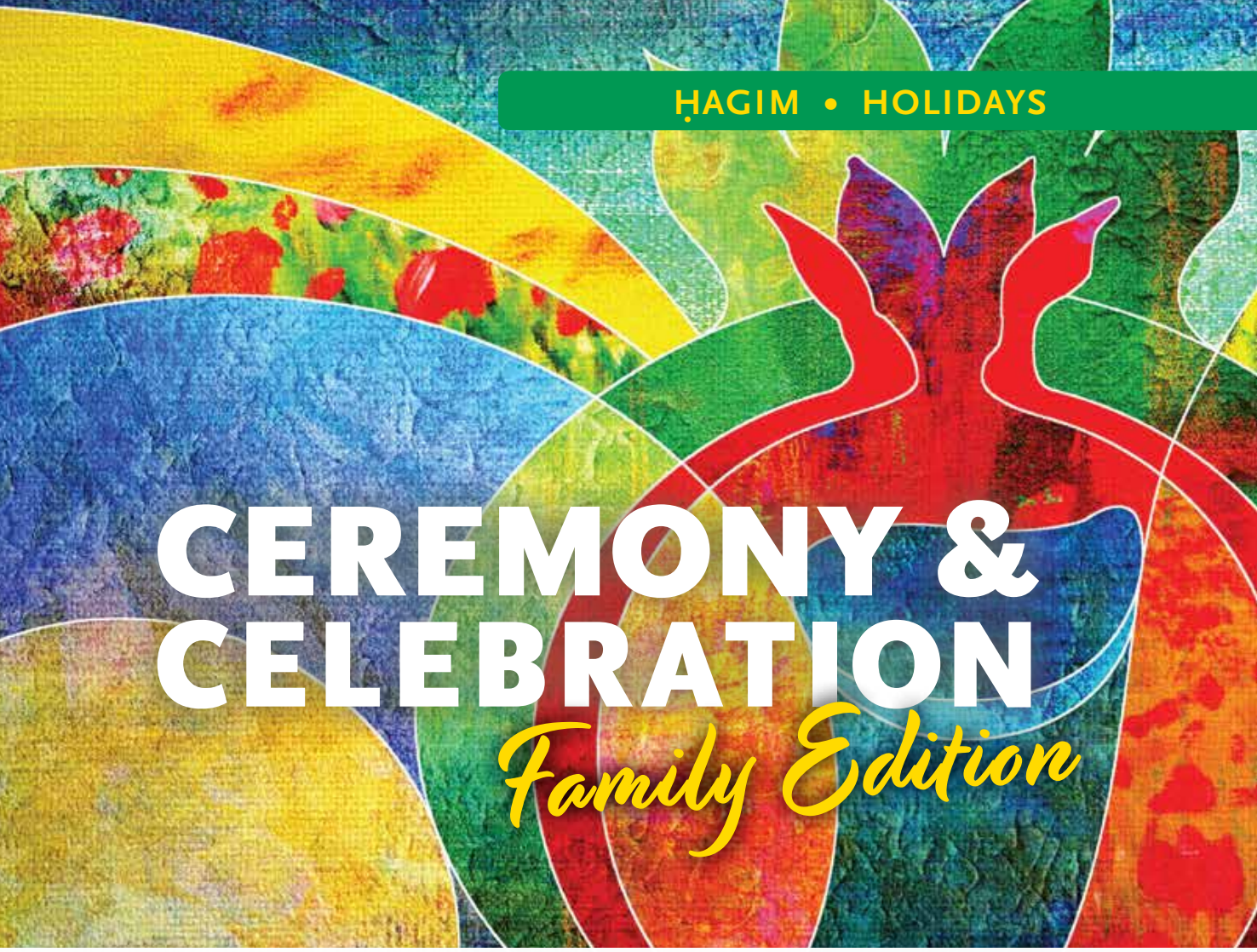

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The *Ceremony & Celebration Family Edition* (on the Jewish holidays) and the *Covenant & Conversation Family Edition* (on the weekly Torah reading) are both available from www.korenpub.com/family-edition.

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Pesaḥ

PESAḤ IN A NUTSHELL

Seder night is a highlight of the Jewish calendar for parents and children alike. It is the night that revolves around children, and parents are reminded of the importance of their role as educators. (Thankfully, the Haggada gives them lots of tools and tips!)

Rabbi Sacks explains that on the eve of the original Pesaḥ, at the very moment when a new chapter in the life of the Jewish people began, we found out what it means to be a Jew: "About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators" (*A Letter in the Scroll,* 34). Being a Jew means being both a student and an educator, and Seder night is our opportunity to focus on both these roles.

This section serves as an educational companion to Seder night and will give you some ideas and thoughts on several of the core pages from the Haggada and how Rabbi Sacks understands them. As well as offering educational insights, like the other sections of this book, this Seder night companion also includes activities, stories, and reflection questions, designed to engage all the participants around your Seder table, young and old alike.

You will notice many extracts from Rabbi Sacks's writings, all sourced from *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada* (Koren). This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with a Haggada; it is not a replacement for one.

HA LAḤMA ANYA הָא לַחְמָא עַנְיָא

IN A NUTSHELL

We start the Haggada, and with it the core of the Seder night, with the mitzva of *Maggid* (the telling of the story of the Exodus), which begins with this invitation to join the Seder. The language of this paragraph is Aramaic, because this was the vernacular (spoken language) at the time the Haggada was written. If this invitation is to be genuine, it is important that it is stated in a language that is understood.

DEEP DIVE

This is a strange invitation: "This is the bread of oppression our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come in and eat." What hospitality is it to offer the hungry the taste of suffering? In fact, though, this is a profound insight into the nature of slavery and freedom. Matza represents two things: it is the food of slaves, and also the bread eaten by the Israelites as they left Egypt in liberty. What transforms the bread of oppression into the bread of freedom is *the willingness to share it with others*.

Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us. Bread shared is no longer the bread of oppression. Reaching out to others, giving help to the needy and companionship to those who are alone, we bring freedom into the world, and with freedom, God.

REFLECT

What can you share in your life to show you are truly free?

"Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings."

FURTHER THOUGHTS

This is the beginning of the Seder narrative, known as *Maggid*, from the word "*haggada*," "relate," "recount," "declare," "proclaim." The story of the Exodus is known as the Haggada because of the verse "You shall tell (*vehigadeta*) your child on that day, '[I do this] because of what the Lord did for me when I went out of Egypt'" (Shemot 13:8). However, the word "*haggada*" derives from a verb that also means "bind," "join," "connect." The story of the Exodus is more than a recounting (*sipur*) of things that happened long ago. It binds the present to the past and future. It connects one generation to the next. It joins us to our children. Jewish continuity means that each successive generation commits itself to continuing the story. Our past lives on in us.

