



PASSOVER HAGGADA

With commentary by
RABBI ADIN EVEN-ISRAEL STEINSALTZ

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EXPANSIONS

Cues for the Order of the Seder Because of the numerous customs that are observed on the seder night, the sages devised cues, or mnemonic devices, to aid in remembering the order in which these practices will be observed over the course of the evening. Various formulas were created by many rabbis, some longer and some shorter, some in rhyme, and some employing both meter and rhyme. The most widely acclaimed and accepted of the mnemonics is the following, composed by French Tosafist Rabbi Shmuel of Falaise:

Kadesh: reciting Kiddush, the sanctification prayer recited over wine

URhatz: washing hands in ritual fashion, before partaking of the vegetable

Karpas: eating the vegetable

Yahatz: breaking the middle matza and hiding it, to be used later as the *afikoman*

Maggid: reciting the main body of the Haggada, from “we were slaves” until “who has redeemed Israel”

Rohtza: washing hands again, this time reciting the proper blessing before eating the matza

Motzi: reciting the *hamotzi* blessing over the matza

KADESH \ URḤATZ \ KARPAS \ YAḤATZ
 MAGGID \ ROḤTZA \ MOTZI \ MATZA
 MAROR \ KOREKH \ SHULḤAN OREKH
 TZAFUN \ BAREKH \ HALLEL \ NIRTZA

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Matza: reciting a special blessing over the matza and eating it

Maror: eating the bitter herb

Korekh: wrapping matza and bitter herbs together and eating it

Shulḥan Orekh: conducting the festive meal

Tzafun: eating the *afikoman*, which had been hidden earlier in the seder

Barekh: reciting Grace after Meals

Hallel: reciting the conclusion of Hallel (the first two paragraphs were recited earlier)

Nirtza: concluding the seder with the hope that it will please God

A mnemonic composed of the Hebrew letters found in the phrase *konekha yehene mimekha shama* (literally, “Your master will take pleasure from you there”), is cited by Rabbi David Abudarham. These letters are an acronym for the Hebrew words *kiddush*, *netila* (washing the hands), *karpas*, *yevatze’a* (breaking bread), *haggada* (telling the story), *netila*, *hamotzi*, *matza*, *maror*, *kerikha* (wrapping the matza and maror), *shemura* (“guarded,” i.e., the *afikoman*), *mazon* (Grace after Meals), and *hallel*.

קדש

מוזגת היין מווגים כוס יין מלאה לקידוש (וכן לכל אחת מארבע הכוסות) וכן מווגים כוסות לכל המסובין בסדר. נהוג כי אין אדם מווג לעצמו את כוס היין, אלא כמנהג מלכים אחר מווג לו את הכוס. לדעת המקובלים, וכן מנהג הספרדים בימינו, מוסיפים מעט מים ליין. את הכוס מחזיקים בשעת הקידוש כאשר תחתית הכוס מונחת על כף היד הימנית, האצבעות מקיפות את הכוס מכל צד. אף שברוב קהילות ישראל נוהגים לקדש בכל שבת וחג בעמידה, מכל מקום בפסח נהגו ברוב הקהילות לעשות גם את הקידוש, כמו את סדר הפסח כולו, בשיבה, שהיא דרך בני חורין, בני מלכים.

שתיית היין לאחר גמר הקידוש שותים את היין. את היין שותים (כל החייבים בכך) בהסבה, כלומר: כשהם נשענים ונוטים לצד שמאל שלהם. ראוי לשתות לפחות את רוב הכוס, אלא אם כן היא כוס גדולה מאוד, שאז די לשתות ממנה בשיעור ("רביעית"). חובת השתייה חלה על הכל – אנשים ונשים, ורק מי שאינו ראוי (מטעמים רפואיים וכדומה) מותר לו לשתות רק מעט. (וראה בהקדמה בעניין השימוש במיץ ענבים).

הנני מוכן ומוזמן לקיים מצוות כוס ראשונה של ארבע כוסות.

לשם ייחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה על ידי ההוא תמיר ונעלם בשם כל ישראל.

אם ליל הסדר חל להיות בשבת מתחיל כאן:

בראשית א

בלחש: וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר

בראשית ב

יוֹם הַשֵּׁשִׁי: וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלֹאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלֹאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ, כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְלֹאכְתּוֹ, אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, לַעֲשׂוֹת.

Holding the Cup of Wine According to the kabbalistic understanding, the cup itself represents the *sefira* of *malkhut*, sovereignty. This is one aspect of Shabbat. The wine symbolizes *gevura*, the aspect of might (especially when using red wine, which is preferable for Kiddush), and in order to "sweeten the harsh judgments with kindness," a small amount of water is added to the wine.

The cup is held in one's hand in a fashion that enables simultaneous, symbolic representation of three concepts: *malkhut*, the *Shekhina*, and Shabbat. The

shared symbol of all three is the rose. The cup itself resembles a rose petal, while the five fingers that hold it are like the five green leaves (the calyx) supporting the petals of the rose.

The First Cup The first cup of wine on the seder night corresponds to the *sefira* of *hokhma*, wisdom. One should keep in mind the kabbalistic intention to draw the aspect of consciousness in its initial stages ("the first level of constricted consciousness") into the *Shekhina* and into the souls of Israel.

Kadesh

Pouring the Wine A full cup of wine poured in preparation for the Kiddush ceremony (and for each of the four cups, as well). Cups are also poured for all those in attendance at the seder. Traditionally, no one pours a cup of wine for himself on the seder night – rather, it should be poured by someone else, after the fashion of kings.

According to kabbalistic interpretation, a little water is added to the wine. This practice is observed today by those who observe the Sephardic tradition.

During Kiddush, the cup is held so that the bottom sits on the flat of the right palm, while the fingers surround it from all sides. Although in most Jewish communities it is customary to recite this prayer every Shabbat and festival while standing, still, on Passover most communities say it in a sitting position, the way in which the entire seder is conducted, symbolizing freedom and the behavior of royalty.

Drinking the Wine At the conclusion of the Kiddush service, the wine is drunk. All those participants who are obligated to drink the wine do so while reclining – leaning toward one's left side. It is proper to drink at least the majority of the cup's contents, unless it is an exceedingly large cup, in which case it is sufficient to drink the minimal halakhic measurement of a *revi't*.

The obligation to drink the four cups includes both men and women. One who is unable to drink wine due to health restrictions or the like, is permitted to drink a small amount (see our comments in the introduction regarding the use of grape juice).

I am ready and prepared to fulfill the commandment to drink the first of the four cups, for the sake of uniting the Holy One, blessed be He, with His Divine Presence, through that which is concealed and hidden, in the name of all of Israel.

This version is recited when the seder night occurs on Friday night:

Quietly: And it was evening, and it was morning – the sixth day. Then the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their array. With the seventh day, God completed the work He had done. He ceased on the seventh day from all the work He had done. God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it He ceased from all His work He had created to do.

The Text of Vayekhulu In the kabbalistic variants of the Shabbat Kiddush, which are written from a mystical perspective (reflected in versions used by the hasidic and Sephardic communities, as well as some Ashkenazic versions), the authors took care to ensure that the number of words in this introductory passage would be the same as the number of words in the Kiddush itself

– thirty-five words in each section. (The two words *yom hashishi* ("the sixth day") are not included in this calculation, as they are not part of the biblical passage.) This brings the sum of the words in the whole Kiddush text to seventy. The number seventy alludes to the concept of the hymn, "seventy crowns of the bride" – these are the seventy crowns that adorn Shabbat.

Gen. 1

Gen. 2

אם ליל הסדר חל ביום חול מתחיל כאן:

סברי מרנן

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר
 בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם, וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן, וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
 וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (שְׁבֻתוֹת לְמִנוּחָה
 וּמוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן, אֶת
 יוֹם הַשְּׁבֻת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה
 זְמַן חֲרוּתָנוּ (בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ
 זָכוֹר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, כִּי בָנוּ
 בָּחַרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ
 מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, (וְשֻׁבָת)
 וּמוֹעֲדֵי קֹדֶשׁךָ
 (בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן)
 בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְקַדֵּשׁ (הַשְּׁבֻת וְ)יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְּמַנִּים.

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Savri: Preparation This short phrase expresses an invitation of sorts, requesting that the participants prepare themselves to hear the Kiddush. There are several different versions of this opening, some elongating it a bit with additions such as “Please pay attention, my masters, teachers, and colleagues,

Vayekhulu and Kiddush In a certain sense, these two texts complement each other. In the text of *Vayekhulu*, remembering Shabbat is equated with remembering the act of Creation. But in the Kiddush itself, a different aspect is emphasized: that Shabbat also serves as a remembrance of the Exodus. This is because

the presentation of the commandment of Shabbat to Israel and the intimate bond between the Jewish people and Shabbat relate both to God’s choice of Israel and to the Exodus. Both of these points are found in the Ten Commandments: the first in the version found in the Book of Exodus, and the second

This version is recited when the seder night falls on a regular weekday:

BY YOUR LEAVE, GENTLEMEN

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
 who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
 who has chosen us from all nations,
 elevated us above every language,
 and sanctified us through His commandments.

And You have given us, Lord our God, in love,
 Sabbaths for rest, seasons for joy,
 holidays and special times for gladness;
 this Shabbat day and this day of the festival of Matzot,
 the season of our freedom,
 in love, a day that proclaims holiness,
 in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.

