

THE JEWISH MAYFLOWER

Three hundred years ago a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. This was a great event in the history of England. Yet I wonder if there is one Englishman who knows at what time the ship set sail? Do the English know how many people embarked on this voyage? What quality of bread did they eat?

Yet more than three thousand three hundred years ago, before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Every Jew in the world, even in America or Soviet Russia knows on exactly what date they left - the fifteenth of the month of Nisan; everyone knows what kind of bread the Jews ate - Matza. Even today the Jews worldwide eat Matza on the 15th of Nisan. They retell the story of the Exodus and all the troubles Jews have endured since being exiled, saying:

"This year, slaves. Next year, free!

This year here. Next year in Jerusalem, in Zion, in Eretz Yisrael!"

That is the nature of the Jews.

David Ben-Gurion, first prime minister of the State of Israel, from a speech in 1947 before the U.N. Commission on the Partition of Palestine.



Yahatz: The Partition Plan by Michel Kichka

SYNAGOGUE BECOMES FIVE STAR HOTEL

In Toronto's notoriously cold winters, the city's many homeless people must search for an open door, a shelter that will take them in from the cold. In 1995, despite objections from neighbors and members, the city's Holy Blossom Temple opened its doors as a homeless shelter. Some threatened to cancel their membership or refused to bring their children to the Hebrew school if those people were allowed in the Temple. Now however that attitude has changed completely. Over 500 people, aged 6 to 95, sign up annually to volunteer.

From early November until a week before Pesach, the homeless come for Thursday dinner and Friday breakfast. School children conduct clothing drives. Bnei Mitzvah families decorate their table center pieces with baskets of socks

Walter Seaton, chairperson of "Out of the Cold," Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto

and toiletries later given to the needy. Security guards maintain order as homeless line up.

A strict policy prevents admission of trouble makers and thieves who often plague the homeless themselves in other shelters and on the street. Alcohol, drugs and weapons may not be brought into the building.

The homeless are always called and treated as guests of the Temple. Most come to spend the evening and not just for a delicious meal. They enjoy the warm welcome and the respect shown as well as the companionship. Socializing teams provide books and magazines and join the guests in card or board games. Every other week there is an art show.

On an extremely cold night, a very disheveled street person arrived at the program. Speaking with great difficulty, hardly coherent, he asked for food. After he had eaten, he shuffled over to the piano. While the volunteers were still deciding how, without causing offense, they could ask him not to touch the piano, he sat down and played most beautifully works by Bach and Vivaldi. The whole room became hushed. After playing non-stop for about 30 minutes the man got up and, without saying a word, went back out into the cold night.

Guests of "Out of the Cold" show their appreciation in many small ways. But perhaps what gives the volunteers the biggest pleasure is to hear a guest say: "I am not coming back here anymore. I have got myself a good job."

PRIMO LEVI

PASSOVER

Tell me: how is this night different
From all other nights?
How, tell me, is this Passover
Different from other Passovers?

Light the lamp, open the door wide
So the pilgrim can come in, Gentile or Jew;
Under the rags perhaps the prophet is concealed.
Let him enter and sit down with us;
Let him listen, drink, sing and celebrate Passover;
Let him consume the bread of affliction,
The Pascal Lamb, sweet mortar and bitter herbs.

This is the night of differences
In which you lean your elbow on the table,
Since the forbidden becomes prescribed,
Evil is translated into good.

We spent the night recounting
Far-off events full of wonder,
And because of all the wine
The mountains will skip like rams.

Tonight they exchange questions:
The wise, the godless, the simple-minded and the child.
And time reverses its course,
Today flowing back into yesterday,
Like a river enclosed at its mouth.
Each of us has been a slave in Egypt,
Soaked straw and clay with sweat,
And crossed the sea dry-footed.

You too, stranger.
This year in fear and shame,
Next year in virtue and justice.

Primo Levi, Auschwitz survivor and novelist, Italy

"We have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. We are still called upon to give aid to the beggar who finds himself in misery and agony on life's highway. But one day, we must ask the question of whether an edifice which produces beggars must not be restructured and refurbished."

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1966



An End to Famine

Israeli stamp by A. Calderon, 1963

FOUR CUPS OF MILK: A FOLKTALE

Once, before Pesach, a man entered the home of Rabbi Yossi Ber, and asked him a question: "Tell me Rabbi, can I fulfill the commandment of the four cups with milk instead of wine?" The rabbi asked him, "Are you - God forbid - ill?" The man answered him, "No, thank God, I am quite healthy, but I cannot afford to buy wine this year." Rabbi Yossi turned to his wife, and said, "Give this man twenty-five rubles." The man said, "Honored Rabbi, I came to you to ask a question, not to beg for Tzedaka!" The rabbi calmed him, saying, "This money is given to you as a loan, until God helps you." The man took the money, thanked the rabbi and praised him. After the man left, the rabbi's wife asked him: "Why did you tell me to give him twenty-five rubles? After all, wine costs only two or three rubles." The rabbi answered, "I understood from the man's question that he does not have enough to prepare anything for the holiday. If he had had enough money for fish and meat, he would not have asked if it is permissible to use milk instead of wine. Milk cannot be drunk at the same meal with meat. That is why I gave him money to buy everything he needs for the holiday."

Ma Nishtana **מָה נִשְׁתַּנָּה**

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

מָה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמִצָּה,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה - כָּלוּ מִצָּה.

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שָׂאֵר יְרֻקוֹת,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה - מְרוֹר.

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבֵּילִין אֶפְלוּ פַּעַם אַחַת,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה - שְׁתֵּי פַּעַמִּים.

שֶׁבֶכֶל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה - כָּלְנוּ מְסֻבִּין.

Why is this night different
from all other nights?

On all other nights, we eat
either leavened bread or Matza, but
on this night we eat only Matza.

On all other nights, we eat other
kinds of vegetables, but on this
night we eat Maror (bitter herbs).