REFLECT

Do you feel more connected to your parents and grandparents when you sit at the Seder table? Why do you think that is?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Why is it important to share your Seder table with people from outside your close family?*
2. *Does matza represent freedom or slavery to you?*
3. *How does Seder night connect you to other Jews?*

EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

If you have guests at your Seder table who are not from your immediate family, turn to them now and make sure they feel welcome.

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

Primo Levi survived Auschwitz. In his book *If This Is a Man*, he describes his experiences there. According to Levi, the worst time of all was when the Nazis left in January 1945, fearing the Russian advance. All prisoners who could walk were taken on the brutal death

marches. The only people left in the camp were those too ill to move. For ten days, they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. Levi describes how he worked to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them dying. He then writes:

When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three, typhus) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working. And so it was agreed.

Only a day before, a similar event would have been inconceivable. The law of the Lager [concentration camps] said: "eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbor," and left no room for gratitude. It really meant that the law of the Lager was dead.

It was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from Haftlinge *[prisoners] to men again.*

MA NISHTANA מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה

IN A NUTSHELL

There are four places in the Torah where it speaks of children asking questions about Pesaḥ – and each of these four verses are the sources for the four children's questions (see below). This inspired a tradition that the story of the Exodus from Egypt must be told, wherever possible, in response to the questions asked by children, and this is where the idea for the four questions in *Ma Nishtana* comes from. The origin of the text is the Mishna (Pesaḥim 10:4), although the words have changed slightly over time to reflect our changing practices (for instance, since the destruction of the Temple, we can no longer bring the *korban*, so the fifth question, on serving roast meat, is no longer included in *Ma Nishtana*).

"The story of the Exodus from Egypt must be told...in response to the questions asked by children."

DEEP DIVE

The Torah has two words for inheritance, *yerusha* and *naḥala*, and they represent the two different ways in which a heritage is passed on across the generations. The word *naḥala* comes from the root *naḥal*, which also means "river." It represents an inheritance that is merely handed down, without any work on the part of the recipient, as water flows in a river. *Yerusha*, by contrast, means active inheritance. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch pointed out that *lareshet*, the verbal form of *yerusha*, sometimes means "to conquer"

or "to capture." It means actively taking hold of what one has been promised. An inheritance for which one has worked is always more secure than one for which one has not. That is why Judaism encourages children to ask questions. When a child asks, they have already begun the work of preparing to receive. Torah is a *yerusha*, not a *naḥala*. It needs work on behalf of the child if it is to be passed on across the generations.

Commentary on *Ma Nishtana*, *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

REFLECT

How does Ma Nishtana *and the role of children asking questions affect your experience of the Seder?*

FURTHER THOUGHTS

Religious faith has often been seen as naive, blind, accepting. That is not the Jewish way. Judaism is not the suspension of critical intelligence. To the contrary: asking a question is itself a profound expression of faith in the intelligibility of the universe and the meaningfulness of human life. To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer. The fact that throughout history people have devoted their lives to extending the frontiers of knowledge is a compelling testimony to the restlessness of the human spirit and its constant desire to go further, higher, deeper. Far from faith excluding questions, questions testify to faith – that history is not random, that the universe is not impervious to our understanding, that what happens to us is not blind chance. We ask not because we doubt, but because we believe.

"The Art of Asking Questions," *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

REFLECT

How is asking questions "an expression of faith"? Doesn't it show a lack of faith?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Why do you think we encourage children to ask questions on Seder night?*
2. *Are there any bad questions?*
3. *Do all questions have answers? What do we do if no one we know has the answer to a question?*

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

Isidor Rabi won the Nobel Prize in physics in 1944. When he was asked why he became a scientist, he replied: "My mother made me a scientist without ever intending to. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: 'So? Did you learn anything today?' But not my mother. 'Izzy,' she would say, 'did you ask a good question today?' Asking good questions made me a scientist."

REFLECT

Are you more invested in your learning when you are encouraged to ask questions?

AVADIM HAYINU עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ

IN A NUTSHELL

Avadim Hayinu is our response to the questions asked in the *Ma Nishtana*, and with this we begin the telling of the Exodus story, the main theme of the *Maggid* section of the Haggada. Before we delve into the depths of the story of the Exodus itself, the Haggada makes sure we realise how we are personally affected by this historical event. It reminds us that if not for the Exodus, we would still be slaves in Egypt! This passage also explains that the mitzva of telling the story of the Exodus is for everybody (even the old and wise), and the story should be told at length to make it impactful.

DEEP DIVE

One of the rules of telling the story on Pesaḥ is that each person must feel as if they had personally left Egypt. History becomes memory. The past becomes the present. At this stage, therefore, we speak of the continuing consequences of the past. Had the Exodus not happened, and the Israelites stayed in Egypt, none of the subsequent events of Jewish history would have occurred. What and where we are now is the result of what happened then.

There is a fundamental difference between knowing and telling the story. We do not tell the narrative of the Exodus to know what happened in the past. We do so because each telling engraves that event more thoroughly in our memories, and because each year adds its own insights and interpretations. Judaism is a constant dialogue

"History becomes memory. The past becomes the present."

between past and present, and since the present always changes, there is always a new juxtaposition, a new facet of the story. The Sages said, "There is no house of study without *ḥiddush*, some new interpretation." The story of Pesaḥ never grows old, because the struggle for freedom never ends, and therefore each generation adds its own commentary to the old-new story.

Commentary on *Avadim Hayinu, The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

REFLECT

What new aspect of the story, or the Haggada, have you discovered this year? Share it with everyone at your Seder.

FURTHER THOUGHTS

To be a Jew is to know that over and above history is the task of memory. As Jacob Neusner eloquently wrote: "Civilisation hangs suspended, from generation to generation, by the gossamer strand of memory. If only one cohort of mothers and fathers fails to convey to its children what it has learnt from its parents, then the great chain of learning and wisdom snaps. If the guardians of human knowledge stumble only one time, in their fall collapses the whole edifice of knowledge and understanding" (*Neusner on Judaism: Religion and Theology*). More than any other faith, Judaism made this a matter of religious obligation. Pesaḥ is where the past does not die, but lives in the chapter we write in our own lives, and in the story we tell our children.