For You have chosen us,
 and You have sanctified us from every other nation,
 and You have bequeathed Shabbat
 and Your holy seasons to us,
 in love and favor, in joy and gladness.

Blessed are You, Lord,
 who sanctifies Shabbat and Israel
 and the special times.

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etc.” The shorter version consists simply of the words *savri maranan* – “By your leave, gentlemen.” According to the Sephardic *nusah*, all those present answer *Lehayim!* “To life!” the equivalent of “by all means” or “hear, hear.”

The Blessing over the Wine This blessing is normally recited before

in the version found in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Shabbat and Israel and the Special Times This expression concludes the Kiddush for Shabbat and festivals. It is intrinsically associated with differing aspects of the sanctity inherent in

these days: God Himself decreed the holiness of Shabbat; it is fixed and permanent, and is not contingent upon Israel at all. The sanctity of the festivals, however, stems from the holiness of Israel and is a direct result of it. It is only Israel who sanctifies the festivals.

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partaking of wine on any occasion throughout the year. On the seder night, it is recited before drinking each of the obligatory four cups. However, if one drinks more wine during the course of the meal according to personal taste, he does not need to recite the blessing again. In addition to introducing the Shabbat and festival Kiddush, the blessing over wine also serves as the starting point for many other ceremonies. The use of wine, which “gladdens the heart of God and men” (Judges 9:13), and the recitation of its unique blessing, lends a greater sense of festivity and celebration to these occasions. In addition, it is always preferable to refrain from reciting a blessing over something intangible (such as “ushering in the festival”) exclusively, and instead to combine it with something tangible as well (compare, for example, Isaac’s blessings in Genesis 27).

Vayekhulu These verses from Scripture (Gen. 2:1–3) are recited every Shabbat eve as an introduction to the formal Kiddush text established by the sages. Indeed, its content parallels that of the Kiddush, and in a certain sense actually consummates it.

The Sixth Day These two Hebrew words (*yom hashishi*) are the last two words of Genesis 1:31. Before reciting these words, some quietly say the words “and it was evening, and it was morning” (the preceding words of verse 31) and then in a louder voice, begin to recite the words *yom hashishi*. This way, a complete thought is expressed from the biblical verse, and not just two words. The most basic reason that these words are recited is that the first letter of each of these words, together with the first letters of the first two words of the Kiddush (*vayekhulu hashamayim* – “then the heavens were completed”) form the tetragrammaton – *yod-heh-vav-heh*.

The word *vayekhulu* means “then they were completed.” **The heavens and the earth...and all their array** together with all that each of these contains, were perfected. **With the seventh day, God completed** implies that God finished His initial activities of the earth’s creation upon the start of the seventh day. The sages provide an excellent explanation of this concept, stating that the day of Shabbat itself was actually the last entity to be created. Thus Shabbat is that aspect of the creative process that was accomplished “with the seventh day” – the creation of a day of holiness and rest.

“Geniva taught: This can be likened to a king who built himself a wedding canopy, decorating and modeling it, until all that was missing was the bride to enter within. So too, what was the world lacking? Shabbat. Our teachers taught: It is like a king who fashioned a ring, and what was missing? Only the seal. So too, what was the world lacking? Shabbat.” (Genesis Rabba 10:9)

He ceased on the seventh day: On the seventh day, God ceased **all the work** (*melakhto*) **He had done**. The word *melakha* in its biblical usage most precisely

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refers to creative action – the art of the craftsman. **God blessed the seventh day** that this day should forever be a special day, blessed above and beyond all the other days, a source of blessing and pleasure. **And declared it holy** with an extra measure of holiness, which the people of Israel express by abstaining from work, and by dedicating the day to matters of holiness. **Because on it He ceased from all His work** and therefore the nation of Israel emulates God and does likewise. **He had created to do:** The act of formation and creation is now given over to man, and it is he who continues the world’s renewal during the six days of creation.

An Explanation of the Kiddush Who has chosen us from all nations: The idea of the “chosen people” appears many times throughout Scripture, in expressions such as: “For you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God: of all the peoples on earth the Lord your God chose you to be His treasured people” (Deut. 7:6). However, this element of God’s choice is not automatic, like some specially granted status. Rather, it depends (both in the biblical passages and in the text of the Kiddush) upon the definition of the obligations that go along with this standing, and the responsibility to be a consecrated people at all times.

The emphasis on God’s choice of Israel appears in the Kiddush prayer for festivals because, unlike Shabbat, the festivals are times of remembrance of the unique events of Israel’s history. On these days, we recall the singular miracles that transpired for the benefit of the Jewish people, all of which are connected to the fact that God chose us and shaped the events of our history, leading us along a unique path.

Elevated us above every language: This is another reflection of the same idea, which stresses that through the process of God’s choice, Israel was exalted above every other nation. In terms of everyday life, the practical application of this concept is that He has **sanctified us through His commandments. You have given us... in love** all of the festivals, which are a reminder of the miracles that transpired for Israel’s benefit. They are special times that serve to emphasize God’s love for us – **holidays and special times for gladness**. There is a special obligation to rejoice during the festivals, as these are **holy days and seasons** that were designed for joy. **The festival of Matzot** is the true name of the entire festival, while the term *Pesah* has a more limited significance in Scripture. “**The season of our freedom**” is a name that the sages gave the festival, in order to express briefly the essence of its meaning: It is a festival celebrating Israel’s freedom from enslavement in Egypt. **A day that proclaims holiness**, a day when everyone gathers together to celebrate the festival as a community, **in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt**, which is the main focus for our memory on

אם ליל הסדר חל במוצאי שבת מוסיפים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל
 בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ
 בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים
 בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה
 בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ שַׁבָּת לְקֹדֶשׁ יוֹם טוֹב הַבְּדִלָּה
 וְאַתָּה יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִשֵּׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה קֹדֶשׁ
 הַבְּדִלָּה וְקֹדֶשׁ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקֹדֶשְׁךָ.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְקֹדֶשׁ.

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this festival (and on the other festivals as well). From here, we move on to the conclusion of the blessing, which constitutes a brief summary: **For You have chosen us, and You have sanctified us** through the mitzvot from every other nation, **and You have bequeathed Shabbat and Your holy seasons to us** (a kind of novel translation of “My holy assembly”) **in joy and gladness. Blessed are You, Lord, who sanctifies Shabbat and Israel and the special times.** Since the sanctity of the festivals stems from the decision of the *beit din* regarding the days of each month and the structure of the yearly calendar, this sanctity essentially stems from and is dependent on the sanctity of Israel. Thus, the sanctity of the nation of Israel is mentioned first here, and only afterward – as a result of the first sanctity – is the sanctity of the festivals invoked.

The Kiddush The version of the festival Kiddush that is recited on Shabbat

Havdala and Kiddush The version of the Havdala service usually recited on Motza'ei Shabbat is actually an abbreviated version. In reality, both the Talmud and various ancient versions indicate

that at one time, the longer version was recited even on an ordinary Motza'ei Shabbat. This was a lengthier, more ornamental prayer. In fact, some of these texts even feature a listing of every

This version is recited when the seder night falls on a Motza'ei Shabbat:

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
 who creates the lights of fire.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
 who distinguishes between holy and profane,
 between light and darkness,
 between Israel and the nations,
 and between the seventh day
 and the six days of creation.

You have divided between the holiness of Shabbat
 and the holiness of the festivals,
 and You have sanctified the seventh day
 above the six days of creation.

You have separated and sanctified
 Your people Israel with Your holiness.
 Blessed are You, Lord our God,
 who separates between holy and holy.

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is not unlike the weekday version. The only exception is the phrase referring to the sanctity of Shabbat, which is mentioned in addition to the sanctity of the festival. **You have given us ... in love, Sabbaths for rest:** God's gift to Israel of Shabbat is considered an expression of His love for the Jewish people. As such, the nation of Israel was chosen to be God's faithful friend, emulating the example He set for His world – by engaging in creativity during the six days of work and resting on Shabbat. Shabbat is known as a “sign” between God and Israel, an indication of the special covenant that exists between them. Thus, Shabbat is invariably viewed as God's gift of love to Israel. However, in the Kiddush text, Shabbat is mentioned prior to the festival, since the sanctity of Shabbat is greater

instance the expression of Havdala is cited in the Bible.

The version cited here to be recited when the festival occurs after Shabbat does elaborate somewhat on the

standard version, but in accordance with the opinion of the sages it contains only “seven separations,” corresponding to the seven days of the week. In a certain sense, this ties in with the main theme of the

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and more significant than that of the festivals. Therefore at the conclusion of Kiddush, we recite **Your holy Sabbath in love and favor** with regard to Shabbat, and only then, **Your holy festivals for joy and gladness** regarding the festival.

We conclude the Kiddush with the special *Sheheḥeyanu* blessing – “who has given us life.”

Kiddush on Motza’ei Shabbat This is a rather complicated rendition of the Kiddush, because we use it to accomplish two tasks at once: we must sanctify the festival as we usher it in, and at the same time we must take our leave of the outgoing Shabbat. Thus, this text serves simultaneously as Kiddush and Havdala (the ceremony that concludes every Shabbat). It begins with the blessing over wine and the Kiddush – the same as when the seder night falls on an ordinary weeknight.

Havdala This particular version of the Havdala differs from the Havdala that is recited on an ordinary Motza’ei Shabbat; it is specifically styled for when the festival occurs on Motza’ei Shabbat. As such, this rendition of Havdala places emphasis on the distinction between the more serious and significant sanctity of Shabbat and that of the festival. But additions are made that make mention of the festival’s sanctity as well.