On all other nights, we need not dip
our vegetables even once, but on
this night we dip twice.

On all other nights, we eat
either sitting upright or reclining,
but on this night we all recline.

Pour the second
cup of wine for
everyone and
let the younger
children sing "Ma
Nishtana."

Before
continuing
with the story,
we make sure
the children
around the table
are interested
and involved.
For example,
some families
serve nuts and
candies to arouse
the children's
curiosity and
to reward their
participation.

Ma nish-ta-na ha-lai-la ha-zeh / mee-kol ha-lei-lot?

Sheh-b'khol ha-lei-lot / anu okh-leen / kha-metz u-matza / Ha-lai-la ha-zeh / ku-lo matza.

Sheh-b'khol ha-lei-lot / anu okh-leen sh'ar y'ra-kot / Ha-lai-la ha-zeh / maror.

Sheh-b'khol ha-lei-lot / ein anu mat-bee-leen / afee-lu pa-am akhat / Ha-lai-la ha-zeh / shtei-p'ameem.

Sheh-b'khol ha-lei-lot / anu okh-leen / bein yo-shveen u-vein m'su-been / Ha-lai-la ha-zeh / ku-la-nu m'su-been.

THE STUPIDITY OF HAVING AN ANSWER

A novel does not assert anything; a novel searches and poses questions. I invent stories, confront one with another, and by this means I ask questions. The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything...

The novelist teaches the reader to comprehend the world as a question. There is wisdom and tolerance in that attitude. In a world built on sacrosanct certainties, the novel is dead. **The totalitarian world is a world of answers rather than questions.** There, the novel has no place. In any case, it seems to me that all over the world people nowadays prefer to judge rather than to understand, to answer rather than ask, so that the voice of the novel can hardly be heard over the noisy foolishness of human certainties.

Milan Kundera, novelist and anti-Communist activist, Czech Rep.



BEWARE! I WILL BE FORCED TO THROW CANDIES AT YOU

At the beginning of Seder night, Jerusalem's Professor Reuven Feuerstein, world renowned special needs educator, always warns the children around the table:

"Tonight is Seder night. This is an important occasion and we have much to read, so we cannot be bothered with all sorts of questions. If you ask any questions, I will be forced to punish you: I will throw lots and lots of candies at you. Understood?"

Unsurprisingly, the children spend the rest of the night asking many questions, stopping only to collect the candies thrown at them by the old professor...

This is but one of the many strategies for eliciting questions on Seder night: Prize-bearing quizzes and riddles, or just giving a candy to anyone who asks a question - regardless of the answer! Candies and nuts (like American Cracker Jacks) were used in Talmudic times as an advertising gambit by storekeepers to attract children to enter their stores (Mishna, Baba Metzia 4:12). In the Talmud, these tasty "come-ons" or prizes are mandated to keep the

kids awake and involved in the Seder (Talmud Pesachim 109a). As Maimonides explains in his 12th century guidelines for Seder night:

"One should make changes on this night, so that one's children will notice it and ask, "What makes this night different from other nights?" And what changes may be made? Distributing snacks or nuts to the children [in short, serving dessert at the beginning of the meal], clearing the table before anyone has eaten, or by snatching the Matza away from the others, and other games like that." (Maimonides, Laws of Hametz and Matza, Chapter 7:3)

What tricks and games can you use this year for eliciting questions and participation?

There is frequently more to be learned from the unexpected questions of a child than the discourses of men.

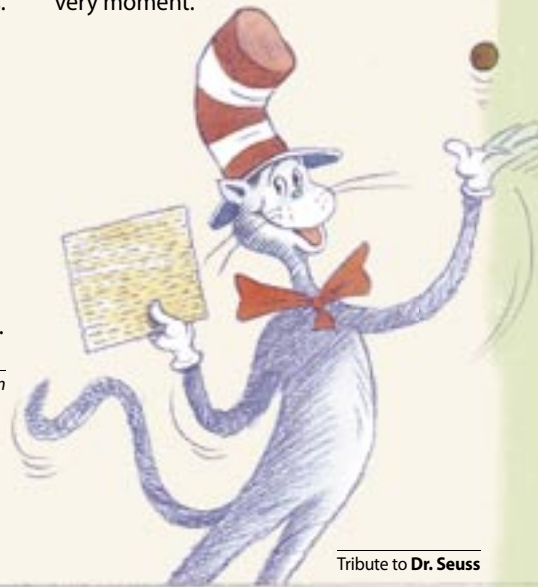
John Locke, Something Concerning Education

QUESTIONS ARE A PARADOX

The key to Jewish exegesis is to assume that nothing is obvious. Questions are the great cultural paradox. They both destabilize and secure social norms. **Nikita Khrushchev**, onetime leader of the Soviet Union, once explained why he hated Jews. He said, "They always ask why!" Questions tend to democratize. Ease with questions conveys a fundamental trust in the goodwill and the good sense of others. **Autocrats hate questions**. We train children at the Passover Seder to ask why, because tyrants are undone and liberty is won with a good question. It is for this reason that God loves it when we ask why.

Rabbi **Steven Greenberg**, *Wrestling with God and Men*

Consequently we celebrate challenging the Torah to make sense, and above all to be a defensible expression of Divine goodness... When we ask good questions the Torah is given anew on Sinai at that very moment.



Tribute to **Dr. Seuss**

NO QUESTIONS, NO CLASS

A story is told of Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, the legendary teacher at Yeshiva University - a great philosopher and a great Talmudist - who demanded that his students prepare rigorously for each class. Often he began his class by asking if any of the hundreds of students crowding his lecture hall had any questions on the assigned text. Many of the students had reviewed the material and yet they feared to ask, lest the questions reveal their ignorance to their teacher. Once, when not one of the hundreds of students dared ask a question, Rav Soloveitchik demonstratively slammed his Talmud closed and walked out saying: "No questions? No class." Learning begins with questions. **Learning requires the courage to expose your ignorance, so the teacher or parent can address the real issues.**

ELIEZER SEGAL

UNCLE ELI'S HAGGADAH

Why is it only, on Passover night
we never know how, to do anything right?
We don't eat our meals, in the regular ways,
the ways that we do, on all other days.

