypt, as it is the last plague before Rameses finally grants the Israelites their freedom from Egypt.

Naked and Bare by David Rosenblatt

Every year for as long as I can remember there was always an mention on the words, "naked and bare" during the Passover seder which of course inspired its fair measure of giggles. As I grow older, I am taking this assignment as an opportunity to understand why such graphic language is used in the Haggadah. Should they be understood literally, or figuratively? The words originate from the prophecy of Yechezkel (17:7). Yechezkel is often figurative in his presentation and it thus figures that he is relating a deeper meaning.

According to the Mechilta in Parshat Bo, "Naked and bare," refers to being naked and bare of mitzvot (heavenly deeds). God was unable to liberate the Jewish People because they had no heavenly merit. They had not done anything to deserve being saved. He then bestowed two special mitzvot: Brit-Milah (circumcision) and the blood of a lamb painted upon the doorpost of the Jews. With these two mitzvot the Jews would merit to be saved.

But a question remains: why these two mitzvot out of all 613? These two mitzvot that God bestowed upon the Jews were the mitzvot that mark the distinction between the Jews and all other nations upon this planet. Brit-Milah is the covenant the Jewish People have with God and as we learned painfully in the Holocaust; any Jew could be identified as such by inspection. There is a woman in our community whose brother was murdered in Poland over 70 years ago because some Polish boys pulled down his pants. Similarly, the blood of a lamb upon a doorpost in Egypt was as sign that the Jew was now living with distinction and independence from Egypt when they slaughtered the god of Egypt. The slaughtered lamb was considered an abomination to the Egyptians (Bereshit 43:32) and the blood on the doorpost said this family is no longer part of the Egyptian nation.

Another possible explanation for these two mitzvot is that at the end of the prophecy the phrase that is uttered twice is "In your blood you shall live". These words compliment the two commandments because blood is a central theme between both of them.

R' Yehuda Leib Chasman gives an interesting interpretation of the Yechezkel's nivuah. Yechezkel focuses on the image: that you have a handsome body bedecked with jewels, but no clothing. This corresponds to the fact that the Israelites had positive qualities; they retained their mode of Hebrew dress, their own language and their Hebrew names. These "jewels" did not prevent them from sinking to the 49th level of impurity; only the clothing of Mitzvot would protect them from assimilating with the Egyptians. The image is quite stark as jewels will make a person look regal, but they will not protect them from the cold.

However, I cannot get away from the graphic language of the Haggadah. It invokes an image of a woman who has just reached maturity. I believe it is meant to signify that the Jewish people had just become mature and ready for a relationship with Hashem. Before this point they were a pre-adolescent nation. As I observe my sisters and their development from childhood to maturity, I can understand that this metaphor describes the developmental journey of the Jews. The first generations were still not "fully cooked" and ready to be the nation to enter the land. But living for 210 years in the pressure cooker of Egypt they had become ready to start the journey to nationhood.

The Four Cups of Wine by Shain Kahn

On Passover, the Haggadah states that we should drink 4 cups of wine throughout the seder. The first cup of wine is drunk after the Kiddush and the second one just before the main meal. The third cup is had after "birkat hamazon" and the last cup is drunk after the conclusion of Hallel, near the end of the seder. Before drinking each cup we say the blessing on the wine, and we drink each cup leaning slightly to the left to symbolize our freedom.

Although there is not a single agreed-upon reason for why we drink specifically four cups of wine, the most agreed-upon reason is that they are "The Four Expressions of Redemption." These expressions were taken from two verses in the book of Exodus (6:6/7)

"Therefore, say to the children of Israel 'I am Hashem, **and I SHALL TAKE YOU OUT** from under the burdens of Egypt; **I SHALL RESCUE YOU** from their service; **I SHALL REDEEM YOU** with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. **I SHALL TAKE YOU TO ME** for a people and I shall be a God to you...."

God said to the nation of Israel that he would take us out of slavery in four different ways, therefore we drink a cup of wine to each of those statements of freedom.

Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi Horovitz, of The Sheloh, had a very unique opinion on this. He explained that we drink one cup of wine for each of the founding mothers of Judaism. We read specifically about our founding forefathers in the Haggadah but our matriarchs are missing. That is why we think about them with symbolism, in each cup of wine. Furthermore, the first cup of wine is drunk during Kiddush where we speak of how God sanctified the nation of Israel. After discovering that there is only one God, Sarah decided to spread the word and also tried to sanctify our nation as a whole. The second cup is drunk after we read the story of how Avraham started out as an idol worshipper but learned to believe in only one God. This is similar to how Rivkah was born to an idol worshipping family, but left that behind and also learned to believe in God. The third cup is had after concluding benching after our meal. The feast we eat is related to how Rachel was the mother of Joseph, who assured the land of Egypt that they would have food and supplies during the famine. The last cup of wine is drunk after Hallel, which is when we praise God. This is a reminder of when Leah gave birth to her son Yehudah and said, "This time I shall thank God."