Who distinguishes between sacred and profane with regard to the general, essential distinction between these two fundamental and interrelated aspects of life. **Between light and darkness:** The first time in Scripture that we encounter the word *havdala* is in the context of the distinction between these elements: “And God separated (*vayavdel*) the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4). Therefore, this distinction has a symbolic significance as well. Shabbat, in contrast to the ordinary weekdays, is a day of nothing but light. **Between Israel and the nations**, as in “And I will separate you from the nations” (Lev. 20:26). This concept of separation is also applicable here, as the essence

Havdala itself: distinguishing between Shabbat and the secular.

The Order of the Blessings: A Mnemonic In the time of the Talmud, many disputes were held over the order in which the five blessings that make up this Kiddush/Havdala service should be recited. The earlier *Amora'im* were divided over this issue (see Tractate Pesahim), and

they discussed just about every possible order. After relating the halakhic conclusion, the Talmud provided the mnemonic *yaknehaz* to help us remember the precise order. This mnemonic contains the first letters of each of the following words: *yayin* (wine), Kiddush, *ner* (candle), Havdala, and *zeman* (time; i.e., the *sheheḥeyanu* blessing). The main idea behind this order is that we should first accept upon ourselves

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of Shabbat is intimately and exclusively associated with Israel. **Between the seventh day and the six days of creation:** This is the singular declaration made in the Havdala – the separation between Shabbat and the other days of the week.

The following are additions that are made in this version of the Havdala, in honor of the festival: **You have divided between the holiness of Shabbat and the holiness of the festivals**, because the holiness of Shabbat is greater and more stringent than that of the festivals. **And have sanctified the seventh day above the six days of creation**, because the difference between Shabbat and the weekdays concerns not only the fact that creative work is prohibited on Shabbat (as opposed to the “days of work”), but also the idea that Shabbat is a “day of holiness.” **You have separated and sanctified Your people Israel with Your holiness:** Here too, additional emphasis is placed on the fact that Israel’s separation from the other nations is a notion not just of isolation, but of a sanctifying separation of dedication. This double wording (“You have distinguished and sanctified”) also alludes to the fact that even within the nation of Israel there are yet another two divisions of sanctity: God has separated the tribe of Levi from the rest of the nation, and the Priests from the rest of the Levites. These separations reflect an additional aspect of holiness.

Thus we count seven distinct aspects of distinction or separation. We end the Havdala with the words **Blessed are You... who separates between holy and holy**, between the sanctity of the outgoing Shabbat and that of the incoming festival.

We conclude with the *Sheheḥeyanu* blessing.

Blessing over the Candle When reciting this blessing, one should place the cup on the table and extend one’s hand toward the candlelight. Most follow the custom of extending the hand so that the back of one’s hand faces the candles,

the presence of the incoming festival, and only afterward depart from the beloved Shabbat.

The Blessing over the Candle A question was posed by the early commentators (such as the Tosafists and others): Why do we conduct this Havdala service differently from that of every other Motza’ei Shabbat? Why do we omit

the blessing over fragrant spices? They explain that the purpose of the spices is to restore the soul, which flutters out with the departure of Shabbat. But in this instance, since we begin a festive meal immediately upon taking leave of Shabbat, this in itself has the power to restore the soul, and the use of spices is unnecessary. Other reasons have also been given.

בשבת, בחול ובמוצאי שבת מברכים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

שותים בהסבת שמאל.

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bending the upper knuckles inward, and gazing at the fingernails (a practice based on both halakhic and mystical concepts). Afterward, the cup is again placed on the palm of the hand, and the blessing is continued until its conclusion. This blessing is part of the standard Havdala text recited each Motza'ei Shabbat. In one sense, it is based on the recognition that now, on an ordinary weekday, lighting a fire is permitted. However at the same time, a homiletic tradition recounts that the very first manmade fire was "discovered" by Adam, the first man, on Motza'ei Shabbat.

The Sanctity of Shabbat and the Sanctity of the Festivals The sanctity of Shabbat is more encompassing than that of the festival, because on Shabbat all creative work is prohibited, while on festivals "activities needed to sustain the soul" are permitted. This is a halakhic classification denoting activities such as those needed for preparing of food, like cooking and baking. Moreover, the holiness of Shabbat

is also more stringent. Desecrating Shabbat is considered one of the most grievous sins; it was included as one of the Ten Commandments, and Scripture states, "Those who profane it shall be put to death" (Ex. 31:14). The prohibition against work on the festivals is less severe, for it only involves a "negative commandment." Thus it is necessary to recite a formal Havdala to distinguish between these two days.

On Shabbat, weekdays, and Motza'ei Shabbat the blessing is recited:

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time.

Drink while reclining to the left.

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Who Creates the Lights of Fire We say "the lights of," in the plural form, since fire consists of lights that flash in different colors: red, blue, green, etc.; each one is a "light" unto itself.

Sheheḥeyanu: Who Has Given Us Life This is a blessing of thanksgiving, recited over anything that brings us joy. **Sheheḥeyanu:** We thank God for giving us life, enabling us to see this day. **Sustained us:** He has strengthened us, and **brought us,** causing us to arrive ready for this occasion.

This Havdala ceremony is not conducted when the circumstances are reversed, that is, when the festival ends on a Friday night.

Sheheḥeyanu: Who Has Given Us Life This blessing is recited on any occasion when one experiences joy, whether it is a particularly joyous event that has transpired, or perhaps the purchase of

a new item that brings its owner happiness. Just as this blessing is recited on occasions of unexpected joy, so too it is recited for joyous events that occur at regular, expected points throughout the year. As such, the *Sheheḥeyanu* blessing (which the sages called "the blessing over time") is recited at the conclusion of the Kiddush, on account of the festival joy.

ורחץ

נוטלים ידיים ואין מברכים.

בנטילת הידיים לפני האכילה יש הבדלים קלים בין מנהגים שונים, ודרך מקובלת היא כך: ממלאים כלי (כגון כוס או ספל, שאין שפתם העליונה פגומה) במים. מחזיקים את הכוס תחילה ביד שמאל, ושופכים ממנה על היד הימנית – מפרק היד עד קצות האצבעות – שתיים או שלוש פעמים. אחר כך מעבירים את הכוס ליד הימנית, ושופכים ממנה באותה דרך על השמאלית. משפשפים מעט את הידיים הרטובות זו בזו, ואחר כך מנגבים אותן. בנטילה זו – אין מברכים בשעת הניגוב.

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URḥatz: Washing the Hands The participants now wash their hands before eating, a practice that is based on an early rabbinical enactment. This enactment, which the Talmud states was established by King Solomon, was originally intended for the Priests who partake of *teruma* (sanctified food designated for the Priests). The practice was later extended to include everyone, even non-Priests, eating everyday food. This prescribed form of ablution is not only for reasons of cleanliness; indeed, it can only be done when the hands are already perfectly clean and free of any soil or obstruction. Rather, it is essentially an act of purifying the hands – which are exposed to everything – from their state of *tuma*. Furthermore, this deed inherently reflects the attitude of respect that is accorded to food in general. In addition to simply satisfying the body's needs, eating incorporates an aspect of divine service

URḥatz: Washing the Hands According to the kabbalists, the act of washing the hands alludes to a sublime concept: Water – the symbol of divine influence – is poured over the hands – the instruments of action and formation – and purifies them of all dross and blemish.

Thus, this first washing ceremony of the seder night functions on such an exalted level that it does not require reciting a blessing. This is because it alludes to the divine influence that radiates down from the Supernal Worlds, beyond the level of speech.

URḥatz

The hands are washed in the manner described below, but no blessing is recited.

There are differing customs that offer slight variations, regarding the precise manner in which the hands are washed in preparation for eating. The accepted practice is as follows: A vessel is filled with water (this vessel may be any cup, glass, or basin, whose upper rim is not cracked or broken). This cup is then held, first in the left hand, and water is poured onto the right hand – from the wrist, up until the tips of the fingers – two or three times. Then the vessel is transferred to the right hand, and the procedure is repeated to wash the left hand. The hands are rubbed together a bit while yet wet, and afterward they are dried. Again, no blessing is to be recited while drying the hands.

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as well. In this regard, the very act of eating resembles the priestly service in the Holy Temple, and the Torah commands that the Priests should wash their hands and feet before entering the sanctified area to commence their tasks.

One must wash his hands before eating bread. However, according to the letter of the law, one must also wash before eating anything that has been moistened with liquid. This latter enactment is now observed by only a few people, except on the seder night, when all of Israel has accepted the practice of washing hands before eating the karpas, which has been dipped in liquid (salt water or the like). But since this washing is less obligatory, the blessing that is normally recited after washing one's hands before eating bread (or matza) is not said now.

Netilat Yadayim This hand-washing procedure is called *netilat yadayim* (literally, "lifting of the hands"), and although the use of this expression to denote washing the hands is ancient and well established, its exact origin has never been clarified to satisfaction. The *Rishonim* explained

that the wording was derived from the word *natla*, the name of the vessel that was used for this purpose; however, the matter remains unclear (*Tsafot Yom Tov*). Perhaps there is some connection to the custom of raising one's hands after washing.

כרפס

לוקחים כמות קטנה מן הכרפס (ביד או במולג) וטובלים אותו בתוך מי המלח (או החומץ) ומברכים לפני האוכל:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

אוכלים בלי הסבה.