`Cause on all other nights we may eat
all kinds of wonderful good bready treats,
like big purple pizza that tastes like a pickle,
crumbly crackers and pink pumpernickel,
sassafras sandwich and tiger on rye,
fifty felafels in pita, fresh-fried,
and toasted whole-wheat bread with liver and ducks,
and crumpets and dumplings, and bagels and lox,
**Yes - on all other nights we eat all kinds of bread,
but tonight of all nights we munch matzah instead.**

And on all other nights we devour
vegetables, green things, and bushes and flowers,
lettuce that's leafy and candy-striped spinach,
fresh silly celery (have more when you're finished!)
daisies and roses and inside-out grass
and artichoke hearts that are simply first class!
Sixty asparagus tips served in glasses
with anchovy sauce and some sticky molasses -
**But on Passover night you would never consider
eating an herb that wasn't all bitter.**

And on all other nights you would probably flip
if anyone asked you how often you dip.
On some days I only dip one Bup-Bup egg
in a teaspoon of vinegar mixed with nutmeg,
but sometimes we take more than ten thousand tails
of the Yakkity-birds that are hunted in Wales,
and dip them in vats full of Mumbegum juice.
Then we feed them to Harold, our six-legged moose.
Or we don't dip at all! We don't ask your advice.
So why on this night do we have to dip twice?

And on all other nights we can sit as we please,
on our heads, on our elbows, our backs or our knees,
or hang by our toes from the tail of a Glump,
or on top of a camel with one or two humps,
with our foot on the table, our nose on the floor,
with one ear in the window and one out the door,
doing somersaults over the greasy k'nishes
or dancing a jig without breaking the dishes.
**Yes - on all other nights you sit nicely when dining -
So why on this night must it all be reclining?**



ये रात दूसरी रातों से आलग क्यों है?

ทำไมคืนนี้ไม่เหมือนคืนอื่น ๆ

ਇਹ ਰਾਤ ਦੂਜੀ ਰਾਤਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਅਲਗ ਕਿਉਂ ਹੈ?

Διὰ τί ἡδὲ ἡ νύξ διαφέρει τῶν ἄλλων νυκτῶν

¿Por que es diferente esta noche de las demas noches?

Чем отличается эта ночь от всех других ночей?

Bu gece neden bütün öbür gecelerden farklıdır?

Wat is het verschil tussen deze avond en alle andere avonden?

بماذا تختلف هذه الليلة عن كل الليالي الأخرى؟

爲什麼今晚與其他的夜晚不同？

どうして 今夜は他の夜と異なるのでしょうか？

ⲛⲓⲛⲧⲏⲧⲁ ⲛⲓⲛⲧⲏⲧⲁ ⲛⲓⲛⲧⲏⲧⲁ ⲛⲓⲛⲧⲏⲧⲁ ⲛⲓⲛⲧⲏⲧⲁ

TORAH SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE OF PEOPLE

Since *Ma Nishtana* was created to reflect children's actual questions about Seder night, it has been customary to encourage children and adults who do not know Hebrew to ask their questions in their native tongue - in Yiddish, Arabic, Ladino and a hundred other languages.

This reflects the saying of the midrash that God spoke the Torah in 70 languages, so that each person could understand.

In that spirit, Murray Spiegel and Rickey Stein have collected *300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions*, the *Ma Nishtana* in different languages.

Above are a few samples.

Can you guess where they are from?

Can anyone around the table translate *Ma Nishtana* into another language?

YEHUDA AMICHAI

Seder night reflections: "What is the difference?" we asked, "What makes this night different from all other nights?"

And most of us grew up and don't ask any more, while others

Continue to ask their whole lives just like they ask

"How are you?" or, "What time is it?" while continuing to walk on

Without hearing the answer. "What's the difference?" Every night

Like an alarm clock whose tick-tock calms and tranquilizes.

"What's the difference?" Everything changes. **Change is God.**

Seder night thoughts: "The Torah speaks of four sons

One who is wise, one who is wicked, one who is simple, and one

Who does not know how to ask. But it does not speak

About one who is good, nor about one who loves.

And this is a question that has no answer and if it did have an answer

I wouldn't want to know it. I, who have passed through all of the sons

In various combinations have lived my life, the moon has shone

Upon me without apparent cause and the sun has run its course and Passovers

Have passed without an answer. "What's the difference? What has changed?"

Change is God, and Death is his prophet.

HOW AM I DIFFERENT TONIGHT ?

After asking how this night is different from all other nights, you might want to take this opportunity to go around the table and have people share: How am I different tonight and this year from previous years? What has changed this year?

This can be a wonderful way to mark the changes and differences in and around us, as well as a way to "catch up" with the many guests at the Seder table.

We Were Slaves עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ

RETELLING OUR STORY

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם,
וַיּוֹצִיאֵנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם
בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה.

When, in time to come, your children ask you:

"What is the meaning of the decrees, laws, and rules that Adonai our God has enjoined upon you?"

You shall say to your children:

**We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt
and Adonai freed us from Egypt
with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.**

Adonai produced before our eyes great and awful signs and wonders in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. God freed us from there, so that God could take us and give us the land that had been promised on oath to our ancestors" (Deuteronomy 6:20-23).

The storytelling begins by re-entering the universe of slavery, as we ask ourselves: What was slavery like then? What is it like today?

Avadim Hayeenu is taken from Moshe's farewell speech to the Jewish people, as he prepares them for their arrival in the Promised Land. He commands them to retell their story of slavery and liberation in order to pass their identity on to the children of the next generation. That is what we do tonight.