I believe that Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi Horovitz's interpretation of the act is the most meaningful. There are many other sections in the Haggadah that symbolize our freedom, including the entire premise for the holiday of Passover. The matriarchs of Judaism, however, are not mentioned elsewhere. This symbolism is significant in our day and age for two reasons. Firstly, Judaism is commonly questioned for the role women play in our religion because there are many separate rules and requirements for women. This added symbolism is another instance for Judaism to show how important our founding mothers were along with our founding fathers. Another reason this symbolism is significant is the idea of forgetting and remembering. Judaism is no stranger to the idea of never forgetting the significant events that make us who we are. It is equally important that we remember we couldn't be here without the help of the matriarchs before us.

Dayenu by: Colin Seltzer

"Dayenu" is a very simple, yet beautiful poem - containing fifteen stanzas describing acts of God's kindness - each stanza states that it would have been 'enough' had God only helped us in one way. The song is extremely catchy, my favourite Passover song since I was a young kid.

The Hebrew word "Dayenu" means "it would have been enough for us." The song describes all of the miracles that God performed and after every subsequent miracle it

says that each miracle would have been enough although God continues to perform miracles for B'nei Israel.

The first five stanzas talk about leaving slavery. For example, the song says that it would have been enough if God brought us out of Egypt, destroyed their idols, given the Jewish people the Egyptians wealth. The next five stanzas are about the miracles that God performed. For example, splitting the Red Sea, drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea, providing manna and caring for the Jewish people in the desert for 40 years. The last five stanzas are about giving the Jewish people a connection to God. For example, giving us the Shabbat, leading us to Mount Sinai, giving us the Torah.

While Dayenu is a fun song to sing it's meaning does not exactly seem to be accurate. It seems that it would not have necessarily been enough if God had only brought us out of Egypt; we would have been stopped at the Red Sea and Pharaoh's men would have recaptured us. If God had only split the Red Sea and not given us manna and resources to survive in the desert, B'nei Israel would have starved to death.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein commented on dayenu in the following way:

Why does it say it would be enough if He had left us on the edge of Red Sea in the merciless, bloodthirsty hands of the Egyptians? There are two possibilities:

1. דיינו means it would have been enough in relation to our merit – what we deserved and anything else was just God's charity and kindness.

2. "And had He not split the sea for us" doesn't mean we would have been killed on the bank of the Red Sea, but God could have saved us without a spectacular miracle.

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman said that Dayenu shows that we must not look at the Exodus in its entirety. Instead we must repay each and every act of kindness. Because we were taken from Egypt, we must deliver others from servitude. Because God brought judgment upon their idols, we must speak out against today's forms of idolatry. Because God fed us in the wilderness, we must feed others in the deserts of their lives. Because God gave us Torah, we must study it, know it, live by it. Because God brought us to our land, we must never be without it. Because God built a Temple for atonement, we must admit our sins.

It is important to understand every privilege that God gave to the Jewish people and that God gives to us. Telling God that what He did would have been enough is like somebody doing a favour for you and you saying, "You shouldn't have." It was important to you that the person performed that favour because you really needed

something to be done for you. Dayenu is just that, God did not have to do that for B'nei Israel, but He did, and every year we must remember what God did for our sakes.

The Egg by Jamie Yasin

The idea behind the use of the egg on the seder plate comes from a long, rich history of traditions. The simple meaning is an egg is a never ending round shape which represents the circle of life. There is a circle of life and no matter what, we as a people will always get through hardships and be prosperous in the end.

Others explain it the roundness by picturing eternity, and its center is a round core of life, signifying eternal new birth. It envisions the endless cycle of renewing life.

But taking it even further we begin the seder meal with a hard-boiled egg dipped into saltwater. A rabbi was asked why Jews eat hard boiled eggs on Passover, "Because eggs symbolize the Jew," said the rabbi. "The more an egg is heated or boiled, the harder it gets. So too with the Jews."

Throughout the years, Jews have been persecuted over and over again. Because of this, like the egg, we have built a harder exterior to protect ourselves. May we, as a nation live on forever, prospering until the end of time.