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Karpas Eating vegetables before commencing with the festive seder meal is an ancient custom. Indeed, it was in practice during the time of the Second Temple, and it is mentioned in the Mishna (Pesahim 10:3). Whether in the time of the Temple or today, eating these vegetables before the meal serves the same purpose: to stimulate the appetite prior to the meal. The Talmud does not actually specify which vegetables should be used for karpas, but the sages established the general rule that one should eat only vegetables that cannot be used later for maror. The early *posekim* made special mention of karpas, providing many allusions (both homiletic and mystical) as to why certain vegetables should be used. Nevertheless, whether because of availability factors or because of inadequate

Karpas The sages explain the act of eating karpas on an allegorical level. The green vegetable with which the commandment is fulfilled is a species that comes from the ground. This alludes to the state of the people of Israel while they were slaves in Egypt. Everyone trod upon them, just like the earth. The sages expound further and regroup the word karpas into the letter *samekh* and the word *perekh* (rigor). The allegorical interpretation

is that the letter *samekh*, whose numerical value is sixty, represents the sixty myriad (600,000) people who served with rigor while enslaved in Egypt.

Karpas On another allegorical level of interpretation, eating the karpas, a vegetable that grows in the earth, represents God's descent to the very lowest level – the level known as "earth" – in order to raise up Israel.

Karpas

A small amount of karpas is taken (by hand or with the aid of a fork) and it is dipped into the salt water (or vinegar). This blessing is recited before eating:

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who creates the fruit of the ground.

The karpas is now eaten, without reclining.

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means of identification, different vegetables are traditionally used for karpas in different locales.

The practice of dipping the vegetable in salt water or vinegar is also part of the process of stimulating the appetite before the meal. Still, special care was taken to preserve this custom in particular, in order to add to the list of strange practices that are observed on the seder night to inspire the young children's questions.

Only a small amount of karpas is actually eaten, in order to avoid the obligatory after-blessing that must be recited after eating the minimal required amount of more than a *kezayit*.

Rabbi Isaac Luria taught that it is preferable to fulfill this mitzva with the vegetable known specifically as "karpas," since the numerical value of this word is 360, an allusion to the first level of *bina* in its process of sublimity. Furthermore, since karpas itself alludes to the aspect of *gevura*, it must be dipped in salt water. Salt water is a combination of kindness and divine benevolence (symbolized by water) and the spirit of sifting and the

judgment of wisdom (symbolized by salt).

Karpas Karpas, identified as celery (*Apium graveolense* L.), is a species related to parsley, and is eaten in salads as a condiment or used in cooking. Karpas is a seasonal vegetable of the hybrid variety. It has a thick rootstock and very indented leaves. It is cultivated in the Middle East and in Europe.

יחץ

לוקחים את המצה האמצעית משלוש המצות של "קערה" וחוצים אותה לשני חלקים בלתי שווים. את החלק הקטן משאירים בין שתי המצות השלמות, ואילו את החלק הגדול יותר משאירים ל"אפיקומן". את החלק עבור האפיקומן נוהגים לעטוף במפה. והיו שנהגו לשים אותו זמן מה מאחורי הכתף כאדם הנושא צרור על שכמו. ולאחר מכן שמים אותו במקום מוצנע. ומנהג רוב האשכנזים (שהתפשט בכל ישראל) הוא שהילדים, בייחוד, משתדלים "לגנוב" את האפיקומן ולהחזיקו בידם כפיקדון, ולאחר מכן "פודים" אותו מהם בדבר מוסכם. ומנהג זה נהגו כדי להוסיף עניין לילדים, וכדי להרבות חדווה.

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Yahatz The act of breaking the middle matza serves a dual purpose. First, our sages have stated that the seder should be conducted specifically on a "piece of matza" (Pesahim 115a). Matza is known as the "bread of oppression," symbolizing poverty, and a poor person usually cannot obtain a whole loaf of bread; he has only a piece. At the same time, one must honor the festival properly with a "double portion" of whole, unbroken matzot, as required on every Shabbat and

Yahatz According to the kabbalists, the middle matza should be broken in the shape of the letter *heh*. They allude to this concept by pointing out that the letters that make up the two words *matza* and *hametz* are almost identical, except that *matza* contains the letter *heh* and *hametz* the letter *het*. The main theme of the matza is that it represents humility and meagerness, as opposed to *hametz*, which rises, expressing a feeling of self-satisfaction and pride.

Yahatz As we have explained, the three matzot represent the *sefirot* of *hokhma*, *bina*,

and *daat*. The uppermost matza, which represents *hokhma*, is not broken, because it merely represents a vowel mark. The middle matza alludes to *bina*, which is more expansive and is thus the source of the lower *sefirot*.

The letter *heh* is the symbol of the aspect of *bina*. This letter is comprised of two components: the letter *dalet*, itself an allusion to the *sefira* of *malkhut* (though also expressing an element of *dalut*, i.e., affliction and poverty), and the letter *vav*, which represents *tiferet*, beauty that is above *malkhut*. This middle matza is actually broken into two pieces,

Yahatz

The middle of the three matzot, which lay on the seder plate, is now taken and divided into two unequal portions. The smaller piece is put back and left between the two whole matzot, while the larger portion is set aside to be used as the afikoman. It is customary to wrap this piece in a cloth; some have the custom of placing it behind the shoulder for a short time, like one who carries his burden upon his shoulders. Afterward, the afikoman is hidden. The custom of Ashkenazic Jews (which has been adopted and accepted by all of Israel) is for the children present at the seder to make a singular effort at "stealing" the afikoman, which they will hold for ransom. Eventually they release it, for some agreed-upon compensation. This custom was originally enacted in order to arouse the children's interest and increase their joy in the evening's events.

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festival (in remembrance of the double portion of manna that fell on Shabbat eve). Therefore we leave both the "piece of matza," as well as the two whole matzot. The larger portion of the broken matza is returned to its place; it will serve as the *afikoman*, eaten at the end of the meal in remembrance of the Paschal offering that was similarly eaten at the conclusion of the festive seder meal in the time of the Holy Temple.

and according to the kabbalists, when doing so one should endeavor that the smaller piece resemble the letter *dalet*, and the larger one, the letter *vav*. The smaller *dalet*-shaped piece should be used to fulfill the commandment of eating matza, and the larger one, which resembles a *vav*, should be used for the *afikoman*.

Afikoman This is undoubtedly a Greek word. However, its origin (as well as any practical usage the word may have originally had in that era) is far from certain. Our sages have already offered various

linguistic interpretations that are connected to its Greek meaning. In keeping with their usual approach, the sages expounded this word as if it were Aramaic; a contraction of the two words *afiku* and *mina*, which would mean, "bring forth things." Some explained that this refers to various sweets that were brought out at the end of the meal, or to types of songs that were sung at the feast's conclusion.

The original Greek word would seem to be *epikomion*, which can mean a procession or song following a festive meal, or celebratory rejoicing, etc.

מגיד

מורידים את הכיסוי מעל המצות, ומגביהים את הקערה. במנהג החסידים והמקובלים אומרים תחילה בשקט:

הנני מוכן ומזומן לקיים המצווה לספר ביציאת מצרים.
לשם ייחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה על ידי ההוא טמיר ונעלם בשם כל ישראל.

הא

לחמא עניא

די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים
כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח
השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל
השתא עבדי לשנה הבאה בני חורין.

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Maggid Nowadays, the custom at this point in the seder is to hold up the seder plate, a practice that has taken the place of the earlier custom of removing the table (Pesahim 115b). In those days, each seder participant would eat at his own small table. When *Maggid* began, the tables would all be removed in order to pique the children's curiosity. The children would exclaim: "We have not even begun to eat yet; why are they taking the tables away?" Nowadays, we hold up the tray containing the matzot for the same reason. We uncover them for all to see, because we are about to relate that "this is the bread of oppression."

Maggid This invitation, which summons every person to the seder night feast, comes as a response to the fact that the Holy Temple was destroyed through divisiveness. The secret of redemption is for

Israel to be unified and at peace with each other. Some explained that the reason some of the phrases are recited in Hebrew (such as *leshana habda* – "next year" – and *benei horin* – "free men") was to prevent the

Maggid

The matzot are uncovered and the plate is lifted for all to see. Those who follow the hasidic and kabbalistic custom, first recite the following softly:

Behold, I am ready and prepared to fulfill the commandment to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, in order to unify the Holy One, blessed be He, and His *Shekhina*, through that one that is hidden and concealed, in the name of all Israel:

הא לחמא עניא

THIS IS THE BREAD OF OPPRESSION

our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.

Let all who are hungry

come in and eat;

let all who are in need

come and join us for the Pesah.

Now we are here;

next year in the land of Israel.

Now – slaves;

next year we shall be free.

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According to the Sephardic *nusah*, the words "in haste we left Egypt" are said first, and it was instituted that this passage be recited in Aramaic, so the simple, unschooled folk, who only knew this language, would be able to understand. In every community, it has been customary to explain and translate everything that is said into a language that all will understand.

This is the bread of oppression our fathers ate in the land of Egypt, because matza is bread for the poorest of the poor – slaves who do not even have enough time to wait for their dough to rise. They hurry to knead and bake it with the few sticks in their possession.

non-Jews from understanding and accusing the Jews of planning a rebellion.