LET MY PEOPLE GO | An African-American Spiritual

When Israel was in Egypt's land,

"Let My people go" (Exodus 5:1).

Oppressed so hard they could not stand,

"Let My people go."

Go down, Moses,

way down in Egypt's land,

Tell old Pharaoh:

"Let My people go."

Thus said the Lord, bold Moses said,

"Let My people go."

If not, I'll smite your first-born dead,

"Let My people go."

Go down, Moses...

No more shall they in bondage toil,

"Let My people go."

Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,

"Let My people go."

Go down, Moses...



THE FIRE OF CONCERN: MOSHE'S BURNING BUSH

Moses lived in a period of dictatorship. His people were slaves. The bosses made them work under a speed-up system, and committed horrible atrocities. Young Moses became curious about the Hebrew slaves, and one day went to the brickyards and saw an Egyptian boss hitting a Hebrew laborer. Moses was a powerful young man, and he lost his temper. He hit the boss and killed him! **A fire had been kindled in Moses' heart, a fire of concern about his people and their suffering.**

The next day he went back to the hot brickyards. Then he learned two things that those who try to help their fellow men often discover: first, that slaves often spend as much time and energy fighting each other as they do fighting their common oppressors, and second, that slaves do not always welcome their deliverers.

Moses found two Hebrews fighting each other. When he rebuked them, they turned on him and said, 'Who made you our boss? Do you mean to kill us as you did that Egyptian yesterday?'



Leon Baxter

Moses feared that they would tell the Egyptians that he killed the boss. He concluded that it might not be healthy to stay around those parts, so he ran away. In his new home he settled down to a nice comfortable life, raising a family and feeding the flocks of his father-in-law.

Only, after a while, God came into the picture, with a bush that burned and burned and did not stop burning. Moses had had a fire kindled in his heart once, but it went out, or at least died down. **God is the Being whose heart does not stop burning.** What was God all burned up about? The voice that came out of the bush said, "I have seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their oppressors."

And the proof that God had entered into Moses was that he had to go back and identify himself with his enslaved people – organize them into **Brickmakers' Union Number One** – and lead them out of hunger and slavery into freedom and into "a good land, and a large one, a land flowing with milk and honey."

Abraham Johannes Muste (1885-1967), the grand old man of American radicalism and pacifism

THE DEPTH OF DEGRADATION

The degradation, the wrongs, the vices that grow out of slavery, are more than I can describe. They are greater than you would willingly believe.

My master met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? There is no shadow of law to protect the slave girl from insult, from violence, or even from death. All these are inflicted by fiends who bear

the shape of men.

When they told me my new-born babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own...

God gave me a soul that burned for freedom and a heart nerved with determination to suffer even unto death in pursuit of liberty. The slave owners seem to satisfy their consciences with

the doctrine that God created the Africans to be slaves. What a libel upon the heavenly Father, who "made of one blood all nations of men!" Slavery is a curse to the whites as well as to the blacks. It makes the white fathers cruel and sensual; the sons violent and licentious; it contaminates the daughters, and makes the wives wretched. And as for the colored race, it needs an abler pen than mine to describe the extremity of their sufferings, the depth of their degradation...

Harriet Jacobs, *Life of a Slave Girl, An Autobiography*, 1861. Born a slave in 1813 in North Carolina.

WE WERE SIXTIES REBELS

The authors of injustice and oppression in America are Pharaohs:

We name the Pharaohs in Congress who multiply the weapons.

We name the Pharaohs who condemn Black babies to die at twice the rate of whites.

We name the Pharaohs who poison the land and water.

In America we [Jews] have been both coerced and cajoled into abandoning the prophetic legacy. The American lifestyle tries to remake us in one dimension - bureaucratic, programmed, technological... flat... [But we demand] the survival of Judaism, not merely of a brood of suburban Bar Mitzvah boys and girls.

Arthur Waskow, *The Freedom Haggadah*, 1969

WE WOMEN ARE STILL SLAVES

To our body image – guilt eating into our bodies and souls.

To our "super woman" ideals that scatter our energies everywhere.

To a selective memory of history that erases our foremothers.

To recalcitrant husbands who imprison us in dead marriages.

To our desire to be considered good little girls.

To society's concept of success – competitive, autonomous... and lonely.

To our misconception that feminism is just for and about women, that it denies deep and healthy relationships with the men in our lives.

Tanya Zion Waldoks, 2006

WE WERE ZIONIST PIONEERS

"We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt," to King Farouks and Nassers in Egypt. But "we went out from there" – with a popular national uprising, "with a strong hand" - working and laboring, "with an outstretched arm" – liberating ourselves. And if our ancestors had not been liberated, "we and our children and our children's children, would still be slaves" – in exile.

Yitzhak Tabenkin, *Kibbutz Ein Harod Haggadah*, 1953

THE WAY WE WERE 20th Century Adaptations of "We were slaves"

Jews have seen the key to Jewish and universal liberation in many modern movements, and often wrote their own ideological adaptations of the Haggadah. Did these movements contribute to freedom or create new forms of enslavement? How would we write our own adaptation today?

WE WERE COMMUNISTS

We were slaves to Capital, until the October Revolution [the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917] "redeemed us with a strong hand" from the land of slavery.

If it weren't for the October Revolution, then we and our children and our children's children would still be slaves to Capital.

Today the revolution is only here, next year – a world revolution.

The Red Haggadah, 1927

WE WERE POLITICIANS

We were slaves to our passions for power, for career advancement, for political office, for secure income, and therefore we were slaves also to our voters.

Every party teaches its voters to recite: "All of us are wise." "Blessed is God, the Place of the World" – for all of this is to keep our place of work, a soft chair and a high office.

The Non Political Haggadah, Tel Aviv, 1947

More Storytelling כָּל הַמְרֵבָּה

THE LONGER, THE BETTER

וְאִלּוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם,
הָרִי אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ
מִשְׁעַבְדִּים הֵיינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם.