"History and Memory," *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

Screenshot from the animated video **Being Jewish** *at rabbisacks.org*

REFLECT

Why do you think education has become so important in Judaism, and what impact has that had on Jewish history?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Why does the Haggada say, "We were slaves in Egypt"? Were you a slave in Egypt?*

2. *Do you like long stories? Why do you think the Haggada tells us that the longer we make this story, the better?*

3. *Why does the Haggada have to point out that old and wise people still have to do this mitzva?*

EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

On Seder night we try to feel as if we ourselves are being freed from slavery in Egypt. During a point in the evening when the younger people seem less engaged (perhaps after we read of the Four Children, until it's time for the Ten Plagues), send them away from the table to find costumes and prepare their own play of the Exodus from Egypt.

They'll have to work quickly! To make it more challenging, you could ask the adults to choose a new genre for the play, such as adventure, science fiction, or fantasy. The play can then be performed later on, during the meal.

THE FOUR CHILDREN אַרְבָּעָה בָּנִים

IN A NUTSHELL

The section of the Four Children in the Haggada is based on the four different verses in the Torah which describe children asking their parents about the story of the Exodus. Rather than seeing these as just four examples of asking the same question, the Rabbis noticed four distinctive personalities from the different ways the verses are phrased – and this inspired the idea for four kinds of children.

DEEP DIVE

The Four Children are a vignette of the Jewish people. One asks because he wants to hear the answer. A second asks because he does not want to hear the answer. A third asks because he does not understand. The fourth does not ask because he doesn't understand that he doesn't understand. Ours has never been a monolithic people.

Yet there is a message of hope in this family portrait. Though they disagree, they sit around the same table, telling the same story. Though they differ, they stay together. They are part of a single family. Even the rebel is there, although part of him does not want to be. This, too, is who we are.

The Jewish people is an extended family. We argue, we differ, there are times when we are deeply divided. Yet we are part of the same story. We share the same memories. At difficult times we can count on one another. We feel one another's pain. Out of this multiplicity of voices comes something none of us could achieve alone. Sitting next to the wise child, the rebel is not fated to remain a rebel. Sitting next to the rebel, the wise child may share his wisdom rather than keep it to himself. The one who cannot ask will, in time, learn how. The simple child will learn complexity. The wise child will learn simplicity. Each draws strength from the others, as we all draw strength from belonging to a people.

Commentary on the Four Children,
The Jonathan Sacks Haggada

REFLECT

Why do you think Jews argue so much with each other? Is this a strength or a weakness?

"Though [the four children] disagree, they sit around the same table, telling the same story."

FURTHER THOUGHTS

Through the Haggada, more than a hundred generations of Jews have handed on their story to their children. The word "*haggada*" means "relate," "tell," "expound." But it comes from another Hebrew root [*a-g-d*] that means "bind," "join," "connect." By reciting the Haggada, Jews give their children a sense of connectedness to Jews throughout the world and to the Jewish people through time. It joins them to a past and future, a history and destiny, and makes them characters in its drama. Every other nation known to humankind has been united because its members lived in the same place, spoke the same language, were part of the same culture. Jews alone, dispersed across continents, speaking

different languages and participating in different cultures, have been bound together by a narrative, the Pesaḥ narrative, which they tell in the same way on the same night. More than the Haggada is the story of a people, Jews are the people of a story.

"The Story of Stories," ***The Jonathan Sacks Haggada***

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Which of the Four Children are you most like (it can be more than one)?*

2. *What do you see as the message of including four different children in the Haggada? What advice would you give to a teacher or parent who has many different types of children to teach?*

3. *Why do you think that children are the central focus of such an important event as Seder night?*

REFLECT

How can a story link us to Jews across generations and across geography?

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

When I was a baby, I wouldn't talk. I was the youngest of five children, so I was surrounded by people who doted on me and gave me whatever I wanted. All I had to do was make a noise and point to get what I wanted. So it took me much longer to learn to talk. It worried my parents, and they took me to specialist doctors to make sure there was no deeper cause behind my late development.

When I started going to school, I couldn't sit still and focus for a minute. My mind would wander and then my body would wander, and next thing I knew, I was being told off, or worse, I would be sent to the headteacher's office. I wasn't trying to be mischievous or rude. I just couldn't sit in one place for long.

When I was a teenager, I got angry. Angry about all the injustices in the world, about the way the government didn't care enough about the environment, and angry that the school administration didn't do enough to make everyone feel valued and included in our school. I organised all sorts of demonstrations and one day I even led the

students in a strike. The school didn't like that one bit, and I almost got expelled for it!

Then I went to university, and I took my passion for making a difference in the world and channelled it into my studies. Today I am a lawyer who represents the underprivileged and disadvantaged in society, and my dream is to one day become a judge.

REFLECT

Do you see any of the Four Children in this story? Do you see any of them in your own story?

THE TEN PLAGUES עֶשֶׂר מַכּוֹת

IN A NUTSHELL

One of the most exciting and colourful parts of the story of the Exodus is the Ten Plagues. There is a custom to spill a drop of wine as we say the name of each plague. There are many reasons given for this, but the most beautiful is that of Abudraham (a fourteenth-century rabbi from Spain who is best known for his commentary on the Siddur), who interprets it in accordance with the verse "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls" (Mishlei 24:17). We give thanks for the miraculous plagues which brought our ancestors out of Egypt and granted them freedom, but at the same time, we also shed a symbolic tear for those who suffered.

"We give thanks...but we also shed a symbolic tear."

DEEP DIVE

The plagues occupy the borderline, so common to the Torah, between the natural and the supernatural. Commentators have been divided between those who emphasise their miraculous character and others who have sought to provide a scientific account of the disasters in terms of a series of chain reactions to an initial ecological disaster, possibly the appearance of algae in the Nile, which turned the water red and caused the fish to die. Which view speaks more compellingly to us will depend on whether we understand the word "miracle" as a suspension of the laws of nature, or an event that occurs within nature but that, by happening when and to whom it does, reveals a providential pattern in history.

Commentary on the Ten Plagues, ***The Jonathan Sacks Haggada***

REFLECT

Do you think that the plagues were from natural causes or supernatural intervention? Are they any less impressive if God performed them through nature?

FURTHER THOUGHTS

The plague of lice is a sardonic comment on the monumental scale of Egyptian architecture. The Egyptians believed the gods were to be found in things that are big. God shows them His Presence in something so small as to be almost invisible. The irony recurs in the division of the Red Sea, where Pharaoh's greatest military asset, the chariots, prove to be his undoing, as their wheels sink into the mud. The key to the plagues – as in God's covenant with Noaḥ – is the principle of reciprocity: "As you do, so shall you be done to." Those who harm others will themselves be harmed. Nations that begin by depriving others of their liberty in the end destroy themselves. Historically, this was so. Egypt never again recovered the greatness it had enjoyed in the earlier part of Ramesses II's rule.