Maggid Some were accustomed to pronounce these initial words not as

ha lahma (this is the bread...) but as *heh lahma*. This is another allusion to the letter *heh*; the matza symbolizes the letter *heh* of the divine name, which alludes to the *Shekhina*.

מוזגים לכל אחד מן המסובים כוס יין (שנייה).

מכסים את המצות ומפנים את הקערה למקום אחר. וכאן הבן שואל את ארבע הקושיות, ונהגו שישאל הקטן שבמסובים היודע לחזור על נוסח השאלה. ואם אין ילד במקום, שואל הצעיר שבמסובים. ויש מקומות שנהגו שכל הבנים שואלים בזה אחר זה את ארבע הקושיות. ואפילו יש שם כמה דורות, כל בן שואל, ואפילו היושב בראש – גם כאשר הוא עושה את הסדר לבדו – חוזר ושואל:

מַה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת

אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמַצָּה	שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלּוּ מַצָּה	
אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יִרְקוֹת	שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מְרֹר	

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Since the night of Passover is a time of freedom and rejoicing for all of Israel, the head of the house declares: **Let all who are hungry come in and eat; let all who are in need come and join us for the Pesah.** It would seem that in the days of the Holy Temple, this would actually be announced, giving notice that whoever had not joined others to purchase the offering up until that point, should do so now if they are in need.

Now we are here; next year in the land of Israel. Now – slaves; next year we shall be free. After all, wherever the Passover seder is held, it is incomplete as long as it is not celebrated in the proximity of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Thus we express the hope that just as our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt during this month, so too, the final redemption will also take place in Nisan, and

The Four Questions When the Holy Temple still existed, the format of these questions was somewhat different. In those days one of the questions was: "That every other night we eat roasted or cooked meat, but tonight we eat only roasted meat?" This question became

irrelevant and was struck from the service during the generations that followed the Destruction of the Temple, since the Paschal offering was no longer eaten. Thus in order to preserve the formula of four distinct questions (as the Vilna Gaon points out, every aspect of the seder observance

The second cup of wine is now poured for all the participants.

The matzot are covered, and the plate is removed.

The son now poses the four questions, and the youngest person present who is capable of repeating the formula for the questions customarily does this. In any event, in the absence of any children, the youngest participant should ask the questions.

In some communities, it is customary for all the children to ask the four questions, one after the other. Even if several generations are present, each child asks – even the master of ceremonies.

מַה נִשְׁתַּנָּה

WHAT MAKES

THIS NIGHT UNLIKE ALL OTHER NIGHTS

so that every other night we eat either bread or matza
but tonight there is only matza?

And that every other night we eat many different greens
but tonight we will eat bitter herbs?

EXPANSIONS

the entire Jewish people will return to the land of Israel, to perform the Passover service in the proper way.

The Four Questions The four questions, which are traditionally posed before beginning the "answer" portion of *Maggid*, are exceedingly ancient in origin. Although the wording has undergone slight changes over the generations, the central aspects of this liturgy remain unaltered since the days of the Second Temple. The format of its central theme has likewise remained as it was in the very beginning, reflecting its identity as a children's query. Ideally, the children should ask questions about the customs of the seder on their own initiative, because the whole point of the seder is to expand upon the Torah's declaration, "And when your son asks you... you shall say to him" (Ex. 13:14). Ultimately,

is based on elements of four), the additional question about reclining was later added. This practice was not difficult to understand in earlier times, and would not have merited a question, as people were accustomed to recline at every important meal.

The Four Questions On a mystical level of interpretation, the four questions allude to the four supernal worlds of *atzilut* (emanation), *beria* (creation), *yetzira* (formation), and *asiya* (action). Each of the four questions corresponds to one of these worlds. Even though it is understood that

אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבֵּילִין אֶפְלוּ פְּעַם אַחַת	שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת
שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים	הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה
אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵין וּבֵין מְסַבֵּין	שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת
כָּלֵנוּ מְסַבֵּין	הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה

EXPANSIONS

in order to preserve the question-and-answer format, the earlier generations enacted that children should be taught to ask these four standardized questions.

There was a custom in some communities for the child to preface his remarks with the statement, in his own words, "Father, if you please, I will now ask you four questions." Some even had the custom to ask leave of a father who was no longer living before asking the four questions. They explained that this is because these questions also contain a hidden aspect of meaning, an allusion to our Father in heaven. Thus on a deeper level, we pose other questions to God, imploring Him: Why have we not yet merited the complete redemption? Why do we have cause to celebrate such a festive meal as this only once a year?

What Makes This Night Unlike All Other Nights? All of the festive meals that are held for Shabbat and festivals are regularly conducted at night. Besides, in the time of the Talmud the main meal would always take place at night, even on ordinary days. **Bread or matza:** This means that on every other night, we eat

generally questions stem from the side of evil (since a question is an expression of either insufficient understanding or doubt), the questions that are posed on Passover are associated with the realm of holiness, since their purpose is to arouse us to revelation.

What Makes This Night Unlike All Other Nights? Some explain that this question means that some of the customs we observe on the seder night seem to contradict each other. Certain customs appear to be indications of freedom and redemption (such as reclining, which is

the way of free men) and yet others seem to symbolize the customs of slaves (the "bread of oppression," for example). Thus the question is "what is the meaning of all these differences?" (*Zevah Pesah*).

What Makes This Night Unlike All Other Nights? The kabbalists have written that the "unlikeness" is actually in the night itself. Generally, night symbolizes a time of spiritual descent, but the essence of the seder night is just the opposite; it is a time of the greatest supernal revelation. So the emphasis of the question should be: "What makes

And that every other night we do not dip [our food] at all
but tonight we will dip it twice?

And that every other night some sit to eat and some recline
but tonight we are all reclining?

EXPANSIONS

either bread or matza; it does not matter (and indeed one version of this question reflects this notion). Obviously, on any other night we may eat a *mixture* of bread and matza as well. **Tonight we will eat bitter herbs:** Although we do eat other vegetables tonight, it is only on the seder night that we are actually *obligated* to eat bitter herbs. **We do not dip [our food] at all:** Some versions featured the words "we are *not required* to dip at all"; people certainly dip their food occasionally during the course of any meal throughout the year. Our question relates to the outright obligation to dip tonight, and the unusual manner in which it is done. **Some sit to eat and some recline:** There is no other meal in which we are required to sit in any particular fashion, but on the seder night we are all required to lean, because this is our custom. Although it was not always the case that all the seder participants reclined, nevertheless most people did observe this practice. Tonight, it is clear to all that the seder participants are not sitting as they please, but exclusively in a leaning position.

this *night* unlike all other nights" in its very nature?

Tonight We Will Dip It Twice The commentators have pointed out that the children asking this question have only seen one act of dipping by the time their turn comes to ask. So how can they ask why we dip *twice*? Some explained that since by this time they have observed that only the karpas was dipped, they can assume that the *hazeret* would be dipped later (Rashbatz and others).

But in reality there is a simpler solution. It is understood that these are not

necessarily the children's own questions. Indeed, if they were to ask questions based on their own initiative, they might ask about other changes and differences that they may notice during the course of the evening. The obligation of "And you shall tell your child" is equally fulfilled if one answers their questions about other things as well. But these questions were prepared and designed to capture the attention of all the seder participants, and to arouse their interest in the seder's significance and purpose. Therefore, the children now raise questions about things that will come up later, during the course of the evening.

מחזירים את הקערה למקומה, ומגלים את המצות ואומרים:

עבדים היינו

לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם
 וַיּוֹצֵיאֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם
 בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֹרֹעַ נְטוּיָה.
 וְאִלּוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
 אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם
 הָרִי אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בָנֵינוּ מִשְׁעַבְדֵי הַיָּם
 לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם.
 וְאִפְלוּ
 כָּלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים, כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים, כָּלֵנוּ זְקֵנִים
 כָּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה
 מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם
 וְכָל הַמְרִבָּה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם
 הָרִי זֶה מִשְׁבַּח.

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We Were Slaves The various answers given for the four questions, which relate to the significance of Passover and the details of its requirements, begin at this point. As the Haggada states explicitly, this section provides several different variations of the answer to those questions. The numerous versions of the answer all correspond to the different archetypes who ask the questions; each receives an answer according to his level of understanding and his unique approach to the subject. But all of the answers share one common factor: In the words of the Talmud, we “begin with shame and end with praise” (Pesachim

The More One Tells of the Coming out of Egypt Some explained this in the following manner:

It is human nature that usually when one undergoes a miraculous experience, he recounts the event at great length,

The seder plate is returned to its place, and the matzot are uncovered for the recitation of “We were slaves to Pharaoh...”

עבדים היינו

WE WERE SLAVES

to Pharaoh in Egypt,
 and the LORD our God brought us out of there
 with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.
 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.
 And even
 were we all wise, all intelligent,
 all aged and all knowledgeable in the Torah,
 still the command would be upon us
 to tell of the coming out of Egypt;
 and the more one tells of the coming out of Egypt,
 the more admirable it is.

EXPANSIONS

117a). We recall the nation’s travail and the humble beginnings of her forefathers and end with the story of the redemption.

“We Were Slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord our God Brought Us Out of There With a Strong Hand” (Deut. 6:29) This is one of the answers that is actually provided in writing by the Torah itself: “When your child shall ask you tomorrow... and an outstretched arm” (Deut. 26:8). This is a combination of words from another verse, which also speaks of the miracles of the Exodus.

drawing out every detail. By the same token, when one goes to great lengths in retelling this story of the Exodus, this is tantamount to giving a personal testimony that one is a true member of the people of Israel, a descendant of those who left Egypt in the great

Exodus. By embellishing the details of this story with relish, one shows that the narrative is not just a historical anecdote, but a matter of great personal consequence that has left an indelible mark on his own life (Rabbi Shlomo Cordovero).