If God had not taken
our ancestors out of Egypt,
then we would still be enslaved
to Pharaoh in Egypt, along with our children,
and our children's children.

וְאִפְלוּ
כָּלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים,
כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים,
כָּלֵנוּ זְקֵנִים,
כָּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה,
מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיציאת מצרים.

Even if
all of us are wise,
all of us discerning,
all of us veteran scholars, and
all of us knowledgeable in Torah,
it is still a mitzvah for us to retell
the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

וְכָל הַמְרֵבָּה לְסַפֵּר
בִּיציאת מצרים הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח.

So, the more and the longer,
one expands and embellishes the story,
the more commendable it is.

STORYTELLING IDEAS

The Haggadah recommends that parents go beyond the text of the Haggadah and improvise dramatically in retelling the story of the Exodus. However, the traditional Haggadah does not include a script for the storyteller nor does it even bring the appropriate Biblical chapters. So some parents tell the story in their own words. Others ask the children to retell what they have learned in school under three major headings:

What was it like to be a slave?

What do you know about Moshe as a baby and as a young man?

How did the Jews finally become free?

Before the Seder ask the children to prepare drawings to illustrate these themes and then to show and tell what they drew. Or look at the pictures and create a dialogue among the characters represented.

BIBLIODRAMA: FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS OF THE EXODUS

Though we all know the story of the Exodus, we need to bring it alive tonight. Invite the participants to think of a person or an object, then to retell part of the story from their character's/prop's point of view. For example: an Egyptian official during the plague of darkness, a Jewish child crossing the Red Sea, Moses' staff or basket, etc.

Here is one story of Moses' basket, as told to Peter Pitzele, creator of the Bibliodrama method:

"I am the reed ark that carried Moses down the Nile."

"Tell me more about yourself."

"Well, what do you want to know?"

"Who made you?"

"Moses' mother made me."

"Did she talk to you while she was making you? Or could you read her thoughts?"

"Not her thoughts, her feelings. She was sad, and angry."

"I see. And did you know what you were being made for?"

"Yes. To carry the little infant down the Nile."

"How did you feel about this assignment?"

"It was a huge responsibility. I wanted Moses' mother to be very careful. To weave me well and to caulk me well. I did not want to leak, or tilt over."

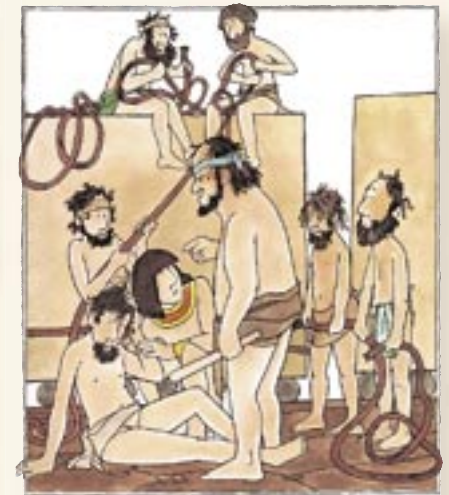
"And did she build you well?"

"Yes, very well."

"Yes. I want you to know what it felt like to carry him down the river. It was like being his mother."

And another group member said, "I never thought about the ark of papyrus, the basket, before as a kind of second mother, a womb. It made me realize how many times Moses was mothered and passed on. The little ark is like a metaphor for how transient his childhood must have felt for him."

Peter Pitzele, *Scripture Windows*



Leon Baxter

It was the Finger of God!

by the Religion Editor, Sigmund Freud, author of the forthcoming
Moses and Monotheism

The head of the Egyptian priests admitted publicly that the plagues are an act of the Jewish god, according to a report by the Akhenaten Association. This is the first time the priests have acknowledged the existence of a divine power other than themselves. What began as the Israelites' struggle for freedom might lead to a religious revolution, whose international ramifications remain to be seen.

TOMBS DESECRATED

The Egyptian Antiquities Authority (EAA) reported today that two mummies were stolen from Ramses' tomb – Tsofnat Paneiakh (alias Joseph) and a daughter of Ramses II. The EAA spokesperson says the Israelites are the main suspects in the theft.

LAND O'GOSHEN BAKERY

When time flies and the bread won't rise
INSTANT MATZA!

JOSHUA, THE CAMPING KING!

Big spring sale on all trekking equipment

Ask about our special desert survival kit:

- 2 packages of bitter waters desalination pills
- Unleavened trail mix - from Gorp - the trail mix master
- Anti reflection UV coated sunglasses, guaranteed to block out even Divine rays
- Battery operated GPS - don't wander without it!

Weekly Horoscope



Leo: Nachshon Ben-Aminadav

head of the tribe of Judah, first to cross the Red Sea, is a classic Leo, determined and brave even though they are also reckless and hasty!

Leos jump to the head of the pack, making them natural leaders, yet drawing them into dangerous or embarrassing situations. After they leap without looking, they can find themselves knee-deep in mud, but the move can also be one that makes history!

Pest Control

Frogs, gnats and lice getting you down? Call Amenhetop for a free estimate today.

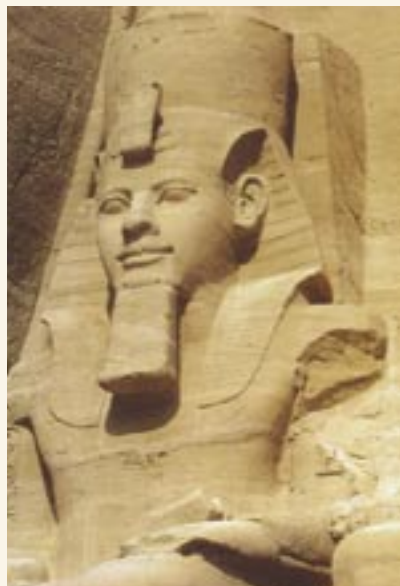
CONDO DEVELOPMENT

Get in on the ground floor of this new condo conversion project. Lovely views of the pyramids. Goshen area. Former slave dwellings can become your luxury home!