Chad Gadya by Mikaela Frame

Chad Gadya is a playful song that is sung at the end of the seder. Not only is it fun to sing, but it also has a significantly important meaning behind it that may often be overlooked. How can singing about animals and elements killing or destroying others in a chain of events relate to Pesach and Judaism?

At my family's Pesach seders, a family member or family friend acts out each animal, element, or character that is mentioned in the song. For example, every time the goat is mentioned, instead of saying the word, one person will make a goat noise. This tradition that we practice every year, makes for a fun ending to the night. While we enjoy singing Chad Gadya though, we never once think of the meaning.

Chad Gadya is a reminder that no matter how powerful anyone or anything is, God has, and always be the Almighty and our ultimate protection. In the Pesach story, the last plague is the killing of the first-born. The only way the Jews were able to save their first-born was to slaughter a lamb or kid, and spread the blood across their doorframe. The Egyptians of this time worshiped lambs. By killing this animal, they were committing a heretical act. Instead of receiving punishment for this act though, they were saved.

Chad Gadya starts with a kid, the object of Egyptian worship. The chain then starts with a cat eating the kid, and then a dog biting the cat. The chain continues, mentioning multiple items that people have worshiped at one point. The last thing mentioned in the song is God. This shows that God is the ultimate superior, and also our ultimate protection.

The Splitting of the Sea by Matthew Stein

The splitting of the red sea can be seen as one of the most miraculous and iconic events in the Torah. Looking back on the Torah, it is also definitely one of the most visual scenes within the five books. After the Jews leave Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind and decided he wanted his slaves back. Thus, Pharaoh took his best men and chariots started chasing the Israelites. When the people of Israel saw the Egyptian army they were all scared. On God's command Moses raises his staff, and God opened up a path through the water. The Israelites walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side! The Egyptians, with their horses and chariots, chased after the Israelites through the sea chasing Egyptians, and then split the sea. But when the Israelites reached the other side God made the waters return and all of the chariots and horses of Pharaoh's army were drowned. Not a single one survived. Even to this day, there have been reports of scuba divers finding wheels and parts of the chariots from Pharaoh's army.

One biblical commentator by the name of Aaron Moss asks why the Israelites had to pass through the Red Sea? On the map of the Middle East, the route from Egypt to Israel is directly through the desert. The sea is totally out of the way. God led them on a detour, trapping them. Does God have no sense of direction?

He answers his own question by explaining how God had a bigger plan in mind for the Jews. He suggests that the earth is comprised of oceans and continents, sea and dry land. What we can see on land is visible. However, what we can't see is what is below the water, full of mystery and uncertainty. These ideas can be applied to the Hebrew slaves and us. "One's personality has two layers: our sea and our land. What we know of ourselves; our visible strengths, our tested talents and our known abilities, the elements of our character that we are aware of—these comprise the "dry land" of our personality. But below the surface of our character lies a vast sea of latent talents, inner strengths and untapped abilities that we never even know we have until we actualize them."

Korech Sandwich by Shawn Moss

Despite what most people may think, the Korech (Passover sandwich) was created to symbolize Hillel's life. Hillel created the sandwich from many ingredients, each representing the hardships in his life. Rather than being upset over the hardships bestowed upon him, he considered it as something that God bestowed on him for good reason.

Hillel's sandwich consists of the following ingredients:

- Matzah
- Bitter Herbs
- Meat from the sacrifice (not eaten today)

Each ingredient represents something different. Matzah, the thin bread, represents the freedom we were granted as opposed to being slaves in Egypt. The matzah also represents the Jews' hardships, as they did not have time to wait for the matzah to rise to bread. The unpleasant taste of the Bitter Herbs represents life's hardships as well.

Reminding us of our bitter past gives reason to be optimistic about our future. Although our people have gone through hard times, we still persevere and achieve liberation.

Who Knows One? by Max Chark

At the end of the Haggadah, we sing songs. You may ask, why wait till the end when everyone is tired to sing? The seder refers to exile and the affliction and at the end it is symbolizing that Hashem is redeeming them.

Who knows one? I know one! One is our God in heaven and earth.

This is referring to everything returning back to God, and there is only one God.

God is one and humans are made up of many, therefore we are imperfect and if one thing is missing from us, we are not a single perfection as God is. God cannot be missing something like us. God is the one and the only one in the heaven and the earth.