מעשה

בְּרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה
וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא וְרַבִּי טַרְפוֹן
שֶׁהָיוּ מְסַבִּין בְּבֵנֵי בְרַק

EXPANSIONS

From this point on, the Haggada explains the importance of retelling the story of the Exodus, informing us that these questions and answers are not merely the account of some event from the distant past. Rather, there is an intrinsic necessity to review and remember the Exodus, to re-examine the events afresh in every generation. The first answer provided is that **if the Holy One, blessed be He, had**

Rabbi Eliezer This is R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus, who in his own lifetime was already known as "Rabbi Eliezer the Great." He was one of the greatest sages of the Mishna, in the generation following the Destruction of the Second Temple.

R. Eliezer was the scion of a very wealthy, aristocratic family; some say that his lineage could be traced all the way back to Moses. However, his family did not allow him to pursue his Torah studies as he wished. It was only at an advanced age that R. Eliezer succeeded in escaping from his home, and in the midst of great physical deprivation, began studying with R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai.

R. Eliezer was unusually intelligent, and his phenomenal memory became legendary (his teacher dubbed him "a cemented cistern that does not lose a single drop"). These factors caused him to rise in prominence within a short time and become one of the most important sages. Indeed,

one text states that on a scale, R. Eliezer "is the equivalent weight of all the sages of Israel." Because of his learning and lineage, he married the sister of the *nasi* (president) of the Sanhedrin, Rabban Gamliel of Yavne. R. Eliezer and his colleague and opponent R. Yehoshua were the main spokesmen in the succeeding generation. Although he received his instruction from the sages of the school of Hillel, R. Eliezer was personally more inclined in thought toward the opinions of the school of Shammai. Furthermore, he did not accept upon himself the decision of majority rule, and the situation deteriorated until the sages of the Sanhedrin were compelled to excommunicate him. This action, however, had no effect on the feelings of esteem and respect in which he was universally held. He was still viewed as a great luminary for all of Israel, and a personification of the Torah, by dint of his wisdom, righteousness, and personality. In reality, all of the sages who rose to

מעשה

ONCE,

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua
and Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria
and Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon
reclined [for the seder] in Benei Brak.

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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. The Exodus was not an isolated event, affecting only a portion of the nation of Israel, with no more than passing historical significance. It is the very source of the existence of the people of Israel as a nation, and had it not transpired, this people would have

prominence in the following generation had been his students, but a singular bond of affection existed between R. Eliezer and R. Akiva. It was R. Akiva whom R. Eliezer chose to teach the secrets of the Torah, because the latter deemed him alone worthy of receiving these mysteries.

R. Eliezer's son Hyrcanus was also considered one of the great sages of his generation.

Rabbi Akiva R. Akiva is considered one of Israel's greatest scholars of all time, and the pillar of the tannaitic era (first–second century CE). He was born in the time of the Second Temple and was executed following Bar Kokhba's unsuccessful rebellion against Rome.

Akiva b. Yosef was the offspring of a poor, ignoble family, a family of converts. His early life was marked by such ignorance that he did not even know the alphabet until an advanced age.

When he was already a widower and a father, he met Rachel, the daughter of his employer. She perceived his inner character and promised to marry him if he would engage in Torah study. Abiding a life of extreme poverty and toil, R. Akiva began to study Torah, advancing to the level in which he could be accepted as a student of the leading sages in the post-destruction era – R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua. His teachers succeeded in revealing his great inner spiritual strengths, and in due time his relationship with these great men developed into that of a "student-colleague." Ultimately, R. Akiva became the *rosh yeshiva* of a great yeshiva in the city of Benei Brak, attracting thousands of students. Following the death of his teachers, R. Akiva was universally recognized as the foremost leader of his generation in every aspect of Judaism.

R. Akiva was one of Bar Kokhba's most ardent supporters; indeed, it was

וְהָיוּ מְסַפְּרִים בְּיַצִּיאת מִצְרַיִם כָּל אוֹתוֹ הַלַּיְלָה
עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ תַלְמִידֵיהֶם וְאָמְרוּ לָהֶם
רְבוֹתֵינוּ, הֲגִיעַ זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שֶׁל שַׁחֲרִית.

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remained in Egypt forever as a tribe of slaves. Therefore **even were we all wise**, if every seder participant is a Torah scholar, **all intelligent, all aged**, having already heard the story of the Haggada many times before, **and all knowledgeable in the Torah** and what is written in it regarding this matter, **still the command would be upon us to tell of the coming out of Egypt**, to discuss it and review it. **And the**

apparently he who bestowed this sobriquet on the heroic rebel. R. Akiva believed that Bar Kokhba was none other than the Messiah, and it would appear that most of his students were killed during the rebellion. After this failure, R. Akiva unabashedly continued to teach Torah publicly. For this crime he was caught and imprisoned by the Roman authorities and executed in a most brutal and torturous manner, while all throughout the torment he recited the *Shema*. Although most of his students had been killed, those who did survive became the major leaders and sages of the next generation. For this reason, almost all of the mishnaic literature (and subsequently the talmudic literature as well) is based upon the pedagogic styles and analytical methodology that R. Akiva expounded and taught.

Just as he excelled in his knowledge of the "revealed" aspects of the Torah, so too, R. Akiva was a master of the hidden secrets of Torah wisdom. He was among the scholars who "rode in the chariot," meaning that he successfully navigated through the "orchard" of the Torah's mysteries, entering and leaving unharmed. Despite the many hardships he endured,

R. Akiva enjoyed great longevity, and according to tradition he was 120 at the time of his execution.

R. Akiva had a number of sons who also became Torah scholars, but it would seem that most of them died during his lifetime. It may be that only his son R. Yehoshua survived him.

To this day, R. Akiva's scholarship in every area of wisdom remains one of the central foundations of the entire Torah.

Rabbi Yehoshua This is R. Yehoshua b. Hanania HaLevi, one of the great *Tanna'im* of the generation following the Destruction of the Second Temple. R. Yehoshua was the most prominent student of R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai. In addition to his greatness in Torah scholarship – he was so accomplished that the halakha follows his opinion even when the majority disagreed with him – he was famed as being one of the most brilliant men of his day. It is known that physically, he was exceedingly un-attractive; nonetheless he succeeded in mesmerizing not only his contemporaries and friends, but also the family of the Roman emperor Hadrian. He traveled to Rome several times to serve as the

And they told of the Exodus from Egypt all that night; until their students came in and said,
"Teachers –
the time for saying the *Shema* of the morning has come."

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more one tells of the coming out of Egypt, the more admirable it is since he fulfills the commandment of remembering the Exodus in the most perfect manner. And as proof that even the greatest sages of the generation must also fulfill this commandment, an incident is recorded concerning five of the greatest scholars in Israel **who reclined [for the seder] in Benei Brak** where R. Akiva's beit midrash

representative of the Jewish people in matters of vital national interest. R. Yehoshua was a blacksmith by trade, and all his life he struggled to make a living. Despite this, he was always in good cheer, and his adages bespeak a gentle humor and a love for all of God's creatures. Almost all of the scholars in the next generation were either his students or his colleagues.

Rabbi Tarfon R. Tarfon was of priestly descent, and served in the Holy Temple at the close of the Second Temple era. However, the main period of his activity was in the years following the Temple's destruction, and to a large extent, in the proximity of R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua. R. Tarfon was wealthy and extremely generous, as well as somewhat eccentric. His unusual approach to various matters caused him to become involved in numerous adventures; moreover, over the years some of his personal expressions became accepted as standard forms of speech. Apparently, R. Tarfon was one of the first to recognize R. Akiva's greatness. Although he was initially wiser than R. Akiva and perhaps older as well, R. Tarfon deferred to R. Akiva, considering himself R. Akiva's student.

R. Tarfon also raised numerous students, including the great sage R. Yehuda b. Ilai. Likewise, R. Tarfon's grandson became a great Torah scholar during the time of R. Yehuda HaNasi.

Benei Brak This city is mentioned in Joshua 19:45 as one of the cities of the tribe of Dan, and it was almost certainly situated not far from the location of present-day Benei Brak.

Nothing is known of the city from the biblical period, but it seems that in the mishnaic era the city developed into an important center. Once R. Akiva established his yeshiva there, it gained special prominence, as illustrated by the Talmud's comments on the verse, "Justice, justice shall you pursue" (Deut. 16:20) – "this means one should follow the sages to their yeshivas...follow R. Akiva to Benei Brak" (Sanhedrin 32b).

It certainly appears that R. Akiva hosted this famed Passover meal, with the great sages of Israel in attendance.

They Told of the Exodus from Egypt Hasidic literature explains that the word *mesaper* ("tell") is related to *sapir*,

ברכות יב:

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה
 הָרִי אֲנִי כְּבֵן שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה
 וְלֹא זָכִיתִי שֶׁתֵּאמֹר יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלֹת
 עַד שֶׁדַּרְשָׁהּ בֶּן זֹמָא
 שְׁנֵאמַר

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was located. There, they told of the Exodus from Egypt and expounded their own interpretations and expositions all that night. They expounded so deeply, and protracted the evening to such an extent that finally their students came in and said: “Teachers – the time for saying the *Shema* of the morning has come.”