Call Ramses for details.

The HieroglyphTimes

16 Nisan, 2560 | published in Egypt for 210 years | Cost: 1 dinar in Goshen | "All the news that is permitted to print" – by Ramses II



THE EXODUS BEGINS!

Final approval from the Pharaoh: Go!

The most heated meeting to date was concluded just yesterday between Moses Ben-Amram and the Pharaoh.

Hebrew sources revealed that the Pharaoh, in a familiar tactic, tried to renege on his agreement. It appeared that negotiations had reached a stalemate. Then came the fateful night of the 14th of Nisan. A mysterious plague left every Egyptian firstborn lifeless. An unearthly howl went up, never heard before.

"Out!" shouted the Egyptian people. "Out before we are all dead! Take our jewelry, take our dresses. But get out – Now!"

The palace capitulated and this morning more than 3,000,000 slaves headed for Egypt's border. After 210 years of slavery, drowning babies, deceit, and desperation, the Jews are free! Neither the Egyptians nor the Jews will forget this night.

Egypt to the Israelites: Return the stolen gold!

A class action lawsuit has been filed in international court against the Israelites by the Egyptians, who claim that the Jews used the confusion created by the "plague of the first-borns," to steal large quantities of gold on their way out of the country.

The Israelites' attorney said that the gold represents token compensation for years of enslavement at the hands of the Egyptians.

Our legal reporter adds: "When you set a slave free, do not send him empty handed."

(Deuteronomy 15:13-15)

Everything Must Go!

Great prices on household furnishings and heavy equipment!
Moving away sale - bargains aplenty!
Call now, ask for Aaron.

Situation Wanted

Speech therapist available afternoons and evenings. I got Moses to say "Let my People Go." I can get you to speak up too!
Nefrititi - Therapist to the Stars.



Five Rabbis מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר

THE LONGEST SEDER

מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְרַבֵּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
וְרַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה וְרַבֵּי עֲקִיבָא
וְרַבֵּי טַרְפוֹן שֶׁהָיוּ מְסַבִּין בְּבֵנֵי
בְּרַק, וְהָיוּ מְסַפְּרִים בִּיצִיאַת
מִצְרַיִם כָּל אוֹתוֹ הַלַּיְלָה, עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ
תַלְמִידֵיהֶם וְאָמְרוּ לָהֶם: "רַבּוֹתֵינוּ,
הִגִּיעַ זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שֶׁל שַׁחֲרִית."

אָמַר רַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה: הֲרִי אֲנִי כְּבֵן
שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, וְלֹא זָכִיתִי שֶׁתֹּאמַר יְצִיאַת
מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלוֹת עַד שֶׁדַּרְשָׁה בֶּן זוּמָא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:
"לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כָּל
יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ"

"יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - הַיָּמִים, "כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - הַלַּיְלוֹת.
וְחֲכָמִים אוֹמְרִים: "יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה,
"כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - לְהַבְיֵא לִימּוֹת הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

A tale is told of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar son of Azarya, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon who dined (reclined) at the Seder in Bnai B'rak. The whole night long they spent retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, until their students arrived and announced to them: "Our masters, it is already time to recite the morning Sh'ma!"

Rabbi Elazar son of Azarya said: Even though I am like a man of seventy, I had never understood why the Exodus from Egypt should be mentioned at night-time [in the Sh'ma], until Ben Zoma explained it to me using the verse:

"That you may remember the day when you came out of Egypt all the days of your life"

(Deuteronomy 16:3).

"The days of your life" means just the days, BUT "all the days of your life" means the nights as well! However the Rabbis explain: "The days of your life" means this life, BUT "all the days of your life" means the days of the Messiah as well!

(Mishna Brachot 1:5)

After we do our own storytelling, the Haggadah now recounts the story of the longest Seder ever, as a model for our own Seder.

This is an opportunity to recount other stories of successful and memorable Seders, throughout Jewish history, as well as in our own family experiences. Invite participants to share a special Seder memory from home or from their most unusual Seder.



SONGS OF FREEDOM IN A SYRIAN PRISON

On Thursday, April 2, 1970, an Israeli Phantom jet was shot down over a Damascus suburb. The pilot **Pini Nahmani** was imprisoned in the al-Mazza Prison in Damascus. In his secret diary he describes his Festival of Freedom:

It's hard to imagine the holiday atmosphere here: in the morning, we gave the cell a thorough scrubbing, something the concrete floor had never had. We drew a Seder plate on a piece of cardboard, with a Magen David in the middle, and a different item at each of the star's points. In the afternoon, we managed to give ourselves baths in ice-cold water, and then we put on our cleanest clothes.

These were difficult hours of soul searching. When you are a prisoner of war, the memories rise up and choke you. You think about home, trying to sense the smells and the holiday feeling at twilight. You know that your family and children, that the entire Jewish people, are waiting and hoping, while you're still here, tossing and turning, helpless, on your stinking mattress. Time crawls by at its own pace.

Two Haggadahs and some matza crumbs sent by the Chief Rabbi of Zurich gave us the feeling of a real Passover. When Boaz, the youngest among us - almost a kid - sang the four questions, tears welled up in my throat. But then came the singing! It was such a strange scene. In the most heavily-guarded prison of an enemy state, three Israeli prisoners are singing songs

of the ancient holiday of liberty.

While we were still celebrating and reading the Haggadah, the guards appeared and demanded that we stop. It seemed that our singing had disturbed the ousted Syrian president in the next cell, Nur al-din Atassi. He had thrown us in jail and declared that "the Israeli pilots would grow old in a Syrian prison!" Now [after Hafez al-Assad, father of the present leader of Syria, seized power in a military coup] Nur was in the same boat we were. At any rate, we refused to stop, even when they threatened to throw us into solitary confinement as a punishment for making noise, for even that awful threat could not silence the sound of freedom.