Commentary on The Ten Plagues, ***The Jonathan Sacks Haggada***

REFLECT

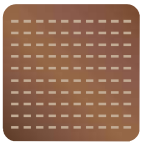
What is the message behind the plague of lice? How can we apply this lesson to our own lives?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Why do you think God chose these particular plagues?*

2. *In your opinion, which was the worst of the Ten Plagues?*

3. *Who were the plagues really for?*



EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

How many of the plagues can you simulate at your Seder table?
Here are a few ideas (some may require preparation in the days before Seder night):

1. Blood: Spill a little wine or grape juice onto everyone's plate, and/or (temporarily) confiscate all the bottles and jugs of water from the table.

2. Frogs: Get the children to jump around the table making frog noises.

3. Lice: Ask the children to check everyone's hair for lice. (If you plan this ahead of time, you could even plant some fake lice to find.)

4. Wild animals: Collect all the stuffed animals in the house and place them around the table.

5. Pestilence: Throw all of the stuffed animals on the floor and then bury them under the table.

6. Boils: Using forks, give all your guests boils (be gentle!).

7. Hail: Have a snowball/hail fight with cotton balls, pillows, pre-prepared hail made from paper, or other soft materials.

8. Locusts: Have the children lead everyone in making a humming, buzzing noise, and then increase the volume, like a swarm of locusts about to descend.

9. Darkness: Blindfold your guests (using scarves) and then try to play a game or continue with a section of the Haggada.

10. The striking down of the firstborn: Gather all the firstborn children together and take them outside.

DAYEINU דַּיֵּנוּ

IN A NUTSHELL

Dayeinu is a song that explores the kindnesses of God to His people on the long journey from slavery to freedom. There are fifteen stages described between leaving Egypt, reaching the Promised Land, and building the Temple in Jerusalem. This song is a *tikkun*, a "putting-right," for the ingratitude of the Israelites in the wilderness. At almost every stage of their journey, they complained: about the water, the food, the difficulties of travelling, the challenge of conquering the land. It is as if we are saying: where they complained, let us give thanks. Each stage was a miracle. And each miracle would have been enough to convince us that Hashem is behind all the events in our history.

DEEP DIVE

Why is Shabbat specifically mentioned in *Dayeinu*?

Shabbat is the ultimate expression of a free society, the antithesis of slavery in Egypt. On this day, all relationships of dominance and subordination are suspended. We may not work, or command others to work, "so that your manservant and maidservant may rest as you do" (Devarim 5:15). At many times in history, people have dreamed of an ideal world. The name given to such visions is "utopia," meaning "no place," because at no time or place have these dreams been realised on a society-wide basis. Shabbat is the sole successful utopian experiment in history. It is based on the simple idea that utopia (in Judaism, the Messianic Age) is not solely in the future. It is something we can experience in the midst of time, one day in seven. Shabbat became the weekly rehearsal of an ideal world, one not yet reached but still lived as a goal, of a world at peace with itself, recognising the createdness, and thus the integrity, of all people and all forms of life. If Egypt meant slavery, Shabbat is collective freedom, a "foretaste of the World to Come."

Commentary on *Dayeinu*, *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

REFLECT

Seder night is when we experience the Exodus, and Shabbat is when we experience freedom and utopia. Why do you think we need regular reminders of what freedom and utopia feel like?

FURTHER THOUGHTS

The Exodus was more than an event in the past. It was a precursor of redemption in the future. Israel, as Moshe warned, would not dwell securely in its land. It would forget its moral and spiritual vocation. It would be attracted to the pagan culture of its neighbours. By so doing it would lose its reason for existence and find itself unable, at times of crisis, to summon the shared vision and collective energy needed to prevail against neighbouring imperial powers. It would suffer defeat and exile. But despair would never prevail. In the past, God had brought His people from slavery to freedom and from exile to the land, and therefore He would do so again. The Jewish people never completely lost faith in God, because its prophets knew that God would never completely lose faith in His people. History intimated destiny. What happened once would happen again. That is what lies behind the words with which the Haggada begins: "Now we are here; next year in the land of Israel. Now – slaves; next year we shall be free." The Jewish people

"The Exodus was more than an event in the past. It was a precursor of redemption in the future."

kept the vision alive. It is not too much to say that the vision kept the Jewish people alive….

That is what Pesaḥ was during more than eighteen centuries of exile and dispersion: a seed planted in Jewish memory, waiting to be activated, to grow. Without it, Jews would certainly have disappeared. Lacking hope of return – hope tempered by faith into a certainty-like steel – they would have made their peace with their condition, merged into their surrounding societies and ambient cultures, and vanished, like every other culture deprived of a home. Pesaḥ, like a seed frozen in suspended animation, contained the latent energy that led Jews in the twentieth century to create the single most remarkable accomplishment in the modern world, the rebirth of Israel, the land, the state, the nation, and the people. Mikha's vision, and Yeḥezkel's, and Moshe's, came true.

"Pesaḥ and the Rebirth of Israel," ***The Jonathan Sacks Haggada***

REFLECT

Rabbi Sacks connects the Exodus to the modern return to Zion. How is this also connected to the poem Dayeinu*?*

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Would it really have been "enough" if God had stopped at any of these stages?*

2. *What do you see as the message behind listing these fifteen stages in* Dayeinu*?*

3. *Where do you think the story of the Exodus actually ends?*

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

Natan Sharansky is a hero of the Jewish people. Growing up in the Soviet Union, when it was almost impossible to live a Jewish life, he knew the term "Jew" only as something to hide. But then in 1967, following Israel's dramatic victory in the Six-Day War, Jews began to reconnect to their ancestral faith with pride. Many began to dream of returning to their homeland but were prevented by the Soviet authorities. They became known as Refuseniks. Sharansky, who was arrested at the age of twenty-nine for his Zionist activities, was arguably the most famous Refusenik, with thousands of people campaigning for his release from the Soviet gulag prison system in Siberia. He gained his freedom in 1986 and realised his lifelong dream to immigrate to the State of Israel.

At the beginning of the Coronavirus global pandemic, when many Jews around the world were facing the notion of a Pesaḥ Seder without their family around the table for the first time, he was interviewed about

his experience of Pesaḥ in the gulag. The Soviet authorities knew the importance of Seder night, and cruelly ensured that Sharansky was in solitary confinement, where he was served nothing but three pieces of dry bread and three cups of water per day.