Another confirmation of the extent of the obligation to retell the story of the Exodus – especially on the night of Passover – is cited from the Mishna (Tractate Berakhot 1:5): **Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria said: I am almost seventy years old**

the sapphire, a bright precious stone. This signifies that the words of these sages served to illuminate not only the Torah's hidden mysteries, but also the night itself. As a result, they were unaware that the morning had arrived.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria R. Elazar b. Azaria was one of the youngest of the prominent sages after the Second Temple was destroyed, and one of the principle figures at the yeshiva in Yavne. He was a member of a distinguished and extremely affluent priestly family – descended from Ezra. While still a youth, he was considered one of

the outstanding scholars of the generation. When the *nasi* of the Sanhedrin, Rabban Gamliel, was deposed, R. Elazar b. Azaria was chosen as his replacement in spite of his youth. Even after Rabban Gamliel had been reinstated to his former position, R. Elazar still remained in office. R. Elazar was also renowned for his mastery of halakha, and even more so, as one of the foremost Torah expositors of his day. His important discourses were even recited in the presence of his teachers and met with universal admiration and honor.

Even though R. Elazar b. Azaria rose to a high level of official prominence, he

Berakhot 12b

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria said:
 I am almost seventy years old,
 and never have I merited to find the command
 to speak of the Exodus from Egypt at night –
 until Ben Zoma interpreted:
 It is written,

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(and already considered among the greatest of the sages even while still a youth) **and never have I merited** (meaning, I did not succeed in bringing satisfactory evidence to substantiate my opinion that) **to find the command to speak of the Exodus from Egypt** in the *Shema* at night, on ordinary nights throughout the year, until the sage Shimon ben Zoma proved it through biblical exegesis of this verse: “So that you remember the day of your Exodus from Egypt all the days of your life” (Deut. 16:3). Ben Zoma explained that the expression “the days of

never quarreled with or set himself above others. Indeed, he always endeavored to continue his Torah studies and to learn from anyone who might have knowledge to impart, young and old alike. It appears that R. Elazar lived to be more than seventy. We have no record of his direct descendants, but we do know that he left a family that included numerous Torah scholars for many years to come.

To Speak of the Exodus from Egypt at Night The reason that it was not customary to mention the Exodus at night is that within the passages of the *Shema*, the Exodus is only mentioned in

connection to the commandment of tzitzit. But since the commandment of tzitzit is only fulfilled during the day, this paragraph was not included in the evening recitation of the *Shema* (although the concept of the Exodus is mentioned elsewhere in the Maariv service, in the blessing following the *Shema*). This halakhic debate whether to recite the passage of the tzitzit at night was never completely resolved. But in practice it has become the universally accepted custom to include this passage, and with it the mention of the Exodus, in both the morning and evening recitations of the *Shema*.

לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ הַיָּמִים
כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ הַלַּיְלוֹת.

וְחַכְמֵי אֲוֻמִּים

יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה
כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ לְהַבְיִיא לְיָמוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

בְּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם, בְּרוּךְ הוּא
בְּרוּךְ שֶׁנָּתַן תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּרוּךְ הוּא

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your life” can be understood according to the simple meaning of the words, and **would mean in the days**. But this verse places a special emphasis on **“all the days of your life,”** and the verse uses this word “all” to convey additional meaning, to add a new message. From this verse, Ben Zoma taught, we can understand that the obligation to mention the Exodus **includes the nights**. However, **the sages** disagree with Ben Zoma’s opinion. They maintain that no special interpretation is necessary to teach us this since it is a much broader, more general concept that these verses seek to convey, namely that **“The days of your life” would mean only in this world**, the whole gamut of time from the time of the Exodus until the final redemption in the Messianic age. This includes both the days and the nights

HaMakom The appellation *HaMakom* (the Omnipresent, literally “The Place”) is used frequently in rabbinic literature as a reference to God. The sages explained that this term alludes to the fact that “The Holy One, blessed be He, is the place of the world, but the world is not

His place.” It is along these lines that the rabbis explain the biblical passage, “see, there is a place near Me” (Ex. 33:21): God is not found within the world; He is not limited to existence within the boundaries of space and time. Rather, He is “the place of the world”; the world exists in the

“SO THAT YOU REMEMBER
THE DAY OF YOUR EXODUS FROM EGYPT
ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE.”

“The days of your life” would mean in the days;
“all the days of your life” includes the nights.

But the sages say,

“The days of your life” would mean only in this world;
“all the days of your life” brings in the time of the Messiah.

בְּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם

Blessed is the Omnipresent –
blessed is He.
Blessed is the One
who gave His people Israel, the Torah –
blessed is He.

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equally. In contrast, the special emphasis on the expression **“all the days of your life”** comes to teach an added dimension, and **brings in the time of the Messiah**. According to the sages’ opinion, even though the final redemption of Israel will be greater and more wondrous than the Exodus (see Jer. 23:8), nevertheless Israel’s first redemption will never be completely forgotten.

Blessed is the Omnipresent: *HaMakom*, the place, is an accepted designation for God, and the simple explanation is that “He is the place of the world, but the world is not His place.” **Blessed is He. Blessed is the One who gave His people Israel the Torah** and wrote therein these questions and answers – **blessed is He**.

midst of the divine reality of being. *HaMakom* also appears to be a respectful connotation for God, in lieu of mentioning His name. Perhaps this particular name was originally associated with “the place that He will choose” – the resting place of the *Shekhina* in the Holy Temple – but

afterward it evolved and came to be used in a more general fashion. The kabbalistic literature states that the numerical value of the word *makom* (186) is equivalent to the sum of the squares of the letters in the tetragrammaton – *yod-heh-vav-heh* (100+25+36+25=186).

פִּנְגֵּד אַרְבַּעַה בְּנֵים דְּבִרָה תּוֹרָה
 אֶחָד
 חָכָם
 וְאֶחָד
 רָשָׁע
 וְאֶחָד
 תָּם
 וְאֶחָד
 שְׂאִינּוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשַׁאֵל

EXPANSIONS

The Four Sons The Haggada is a stylized, edited formula of the general precept to retell the story of the Exodus, which is especially applicable on the night of Passover. In the Torah itself, the obligation to “tell of the Exodus from Egypt” is mentioned in the context of answering curious children in future generations. But careful examination and analysis of the various scriptural references reveals that these boilerplate questions and answers are formatted in several different ways, and each possesses a specific, unique characteristic. We begin with an

The Order of the Four Sons It has already been observed that the order in which these sons are mentioned in Scripture differs from the order of their appearance in the Haggada. In the Haggada,

their order is according to theme. We begin with the favorite son, the wise one, who asks a wise question and is motivated by a desire to learn and gain knowledge. He is followed by the wicked son, whose

פִּנְגֵּד אַרְבַּעַה בְּנֵים

The Torah relates

to four types of sons –

- one who is wise,
- one who is wicked,
- one with a simple nature,
- and one
- who does not know how to ask.

EXPANSIONS

introduction. **The Torah relates to four types of sons** in the context of the story of the Exodus. One is wise, possessing a desire to learn more and increase his knowledge. One is wicked; his questions are motivated by a desire to ridicule. One has a simple nature; he is not very perceptive and lacks the ability to present his questions properly. And the last son does not even know how to ask; for him, we must begin the story without waiting to be asked.

wickedness stems from malice. Next is the simple-natured son who lacks the intelligence to ask his own question, and therefore asks in very general terms, and finally the son who does not even know how to ask (Abudarham). In mystical terms, these

four sons correspond to four different aspects, the four legs of the divine chariot: The wise son is *hesed*; the wicked son is *gevura*; the simple-natured son is *tiferet*; and the son who does not know how to ask is *malhut*.

חֲנֻם

מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר

מָה הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים
אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם:

וְאִי אֶתָּה אֹמֵר לוֹ בְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח
אֵין מִפְּטוּרֵינָּה אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֶפְיָקוּמָן.

דברים 1

EXPANSIONS

The wise son – what does he say? “When, in time to come, your children ask you, ‘What are the testimonies, the statutes and laws that the Lord our God commanded you?’” (Deut. 6:20). The wise son’s question is a request that we clarify for him all the various commandments and the details of their observance. The testimonies are commandments that serve as a reminder, bearing witness to various events that have transpired. The statutes are laws that seem, to all appearances, to have no logical explanation or reason behind them; this is the category of observance known as *hok*, which we are required to accept without necessarily understanding. The laws, on the other hand, do have a logical meaning that we can readily grasp. **And you must tell him the laws of Pesah:** You should explain the whole gamut of the vast and intricate legal requirements of Passover to this son. This includes the laws of the Paschal offering and all the details of the seder

The Testimonies, Statutes and Laws Rabbi Saadia Gaon states that all of the Torah’s commandments can be divided into these three categories. He explains that the testimonies are commandments that constitute a remembrance of past events. For example, Shabbat is a remembrance of Creation and Passover is a remembrance of the Exodus. Statutes are commandments whose rationale is beyond our comprehension. These are biblical decrees that

include the prohibition against mixing dairy with meat, or *shaatnez*, combining wool and linen. Laws are commandments that have a logical explanation, such as the laws of damages and evidence.

After Eating the Pesah Offering One Does Not Eat Anything More Many seemingly homiletical interpretations have been proposed to explain why this particular law, more than any other, was selected as the answer for the wise son.