We finished the Haggadah with *Had Gadya*, and went on singing other Israeli songs - Naomi Shemer's "Jerusalem of Gold" - just to continue the celebration long into the night and to avenge ourselves a little bit... I had never taken part in such a long Seder. We had to be taken prisoner in order to fulfill the Haggadah's description of the five rabbis in Bnai Brak: "The whole night long they spent retelling the story of the Exodus."

THE LAST ETHIOPIAN SEDER, 1991

From the eyewitness report of Micha Odenheimer, journalist and director of a program for Ethiopian olim.

“I brought you to Me on eagles’ wings” (Exodus 19:4)

On Friday night, May 24, 1991, fourteen thousand four hundred Jews from Beita Yisrael crowded into the Israeli Embassy compound in Addis Ababa, the capital. They were caught between a nightmare and a dream, the danger of slaughter by the rebel army that encircled the capital and the opportunity to make aliyah to Israel at the last possible moment before the invasion by the rebels.

Months earlier the Jews of Ethiopia who had lived for centuries as farmers in the Gondar region abandoned their homes, sold their property and migrated – often by foot – 700 km south to the slums of the capital of the Marxist regime, hoping to leave from there to Israel.

Eight weeks earlier the priests (called *kesim*) celebrated at the Israeli Embassy their last Passover in Ethiopia. After purifying themselves in water they laid their hands on ten one-year-old sheep, blessed them, and then ritually slaughtered and roasted them. When the *kesim* honored me by offering me – an Ashkenazi Orthodox Jew – a piece of the lamb, I hesitated for a moment because their kashrut is different than my own. Yet I knew that eating the Pesach lamb has always been the symbol of inclusion in the Jewish community, so I expressed my solidarity with their Exodus and ate my first Paschal sacrifice.

Now, only weeks after Pesach, the final Exodus was to begin under the title “Operation Solomon.” The Marxists who ruled the capital had made a deal with Israel for a \$35,000,000 bribe

(paid by American Jewish philanthropists) to release the Jews in a massive airlift just days before the government fell.

At the Israeli embassy, 14,400 Jews spent all night long in darkness and exceptional calm and discipline. They experienced a mixture of fear and hope (reminiscent of the children of Israel in Egypt on the first Seder night).

That night the Ethiopian Jews passed from one station to another at the embassy grounds. First the head of the household’s identity card was checked and his children counted off and given a sticker with the number of their bus to wear on their forehead. Then all their local money had to be thrown into a box, as demanded by the Ethiopian government. Afterwards all their possessions were relinquished, for lack of space in the planes. Only what they wore – their nicest clothes and gold jewelry – came with them, along with bread which was wrapped in their flowing garments.

I remembered the Biblical verses describing a similar “Night of Vigil” in which no one slept, on Passover evening in Egypt: *“The people took their dough before it was leavened...wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders. That was...a Night of Vigil”* (Exodus 13:9). Even the numbered stickers on the foreheads reminded me of the command, *“This shall serve you as a sign upon your hand and as a reminder on your forehead... that the Lord freed you from Egypt with a mighty hand.”* (Exodus 13:9).

**In less than 24 hours
El Al passenger
planes and Hercules
transports took
14,400 people in
the largest, longest,
and fastest airlift
of refugees in the
history of the world;
40 journeys over
1,560 miles and back
in 24 hours.**



THE HUNGER STRIKE SEDER, 1946

Golda Meir, Israel's first female prime minister, tells of one memorable Pesach Seder in the midst of the struggle against the British Mandate's restrictions on Jewish immigration.

On April 8, 1946, I received the following telegram from Italy:

"We are 1100 Jewish refugees. We sailed from Spezia for Palestine - our last hope. Police arrested us on board. We won't leave the ship! We demand permission to continue to Eretz-Israel. Be warned: we will sink with the ship if we are not allowed to continue to Palestine, because we cannot be more desperate."

The next day, the refugees went on a hunger strike. We asked them to stop because of the harsh conditions on board, and decided that we would take their place and fast until the ship was allowed to sail to Palestine. On the second day of the hunger strike, **every Jew in Palestine over the age of 13 fasted**. We suddenly felt that we were a single, united, people.

The third day of the hunger strike was Pesach Eve. Thousands of people carrying flowers came to Jerusalem to show their support. The chief rabbis, who joined our fast and presided over the unusual Seder, decided that everyone would eat a single piece of matza, no bigger than an olive. We put out cups of tea rather

than wine for the hunger strikers.

We read from the Haggadah: *"Every generation must see itself as the one that left Egypt... the Lord saved not only our ancestors, but us, as well."* We repeat these words at Seder every year, but this time they took on a new meaning.

I will never forget my children joining me at the Jewish Agency for the Seder, which may have been **their most important lesson in the suffering of the Jews, the love of Judaism, and the resilience of the Jewish people**.

The day after the Seder, we were notified that the refugees had been allowed to enter Palestine. So, on the first day of Passover, the 101-hour fast ended.

DREAM FREEDOM, 2002

This is the story of how Jewish middle school students in Los Angeles became abolitionists – today in the 21st century:

It all began as a program to make the holiday of Passover more meaningful for the students at our school. The entire school, students and teachers, read Sonia Levitin's book *Dream Freedom* which chronicles the modern problem of slavery in Sudan, where Muslim gangs with army support take over Christian villages and sell men, women and children as slaves. Two weeks before Passover, the school convened to meet Francis Bok, a Sudanese slave who escaped to America. One student wrote: *"Before meeting Francis Bok, slavery seemed like*

a horrific nightmare, but I never imagined that the nightmare would stand right in front of me. To witness a slave was an enlightening experience, and I thank God every day that I am free. The whole concept of selling people like property and treating them like animals is the most horrendous and disturbing problem that faces our world today. I learned that 27,000,000 people are enslaved today. Now all my problems seem so miniscule. Today I am helping to free several in bondage."