"I decided my three cups of water would be my wine and my three pieces of dry bread would be my matza," Sharansky recalled. "And my salt would be my *maror*. I found out that this is the great place to feel the unique struggle of the Jewish people – to be connected with every Jew in the world, and to enjoy thinking that this year we are slaves and next year we [will be] free people in Jerusalem."

Sharansky concluded his interview by emphasising that even if we are not with our family on Seder night, we are still connected, for we are one big family, a people with a shared history, a shared future, and a very special role in this world.

REFLECT

Natan Sharansky found meaning in the Pesaḥ story for his situation, both in the gulag and during the Covid pandemic. What meaning for this year can you find in the Pesaḥ story?

PESAḤ, MATZA, *MAROR* פֶּסַח מַצָּה וּמָרוֹר

IN A NUTSHELL

These are the three mitzvot of the night that involve eating (we no longer eat the *korban Pesaḥ*, but while there was a Temple this was a biblical command). Normally, mitzvot are fulfilled by performing the required act with the intention of observing the commandment. To fulfil the duty of sukka, for example, we do not have to tell the story of the wandering of the Israelites in the desert. However, in the case of Pesaḥ two commands coincide: the first, to eat the festive meal, and the second, to tell the story. Rabban Gamliel argues that the two are connected. The story explains the food; the food allows us to relive the story.

The Torah states: "When you enter the land which the Lord shall give you as He promised, you shall observe this rite. And if your children should ask you, 'What is this service you observe?' you shall say, 'It is a Pesaḥ offering to the Lord, for He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt while He struck down the Egyptians, but saved those in our homes'" (Shemot 12:25–27). Thus, from the very outset, eating, asking, and explaining were connected, and it is this connection on which Rabban Gamliel bases his view that all three elements of the Pesaḥ meal must be explained.

"The story explains the food; the food allows us to relive the story."

DEEP DIVE

The Pesaḥ lamb symbolises freedom. The bitter herbs represent slavery. Matza combines both. It was the bread the Israelites ate in Egypt as slaves. It was also the bread they ate when leaving Egypt as free people. Why do the symbols of freedom precede the bitter herbs of slavery? Surely slavery preceded freedom? The hasidic masters answered: only to a free human being does slavery taste bitter. Had the Israelites forgotten freedom, they would have grown used to slavery. "The worst exile is to forget you are in exile."

REFLECT

Why is it important to remember and experience both slavery and freedom on this night?

FURTHER THOUGHTS

In the Torah, the festival we call *Pesaḥ* is consistently described as *Ḥag HaMatzot*, the festival of unleavened bread (*Ḥag HaPesaḥ*, in the Torah, is confined to the fourteenth of Nisan, the day prior to the Seder, when the Paschal sacrifice was brought). Rabbi Levi Yitzḥak of Berditchev gave a beautiful explanation for this dual terminology. The name *Pesaḥ* signifies the greatness of God, who "passed over" the houses of the Israelites. The name *Ḥag HaMatzot* suggests the greatness of the Israelites, who followed God into the desert without any provisions. In the Torah, God calls the festival *Ḥag HaMatzot* in praise of Israel. The Jewish people, though, call the festival *Pesaḥ* in praise of God.

REFLECT

Was the story of Exodus a triumph for God or for the Israelites?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *What is special about the educational methods used at the Seder table?*

2. *Do any other ḥagim have a similar aspect to them?*

3. *Do you think our educational institutions can learn anything from the educational methods of Seder night?*

EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

At this point in the Seder, when we eat the matza and *maror* (and remember the Pesaḥ offering), we are experiencing the story we have been learning about. When you eat the matza and *maror*, close your eyes and be mindful about what your senses are feeling and experiencing. What do these foods smell and taste like? What emotions and feelings do they create in you when you eat them? Take a moment to imagine what the generation that left Egypt on the very first Pesaḥ must have felt as they ate these foods.

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

A Jew was sent to Siberia by the Communist government for illegally maintaining a network of Jewish education during the years when it was against the law to practise Judaism openly. When he was finally let free he told his friends, "It was difficult to observe Pesaḥ in the labour camp. One year, we had no *matzot*. Another year, we had no wine. But of bitter herbs, we were never short!"

HALLEL הַלֵּל

IN A NUTSHELL

Now that we have finished telling the story of the Exodus, we feel an overwhelming need to thank and praise Hashem, just like the Israelites 3,300 years ago. So we begin to say Hallel (split into two sections, before and after the meal). This is one of the transitional moments of the Haggada, when we move from story to song, from prose to poetry, from recitation (*Maggid*) to praise (Hallel).

"We move from story to song… from recitation to praise."

DEEP DIVE

Song plays a vital part in Judaism. At the end of his life Moshe gave the Israelites the last of the commands – that in every generation we should write a new *sefer Torah*. On that occasion he used an unusual word. He called the Torah a "song" (Devarim 31:19). Words are the language of the mind. Music is the language of the soul. Whenever speech is invested with deep

emotion it aspires to the condition of song. Thus we do not say our prayers; we sing them. We do not read the Torah; we chant it. We do not study Talmud; we intone it. Each kind of text, and each period of the Jewish year, has its own melody. Thus Moshe was saying: to transmit Torah across the generations as a living faith, it must be not just a code of law, but also the song of the Jewish people.

REFLECT

How does song change the experience of our prayers and the way we praise God?

FURTHER THOUGHTS

Hallel (Tehillim 113–118) is the great song of deliverance that, according to the Talmud, was sung at all the great triumphs of Jewish history. In our day we have added two new occasions when we say it: on Yom HaAtzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, and Yom Yerushalayim, Jerusalem Day.

The late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik asked an interesting question about the recitation of Hallel at the Seder table. The Talmud states that we do not say Hallel on Purim because "the reading of the Megilla is equivalent to saying Hallel" (Megilla 14a). Why do we not apply the same reasoning to Seder night? We have recited the Haggada, the counterpart of the Megilla on Purim. Surely, then, the recital of Hallel is superfluous.

The answer I would give is that there are two different commands to say Hallel. The first is at the time of a miracle. The second is as a form of remembrance on the anniversary of the miracle. Thus, at the time of Ḥanukka, the Maccabees said Hallel at the moment of victory. The next year they established it as an annual obligation. The two forms of Hallel arise from different psychological states. The first is expressive, the second evocative. The first gives voice to an emotion we already feel. The second creates that emotion through an act of memory, recalling an event that occurred in the past.