The WISE SON

what does he say?

“What are the testimonies, the statutes and laws, that the LORD our God commanded you?”

And you must tell him the laws of Pesah:

“After eating the Pesah offering one does not eat anything more.”

Deut. 6

EXPANSIONS

night. Thus, the original source of the wise son’s answer is actually found in the very verse that the Haggada itself employs as the opening response to the four questions, which we assume are questions posed by the wise son. “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt,” etc. (Deut. 6:20–25). We explain the foundations of this observance to the wise son (as will now be performed, from this point onward, during the course of the Haggada), as well as that of all the laws – down to the very last detail: **After eating the Pesah offering one does not eat anything more.** When the Holy Temple stood, no desserts or drinks (*afikoman* in Greek) would be consumed after the Paschal offering had been eaten. Today, the last piece of matza eaten is called the *afikoman* as a remembrance, in lieu of the offering; nothing else is eaten after this. However, whoever wishes may remain at table, and may continue to tell the story of the Exodus the entire night.

Some explain that essentially, the wise son’s question is this: Why is it customary not to send each other portions of the Paschal offering, but rather, to specifically partake of it in tight, numbered groups. The answer is that we do not eat any more food after the Paschal offering! Since nothing else can be eaten after partaking of the offering, there is no time to send gifts on Passover night itself. Alternatively, Ritva explains that we inform the wise son about one of the laws of Passover that is

not only one of the “incomprehensible” aspects of the law, but is also an edict that was initiated by the rabbis, and does not appear in the Torah itself.

It can also serve to explain why we first eat the rest of the festive meal and the festival offering, and only partake of the Paschal offering at the end (*Sefer HaOra*). Moreover, perhaps this particular halakha was chosen precisely because it is slightly peculiar; it serves as an opening, as a subject for scrutiny and discussion, to furnish

רשע

מה הוא אומר

מה העבדה הזאת לכם:

לכם ולא לו

ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל

כפר בעקר

ואף אתה הקהה את שניו, ואמר לו

בעבור זה עשה יהוה לי בצאתי ממצרים:

לי ולא לו

אלו היה שם, לא היה נגאל.

שמות יב

שמות יג

EXPANSIONS

The wicked son – what does he say?: “And if your children should ask you, ‘What is this service to you?’” The language of this question is phrased quite specifically. Indeed, it is not a question at all, but an attack. In Hebrew, the word *ma* (what) often conveys an element of denial and mockery. The expression “this service” also smacks of a sense of distance and disenfranchisement. “**To you,**” he says, **not to him**: The wise son spoke in a similar fashion, using the word *etkhem*, the plural “you.” However, since the wise son prefaced his remarks with the words “the Lord our God,” including himself in the faith, his use of the expression *etkhem* is merely a term of respect. The wise son notes that God commanded these precepts to “you” – his forebears – directly, and thus you certainly must be privy to the knowledge that explains the matter. But as for

the participants with another matter to occupy them on the seder night.

The Response to the Wicked Son The *Rishonim* noted that the response to the wicked son in the Haggada is not the response that is written in this context in the Torah. For the most part, they agreed

that from the sole perspective of the texts, the wicked son’s question and our response to it can be interpreted in a variety of ways. However, the sages did not go out of their way to present these questions and responses in their original textual order. Rather, they simply intended to explain that the Torah alludes to these

The

WICKED SON

what does he say?

“What is this service to you?”

Ex. 12

“To you,” he says, not to him.

When he sets himself apart from the community, he denies the very core of our beliefs.

And you must set his teeth on edge and tell him,

“Because of this

Ex. 13

the LORD acted for me when I came out of Egypt.”

“For me,” and not for *him*;

had he been there he would not have been redeemed.

EXPANSIONS

the wicked son, **when he sets himself apart from the community** of Israel by saying “you,” **he denies the very core of our beliefs**. He is like one who rejects the principles of our faith and denies God. He is considered among the worst of the wicked (see *Laws of the Foundations of the Torah*, where Maimonides indeed counts one who removes himself from the community among the utterly wicked). So too, **you** who answer him **must set his teeth on edge** with a reply that will embarrass and offend him (as in “children’s teeth are set on edge” [Jer. 31:28]). **And tell him**, “**Because of this the Lord acted for me when I came out of Egypt**” (Ex. 13:8). The response is also given in the singular: “**For me,**” and **not for him**, to let him know that **had he been there he would not have been redeemed**, since he does not wish to have any part in the nation of Israel.

four types of questions, and, as a matter of course, contains the proper responses to these questions – though not necessarily in order.

Had He Been There He Would Not Have Been Redeemed This fits with the midrashic account that many

members of the people of Israel indeed did not want to leave Egypt. According to the Midrash, all of these people died in Egypt during the plague of darkness, so that the Egyptians would not realize how many such people existed, thus impugning the name of the people of Israel.

תָּם

מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר

מֵה-זֹאת

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו

בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצֵיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

שמות יג

וְשִׂאֵינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׂאֵל

אֵת פֶּתַח לוֹ

שְׁנֹאֵמֵר

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר

בְּעִבּוּר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם:

שמות יג

EXPANSIONS

The **simple-natured son** who does not know how to explain the details of his question poses his query in a general way: "And when, in time to come, your son asks you, saying, 'What is this?'" (Ex. 13:14). **And you must tell him**, "With a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the grip of slavery" (13:14–17). **And the one who does not know how to ask**, who sees everything transpiring, and to him it all appears simple and normal, **you must**

You Must Open for Him This expression does not mean that we must tell the entire story to the one who does not know how to ask, but only that we must "open [the story] for him." In other words, we must try to enable him to ask the question on his own. It seems that the continuation of the teaching – "Because

of *this*' can only be said when matza and bitter herbs are there before you" – is part of this same "opening" that causes him to ask questions as well. In light of the words of the Talmud and the laws of Passover, it appears that the sages endeavored to increase the number of curious customs that we undertake at the

The

SIMPLE-NATURED SON

what does he say?

"What is this?"

Ex. 13

And you must tell him,

"With a strong hand the LORD

Ibid.

brought us out of Egypt,

from the grip of slavery."

And the

ONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO ASK

you must open [the story] for him,

as it is said:

Ex. 13

"You shall tell your child

on that day,

'Because of this the LORD acted for me

when I came out of Egypt.'"

EXPANSIONS

open [the story] for him. Explain everything to him, so that he understands what is happening, and why. **As it is said**, "And you shall tell your child on that day, 'Because of this the Lord acted for me when I came out of Egypt'" (Ex. 13:8). This entire section of the Torah deals with the commandments that were intended to serve as a remembrance of the Exodus – especially the Paschal offering.

seder in order to encourage the children to question the nature of all these strange changes.

The Talmud relates the following:

R. Nahman said to Daro his servant, "When a master frees his servant and gives him silver and gold, what should he say?" The latter responded, "He should

thank him and praise him." R. Nahman said, "You have proven to us that we do not need to start the Haggada from 'What makes this night unlike all other nights?' but rather, from 'We were slaves'" (Pesahim 115a).

This is one example of "You must open [the story] for him," to ensure that

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ
 יְכוֹל מֵרֵאשִׁי חֹדֶשׁ
 תִּלְמוּד לֹאמֹר:
 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא.
 אִי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְכוֹל מִבְּעוֹד יוֹם
 תִּלְמוּד לֹאמֹר:
 בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה.
 בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה לֹא אָמַרְתִּי
 אֶלֶּא
 בְּשַׁעֲהַ שְׂיֵשׁ מַצָּה וּמְרוֹר מְנַחִים לְפָנֶיךָ.

EXPANSIONS

At this point, the Haggada explains that although this mitzva – remembering the Exodus – is incumbent upon us every day of the year, nevertheless there is a special obligation to occupy ourselves with it on the night of Passover. **One might have thought this meant** that we should relate the story of the Exodus **from the beginning of the month** of Nisan, but Scripture specifically teaches us and emphasizes “**on that day**,” meaning the day of the Exodus itself. We continue and explain that **had it said only** “**on that day**,” **one might have**

all are aware of the miracle that God performed for us.

From the Beginning of the Month
 This is exactly how Moses himself behaved: While Israel was still in Egypt, he began

teaching them the laws and customs of Passover from the beginning of the month of Nisan. Indeed, this was the practice during the talmudic era as well; the great sages would expound upon these laws and arouse the people concerning the

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ

"YOU SHALL TELL YOUR CHILD" –

One might have thought
 this meant from the beginning of the month.

And so it says, “on that day.”

Had it said only “on that day,”
 one might have thought [the obligation]
 applied during the day.

And so it also says, “Because of this” –

“because of *this*” can only be said
 when matza and bitter herbs are there before you.

EXPANSIONS

thought [the obligation] applied during the day, before the seder; therefore, **it also says**, “**Because of this**,” meaning that the proper time for this recitation is when the narrator can point out and indicate something specific (“this”) and associate it with the commandment. “**Because of this**” **can only be said when matza and bitter herbs are there before you**, and they can be displayed (as is done later in the ceremony) and used to explain the significance of eating these items.

upcoming festival of Passover. They would teach these laws at public lectures, a full month before the festival. There is also a special Torah reading (one of the special “four portions” that precede Passover) that mentions the upcoming festival. However,

this passage does not refer to the daily commandment of remembering the Exodus, but rather to the singular mitzva to recount the story of the Exodus at the actual time that the redemption took place – on the seder night.