Who knows two? I know two! Two are the tablets of the covenant;

The tablets are the tablets that Moshe received on the top of Mount Sinai. Written on these two tablets are the Ten Commandments. The tablets were the physical symbol of the relationship uniting God and the Jewish people. In return God is looking for the Jewish people to follow the mitzvahs that they received on the tablets.

Who knows three? I know three! Three are the fathers of Israel.

The three fathers of Israel are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In order for a nation to become one, there are three different aspects that are needed to make that happen. The three are: kindness, strength, and truth. Abraham excelled in chesed (kindness), Jacob in truth, and Isaac in strength.

Who knows four? I know four! Four are the mothers of Israel;

The four mothers of Israel are Sara, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. All the mothers represent something: Sarah is accomplishment, Rebecca is righteous, Rachel is compassion, and Leah is refined.

Who knows five? I know five! Five are the books of the Torah;

The five books of the Torah refer to the five books of Moses. This is the main body of work that Judaism bases its existence on. It is our guidebook.

Who knows six? I know six! Six are the orders of the Mishnah;

The Mishnah is the cornerstone of Judaism and provides a background on every subject of halacha (Jewish Law). There are sixty-two sections divided into six orders.

Who knows seven? I know seven! Seven are the days of the week

Seven are the number of days in a week. God created the earth in seven days. On day one light and dark were created. On day two, he created the sky. On day three he formed the oceans, seas, lakes and rivers and all kinds of plants. On the fourth day he created the sun, the moon and the stars. On the fifth day he filled the sea with fish and other water animals and he also created birds. On the sixth day he created all the other animals large and small and he also created the human. On the seventh day God "created" and mandated a day of rest as a testament that the heavens and Earth are still his. This rest is known as Shabbat.

Who knows eight? I know eight! Eight are the days to circumcision;

On the eighth day males are supposed to be circumcised. Spiritually, the eighth day is the earliest possible day that ensures that every Jewish boy will experience one Shabbat before his bris (circumcision). Once he has had a bris he will enter the covenant to be part of the Jewish people.

Who knows nine? I know nine! Nine are the months to childbirth

Nine are the amount of months it takes for a baby to fully develop and able to survive outside the mother's womb. This represents the next generation who will pass on the traditions and knowledge of Judaism to the future.

Who knows ten? I know ten! Ten are the commandments;

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on mount Sinai. These commandments are a summary of the 613 mitzvahs in the Torah. The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God and the last six deal with our relationship with one and other.

Who knows eleven? I know eleven! Eleven are the stars in Joseph's dream;

Joseph had a dream that the sun, moon and 11 stars bowed down to him. Joseph told his brothers about this dream and they envied him and hated him. In reality, the 11 stars represented the brothers that Joseph fed, nurtured and took care of despite them doing evil toward him.

Who knows twelve? I know twelve! Twelve are the tribes of Israel;

The twelve tribes came from the twelve sons of Israel. Israel was the name that God gave to Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons. The tribes inherited the land of Israel and it was divided between them.

Who knows thirteen? I know thirteen! Thirteen are the attributes of God;

The thirteen attributes of mercy are the core of the slichot prayers. They are the words that God taught Moses for people to use when they needed to beg for divine compassion. They originated after the incident of the golden calf when God threatened to destroy the people of Israel rather than forgive them. God taught Moses the 13 attributes. God said, "Whenever Israel sins, let them recite this in its proper order and I will forgive them." This assures the Jewish people that repentance is always possible.

Why do we eat Maror? By Shelly Shpanya

We eat Maror to remind us of the bitterness of the slavery of our forefathers in Egypt. The following verse from the Torah underscores that symbolism: "And they embittered (*ve-yimareru* וימררו) their lives with hard labor, with mortar and with bricks and with all manner of labor in the field; any labor that they made them do was with hard labor" (Exodus 1:14). As a reflection, we can realize that the Maror can trigger our own thoughts and recollections of the bitterness in life our own lives. This can cause our spirit to ask for mercy. The outpouring of a bitter soul, the intense bitterness one

experiences when sensing how far removed one is from godliness, prompts an abundance of mercy.

Rabbi Leon Morris and curator Saul Robbins directed a video, which talked about this. When we eat Maror it can remind us of the free choice “God” gave us. Bitterness is a part of life. One can both expect it and embrace it or you could try to avoid it; but it’s always there. Reminding ourselves and being aware of bitterness helps us appreciate what we have, where we came from and how far we have come. The Maror can be a symbol to help remind us of our experience of hard times so we will always be grateful of what we have now.