Telling the story of a miracle, as we do on Purim, is equivalent to the second form of Hallel. It is an act of memory. On Pesaḥ, however, we do not merely tell the story. We relive it. We eat the bread of oppression and the bitter herbs. We taste the wine of freedom. We recline as free people. "Generation by generation, each person must see himself as if he himself had come out of Egypt." The Hallel we say on Seder night is therefore of the first kind, not the second. It arises out of the emotions we feel having lived through the event again. It is a "new song." This kind of Hallel is not cancelled by telling the story.

REFLECT

What is the difference in emotion between the two types of Hallel? Do you connect emotionally to the Hallel said on Seder night being the first type?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *What do we have to praise and thank God for on Pesaḥ?*

2. *Is it better to use our own words to do this or the words of someone else (like King David's Tehillim)?*

3. *Do you connect more to words or song as a medium for expressing emotions?*

EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

Ask the guests around your Seder table to share as many tunes for the different parts of Hallel as they know. Spend a moment reflecting (either privately or in a conversation with the Seder participants) on how it feels to sing as opposed to saying or reading the words.

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

Following the splitting of the Sea of Reeds when the Israelites were finally safe from the pursuing Egyptians, Miriam the prophetess took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, singing and dancing with their own timbrels, in praise and thanks to Hashem. The Rabbis in the Midrash ask why the women had musical instruments at all. (Was this really a priority to take with them when they left Egypt in haste?) They answer their own question by praising the women's faith in Hashem. They had deep faith that Hashem would perform miracles in the desert, to protect them and ensure their safe passage, and so they ensured that they had instruments and dances prepared so that they would be able to express their gratitude and praise of Hashem.

NIRTZA נִרְצָה

IN A NUTSHELL

The Exodus by *Jacob Wexler*

Nirtza means "parting," and with this passage we reach the concluding section. We pray that next year we may be able to celebrate Pesaḥ in a rebuilt Temple according to the original biblical rituals (which we can no longer fulfil). This passage is taken from a liturgical poem (*kerova*) composed by Rabbi Joseph Tov Elem in the eleventh century CE. Originally, it was said in the synagogue on *Shabbat HaGadol*, the Shabbat preceding Pesaḥ, to conclude a detailing of the laws of Pesaḥ. It was transferred to the Haggada in the fourteenth century.

DEEP DIVE

As at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, so here – at the two supreme moments of the Jewish year – we pray "*Leshana habaa biYerushalayim habenuya*," "Next year in Jerusalem rebuilt." For eighteen centuries, Jews were scattered across the world, but they never forgot Jerusalem. They prayed toward it. They mourned it even during their celebrations. Each year, on the ninth of Av, the anniversary of the destruction, they sat and wept as if they had just been bereaved. Like the survivors of an earlier catastrophe, they said, "If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy" (Tehillim 137:5–6).

The French historian Chateaubriand, visiting Jerusalem in the early nineteenth century, was overcome with emotion as he saw for the first time the small Jewish community there, waiting patiently for the Messiah. Noting how this "small nation" had survived while the great empires who sought its destruction had vanished, he added, "If there is anything among the nations of the world marked with the stamp of the miraculous, this, in our opinion, is that miracle."

REFLECT

Why do you think the conclusion to these two important days in the Jewish calendar (Yom Kippur and Seder Night) end with these words?

FURTHER THOUGHTS

Jerusalem is a place, but it is more than a place. It became a metaphor for the collective destination of the Jewish people. A city is what we build together, individually through our homes, collectively through our public spaces. So Jerusalem became a symbol of what the Jews were summoned to build, a city of righteousness worthy of being a home for the Divine Presence. Its stones would be good deeds, and its mortar, relationships of generosity and trust. Its houses would be families; its defensive walls, schools and houses of study. Shabbat and the festivals would be its public parks and gardens. For Jews believed that, even in a violent and destructive world, heaven could be built on earth. It was their most daring vision. The architect of the city would be God. The builders would be ordinary men and women. It would be a Jewish city, but it would be open to all, and people from all faiths would come and be moved by its beauty.

So Jerusalem, the "faithful city" (Yeshayahu 1:27), became the destination of the Jewish journey, which began with Avraham and Sara

"Jerusalem became a symbol of what Jews were summoned to build… a city of righteousness."

and will be complete only at the end of days. This is how the prophet Yeshayahu envisioned it, in words that for millennia have captured the human imagination:

In the last days
The mountain of the Lord's Temple will be established
As chief among the mountains;
It will be raised above the hills,
And all the nations will stream to it.
Many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Yaakov.
He will teach us His ways,
So that we may walk in His path."
For the Torah shall come forth from Zion,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He will judge between the nations
And settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into ploughshares
And their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
Nor will they train for war anymore. (Yeshayahu 2:2–4)

These words, among the most influential ever written, sum up much of Jewish faith. They epitomise what it might be like to "perfect the world under the sovereignty of God" (as described in the *Aleinu* prayer). And as they journeyed through the centuries and continents, Jews carried this vision with them, believing that their task was to be true to their faith, to be loyal to God, to exemplify His ways to humankind, and to build a world at peace with itself by learning and teaching how to respect the freedom and dignity of others.

REFLECT

What must the Jewish people do when they reach their final destination, Jerusalem?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Do you think Jews in Israel should still say this at the end of their Seder?*

2. *What does Jerusalem have to do with the Exodus story and Seder night?*

3. *Has anyone around your Seder table celebrated Pesaḥ in Israel? Was it special or different?*

EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

Close your eyes and imagine what celebrating the Pesaḥ Seder in Jerusalem would be like with a rebuilt Temple.

A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

It happened in Jerusalem, one Shabbat afternoon towards the end of the Gulf War. Our family had gone to the Holy City to find peace. Instead we found ourselves in the midst of war. Within weeks of our arrival it became clear that the Middle East was yet again about to be engulfed in conflict. Yet as we stepped out into the Jerusalem sunlight there was peace. The city breathed the stillness of Shabbat. The late afternoon sun was turning the houses of Jerusalem stone into burnished gold. As we looked across the valley to the walls of the Old City, we could understand why, long ago, people had called this the city of peace and why, even when it lay in ruins, Jews were convinced that the Divine Presence had never left Jerusalem.

We had been invited by our neighbours to *seuda shelishit*, the third Shabbat meal. When we arrived we discovered that they had also invited a group of Rumanian Jews who had recently come to make their home in Israel. They had made the journey as a group because they were a choir. In Rumania they had sung the songs of Jewish hope and longing. Now, in Jerusalem, they began to sing again, this time for all of us around the Shabbat table.