It costs only \$36 to free a slave, to buy their

freedom from the Sudanese captors. Many students made bracelets engraved with the name of a slave who had been recently captured. Others wrote a prayer for their Seder tables to remind us that we who were once slaves need to work for the freedom of others. In two weeks, the middle school students collected a whopping \$14,700 - enough to free 411 slaves! As Jews, we know that we cannot remain silent while others have been abandoned into bondage.

Rabbi **Leah Kroll**, Milken Community High School of Stephen S. Wise Temple, Los Angeles

Four Children אַרְבַּעַה בְּנֵים

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

Blessed be God, Blessed be that One.
Blessed be the Giver of the Torah
to the people Israel,
Blessed be that One.

כְּנֶגֶד אַרְבַּעַה בְּנֵים דְּבִרָה תּוֹרָה:

The Torah alludes to Four Children:

אֶחָד חָכָם

One Wise or Thoughtful

וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע

One Wicked or Rebellious

וְאֶחָד תָּם

One Simple or Innocent

וְאֶחָד שֶׁאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ לְשַׁאֵל.

One Who Does Not Know How to Ask.

The midrash of the Four Children invites us to listen to each child's question and identify different character types.

Then the Rabbis turn the commandment of *v'hegadta* ("you shall tell") into a **mitzvah of dialogue** – with give and take on both sides. Successful dialogue means that each side, and especially the side anxious to "pass on the message," be keenly attentive to what the other is saying and feeling – to the particular personality of the child and his or her needs.

QUESTIONS OF THE FUTURE

In a future generation when/if [כִּי] your children ask:

"What do you mean by this Passover rite?" (Exodus 12:26-27).

The Rabbis read this verse as a "good news, bad news" joke: "At that moment, bad news was brought to the Israelites: that the Torah would be forgotten. Some say that good news was brought to them: that they would have children and children's children!" (Mechilta)

The good news arises if we read the Hebrew word כִּי as "when your children ask you," and not as "if your children ask you." There is an assurance of generations to come.

The bittersweet nature of questions has to do with forgetting and the desire to know. Without forgetting, there would be no questions.

Is this – the inevitability of forgetting – bad news? Or is it good news, implying the constant rebirth of narratives, responses to the questions of those in whom distance and forgetting create desire? The issue is not decided, as so many true questions are not decided.

Aviva Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture*

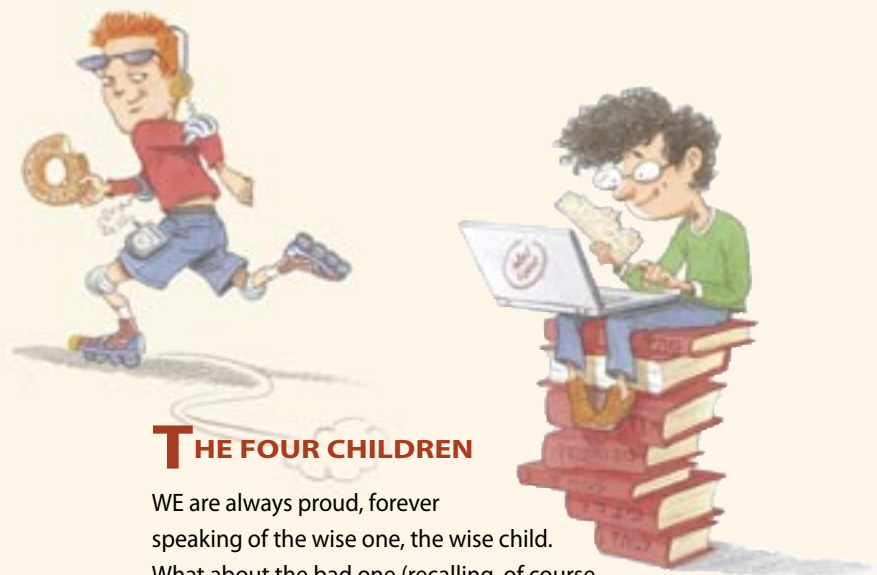


The Four Israeli Sons by Michel Kichka, 2004

TOO QUICK TO CATEGORIZE

It is tempting, and at times not altogether inappropriate, to sort people into a few well-chosen "types." But I urge a sense of the complexity of people on myself and on the reader. **William Carlos Williams**, the American poet, once talked of the "zeal" with which we "take to labels of all kinds." "We crave certainty; we love to put a period at the end of a sentence, and that is that. But take a look at people, a real close look, and you'll find inconsistencies and contradictions - and that's where a closer look is needed, not a category or a definition that tells you, that reassures you: all right, you've got it!"

Robert Coles, educator, *The Call of Service*



THE FOUR CHILDREN

WE are always proud, forever speaking of the wise one, the wise child. What about the bad one (recalling, of course, Father Flanagan's "There's no such thing as a bad kid")?

If we have none of those, why are so many rabbis making rounds in the Big Houses across our fair land? Who are these ghosts in the minimum, medium, and maximum prisons? Figments? (We had our Uncle Simcha who hid out with Grandpa for a few weeks. I think it was Prohibition and he was mixed up with some, shall we say, undesirable fellows.)

NOW comes the hard part, the special two - "simple" and "unable-to-ask." You may say "simple" means nice or "easygoing," the kid who likes everything, is happy, and makes no demands. It's the one you refer to now that he or she is grown up when you say, "Joe (or Nancy) was an easy child." All right, then - that's three out of four.

But that still leaves "the one who doesn't know how to ask." I think the pictures in the Haggadah are wrong, painting children so small.

They shift; they mislead. It doesn't mean: "so young they can't formulate the words."

It means . . . We know what it means.

And if we just say it, with the pride of the first, maybe this year more can come out of their hiding places.

Danny Siegel, poet and Tzedakah educator