Then a rather moving thing happened. As the sounds of the choir reverberated around the alleyways of our quiet corner of Jerusalem, people from the neighbouring houses began to appear, drawn by the music. One by one they slipped in through the open door and stood around and, hesitantly at first, then with growing confidence, joined the singing. Here was an Israeli artist, there a new arrival from Russia, here an American investment banker, there a family from South Africa, and in the doorway a group of tourists who happened to be walking by and had stopped to see what was happening and then found themselves caught up by the embrace of the atmosphere. No one spoke; no one wanted to break the mood. We continued to sing the songs of Shabbat afternoon. As the sun began to set behind the hills, I could feel the Divine Presence among us, joining our words to those of a hundred generations of Jews, uniting them in a vast choral symphony, the love song of a people for God, and I sensed something of the mystery and majesty of the Jewish people, and I knew that it was this that I had come to Jerusalem to find.

We had come together, each of us as the result of a long journey, in some cases physical, in others spiritual, and in many, both. We each had stories to tell of how we came to be in Jerusalem that afternoon. But just as our individual voices had united to sing the words of our ancestors' songs, so our stories were part of a larger story. Our personal routes were stages on the most remarkable journey ever undertaken by a people, spanning almost every country on the face of the earth, and four thousand years of time. If we had been able, then and there, to trace back the history of our parents and theirs across the generations, we would have been awestruck at its drama and scope. Was there anything that could remotely compare to the long Jewish journey to Jerusalem? Was this, I thought, not the most vivid testimony imaginable to the power and endurance of faith?

As the singing ended, and Shabbat drew to a close, I understood that to be a Jew is to join the journey of our people, the story of Pesaḥ, and the long walk across centuries and continents from exile to homecoming. There is no story like it, and the journey is not yet complete.

ḤAD GADYA חַד גַּדְיָא

IN A NUTSHELL

This strange and haunting song seems simple on the surface but has hidden depths. Concluding one of Judaism's most important evenings of the year with a children's song tells us a lot about how important children are, especially on this night. The Jewish love of, and focus on, children means that we look forward to the future even more than we look back to the past. Just as we began the Seder with the questions of a child, so we end it with a nursery rhyme, reminding ourselves that what sustains a faith is not strength or power, but its ability to inspire successive generations of children to add their voices to their people's song.

DEEP DIVE

The theme of *Ḥad Gadya* is the destructive cycle of vengeance and retaliation. In one interpretation, the young goat represents Israel. The "father" who bought it for two coins is God, who redeemed Israel from Egypt through His two representatives, Moshe and Aharon. The cat is Assyria, which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. The dog is Babylonia, which defeated the southern kingdom of Yehuda. The stick is Persia, which replaced Babylonia as the imperial power in the sixth century BCE. The fire is the Greeks, who defeated the Persians in the days of Alexander the Great. The water is Rome, which superseded ancient Greece. The ox is Islam, which defeated the Romans in Palestine in the seventh century. The slaughterer is Christianity – specifically the Crusaders, who fought Islam in Palestine and elsewhere, murdering Jews on the way. The Angel of Death is the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine until the First World War. The song concludes with an expression of faith that "this too shall pass" and the Jewish people will return to their land. So it has been in our days.

"One Little Goat," ***The Jonathan Sacks Haggada***

> **"The theme of *Ḥad Gadya* is the destructive cycle of vengeance and retaliation."**

The song, disarming in its simplicity, teaches the great truth of Jewish hope: that though many nations (symbolised by the cat, the dog, and so on) attacked Israel (the goat), each in turn has vanished into oblivion. At the end of days God will vanquish the Angel of Death and inaugurate a world of life and peace, the two great Jewish loves. *Ḥad Gadya* expresses the Jewish refusal to give up hope. Though history is full of man's inhumanity to man – dog bites cat, stick hits dog – that is not the final verse. The Haggada ends with the death of death in eternal life, a fitting end for the story of a people dedicated to Moshe's great command, "Choose life" (Devarim 30:19).

Commentary on *Ḥad Gadya*, *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

REFLECT

Living in the twenty-first century, do you feel this song and the message behind it are still relevant?

FURTHER THOUGHTS

Having earlier expressed the Jewish hope, "Next year in Jerusalem," we end our Seder night with the universal hope that the Angel of Death will one day be defeated by the long-overdue realisation that God is life; that worshipping God means sanctifying life; that God's greatest command is "Choose life" (Devarim 30:19); that we bring God into the world by reciting a blessing over life.

I find it almost unbearably moving that a people that has known so much suffering can summon the moral courage to end this evening of Jewish history on a supreme note of hope, and write it into the hearts of its children in the form of a nursery rhyme, a song. For what we give our children on this night of nights is something more and greater than the bread of oppression and the taste of Jewish tears. It is a faith that in this world, with all its violence and cruelty, we can create moments of redemption, signals of transcendence, acts of transfiguring grace. No people has risked and suffered more for a more slender hope, but no hope has lifted a people higher and led it, time and again, to greatness. So we end the night with a prayer and a conviction. The prayer: "God of life, help us win a victory over the forces of death." And the conviction? That by refusing to accept the world that is, together we can start to make the world that ought to be.

"One Little Goat," *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

REFLECT

What is the main focus at the end of the Haggada, and how is it different from the beginning of the Haggada?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. *Why do you think we end the Seder with a song for children?*

2. *How do you think the message of the song is connected to Seder night?*

3. *How does this song connect to our lives today?*

EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

Ask every person at your Seder table in turn to share what their hopes for the next year are: hopes for themselves, for the Jewish people, and for the world.

EDUCATIONAL COMPANION TO THE QUESTIONS

HA LAḤMA ANYA

1. As Rabbi Sacks explains in his Haggada, the root of the word "*haggada*" means not only "to tell" but also "to bind," and the Seder evening binds us together as a people. Jews from all walks of life and religious backgrounds will find themselves at a Seder table, and should be welcomed. In fact, the biblical command to sacrifice the Pesaḥ lamb had to be done in a *ḥavura*, which is more than one family coming together. The Exodus freedom is not just about leaving slavery, but also about journeying to the Promised Land and building a society based on the values of the Torah, where kindness to strangers will be a core value. This starts tonight.

2. The beauty of matza is that it can represent both. In fact, without slavery we would not appreciate our freedom, so both concepts can exist in this experience at the same time.

3. Although some families choose to have Seder night on their own (especially if they have young children, so the parents can focus on them) and this is perfectly okay, most people will find themselves at a Seder night with others from outside of their immediate family. People come together for this ritual. But more than this, it is a powerful thought that the entire Jewish people find themselves at a Seder table at the same time, and with some imagination, we can also feel connected to the generations that went before us who celebrated this festival in exactly the same way.

MA NISHTANA

1. Learning through questions makes the educational process engaging and empowering for the learner.

2. Any question asked out of a desire for knowledge, without a secondary agenda, is a good question. There are no bad questions in this case.

3. Not all questions have answers, or at least answers that humans with finite and limited understanding can arrive at. Some questions only the infinite God can answer. But we don't stop asking the questions. The questions are more important than the answers.

AVADIM HAYINU

1. As a nation, we have a national memory and identity. So when the Haggada speaks of our experience in Egypt as slaves, while this refers to a specific generation and historical time period, as a nation we have that experience implanted in our national memory and identity. The Haggada encourages us to re-experience this every year on Seder night, and *Avadim Hayinu* reminds us that the experience does impact us directly, for if God had not redeemed us, we would be slaves ourselves to this day.

2. A good story told well can have a big impact. Stories can be powerful when they are experiential, in that the listener can imagine that they are living the

story, or at least empathise and identify with the characters and their experiences. The longer and more detailed the story is, the better the chances are that this will happen. So the Haggada encourages us to tell the story at length, and deeply engage with it, so we can experience the story as fully as possible.

3. Because Seder night is not about "learning" or "reading" or "understanding" but rather about experiencing and living the story, the Haggada tells us that even wise and experienced people who have done this many times before still have to retell the story. Each year it is a new experience.

THE FOUR CHILDREN

1. Obviously all answers are legitimate, but in the ensuing discussion it is worth encouraging everyone to realise that each of us is all of the four children at different times in our lives (or even at different times of the day!).

2. All children are different and have different educational needs. Insightful parents and teachers realise this and try their hardest to cater to those individual needs.

3. Children are the main focus of the evening because this night more than any other is when we pass on our national heritage to the next generation. Even though the process of learning about and re-experiencing the Exodus is a task which takes a lifetime, it begins when we are children, laying the foundation of our Jewish identity and allowing the national narrative to become part of our very core. We take our cue from the Torah itself, which focuses on the questions children will ask about the Exodus.

THE TEN PLAGUES

1. Each plague attacked a different aspect of the physical and spiritual needs of Egyptian society. The Egyptians could probably have managed without one or two or even more of the elements that were attacked, but all ten plagues together was a systematic destruction of their way of life.

2. Every plague was terrible and designed to attack a different aspect of Egyptian society and cause problems for the Egyptians. If you have to choose one … it doesn't get more terrible than the final plague.

3. God could have taken the Israelites out of Egypt without any miracles or drama. But He chose to take the Egyptians on an educational journey, because the process was important. And even more important than the direct impact on the Egyptians was the impact on the world that was watching (or at least hearing reports) and the effect on the Israelites themselves. The plagues were as much for these other groups as they were for Pharaoh and the Egyptians, if not more so.

DAYEINU

1. Full redemption from Egypt was the establishing of a sovereign nation in the Promised Land, with the Temple at the centre of its religious and political life. If God had stopped short of this at any of the previous stages, then it would not have been complete redemption.

2. The message behind *Dayeinu* is that each individual stage was miraculous and magnificent, and worthy of praise and gratitude.

3. While the physical redemption ended with the liberation from slavery and leaving the geographical boundaries of Egypt, and the spiritual redemption took place at the Giving of the Torah on Sinai, the full religio-social redemption was only achieved once the Jews entered the land of Israel and built a society there based on the Torah.

PESAḤ, MATZA, MAROR

1. It is experiential. We don't just talk or learn or read about the story, we experience it through food and other rituals (such as leaning, pouring for each other, etc.) in order to relive the story.

2. Yes, all the *ḥagim* in Judaism do, although to a lesser extent than Pesaḥ. For example, we sit in the sukka, and we stay up all night learning to prepare to receive the Torah on Shavuot.

3. While some of our educational institutions do practise experiential education (camp is the best example) and some of our schools find opportunities to also do so (such as by having *shabbatonim*), perhaps institutions of formal Jewish education could find more creative ways to incorporate the methodology of experiential education.

HALLEL

1. It is hard to know where to start. But it is important to articulate all the things God did for the Israelites and how we benefit from these acts until this day. In the words of the Haggada itself, "And if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought our fathers out of Egypt – then we, and our children, and the children of our children, would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt."

2. If one is comfortable finding words that articulate genuine emotion, then there is room for that in our prayers. But for many this is a challenge, and so we fall back on the exquisite words of our greatest poets and spiritual leaders, to give us the words we need. Our challenge is then to channel our emotions through these words.

3. For some, words capture the feelings and emotions that we need to express. But for others, only music can connect to our soul to do this sufficiently. While Rabbi Sacks was a masterful wordsmith and orator, he acknowledged that music can take us further along when it comes to expressing what is in our soul.

NIRTZA

1. They should (and do) because this section refers to a rebuilt Jerusalem in Messianic times, when the Temple will exist (allowing us to celebrate Pesaḥ as originally described in the Torah) in a redeemed world of peace. This has clearly not been achieved yet, and so it is appropriate to pray for this at the end of the Seder night, even while sitting in the beautiful rebuilt modern city of Jerusalem.

2. The Exodus is the beginning of a journey that we are still on. The destination of this journey is rebuilt Jerusalem in a redeemed world of peace. We hope that this can be achieved in time for next year's Seder.

3. All the *ḥagim* are special and unique in Israel. There is something very powerful about celebrating a Jewish festival in a Jewish state. It is also easier to remember that we are closer to the final destination of the Jewish journey now than at any point in history, when sitting in the ancient Jewish homeland, rebuilt in modern times.

ḤAD GADYA

1. The whole of the Seder is focused on children, and on transmitting our heritage to the next generation. Like the other songs at the conclusion of the Seder, this song is fun to sing, and it also contains a strong educational message. This is a great way to end the Seder night journey.

2. The message of *Ḥad Gadya* is that while it may seem during our history that there are powerful forces who will dominate and even destroy us, these forces come and go, and only God decides who survives in the long term. And if you consider Jewish history, it is clear that He has decided that the Jewish people have a destiny to fulfil, and therefore we have outlasted all these powerful nations (represented in the song by the animals, etc.) that have tried to destroy us.

3. Modern Jewish history reflects this same message. In the twentieth century, an enemy of the Jewish people came closer than ever before to wiping them out, yet not only did the Jewish people survive, but in fact just three years later returned to their ancestral homeland, re-established sovereignty there, and are now thriving like never before. We are part of a generation that is living the fulfilment of the message of this song.


Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY