

Maggid

Telling the Story

1. The heart of the seder is the “maggid” from the term “Haggadah,” meaning “storytelling.” The storyteller must be flexible and inventive, for this, the longest part of the seder, is also the most creative.

2. According to many oriental Jewish traditions, it opens with a traditional Pesach skit. It is also time to **hide** the afikoman (the larger portion of the middle matza).

בְּהִילּוֹ יֵצְאוּנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם

Recalling the First Seder Night

We begin by recalling the first seder night in history when we “hurriedly left Egypt:”

“Adonai said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt . . .

This is how you shall eat it (the Pesach meal):

your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it **hurriedly**: it is a Passover offering to Adonai . . .

In the middle of the night Adonai struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt . . .

The Egyptians urged the people on, impatient to have them leave the country, for they said, “We shall all be dead!”

So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders . . .”

(Exodus 12:11-29, 33-34)

הִנְנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזוּמָן
לְקַיֵּם אֶת הַמִּצְוָה
לְסַפֵּר בְּיַצִּיאת מִצְרַיִם.

HERE I AM, ready to perform the mitzvah of retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

“**FORGETFULNESS** leads to exile, while memory is the secret of redemption,” says the Baal Shem Tov. *(18th C. founder of Hassidism)*

Therefore, we celebrate Passover by teaching ourselves to become inventive storytellers and empathetic listeners.



Prague, 1526



Kadesh
Urchatz
Karpas
Yachatz
Maggid

The Game Begins: Rules for Hiding the Afikoman

While the broken matza is designed to remind the adults of the culture of poverty, the afikoman is the key to gifts of plenty for the children, as well as the lever for parents to arouse tired children and maintain their alertness through the lengthy stories, rituals, and explanations of the seder. The rabbis mandated playing games with the matza precisely for this educational purpose and felt little compunction about disturbing the sanctity of the evening or the dignity of the matza as a symbol. Each Jewish community made their own rules — sometimes the child stole the afikoman and sometimes the parent hid it. Here is one contemporary version of the game with practical instructions:

1. After breaking the matza, either the seder leader or head of each nuclear family hides the afikoman(s) in a napkin. Some parents sew cloth envelopes embroidered with the word "afikoman."

2. The children are told that a portion of the afikoman will be hidden in more or less plain sight. Children should be encouraged to work together so that the negative aspects of competition will not ruin their evening when they are rewarded for finding the afikoman.

A Passover Skit

In Egypt the Jews ate quickly and anxiously because they were nervous about the plague of the first born and they were expecting their imminent departure into freedom. Today Jews of Africa and Asia customarily act out the Exodus itself dressing their children (or a dramatically inclined adult) in baggy clothes, a scarf or hat, hiking boots, a walking stick, a belt with a canteen and, most important, the afikoman wrapped in one's clothes on the shoulder (or perhaps in a backpack).

Try sending the youngest children out of the room (or the house) with a bag of props and the help of an adult to prepare this dialogue. Here is a semi-traditional script that may be used by the "actors" at the seder.

Knock on the door

Adults: Who's there?

Children: Moshe, Aaron, and Miriam.

Adults: Come in. Tell us about your journey!

Children: We have just arrived from Egypt where we were slaves to Pharaoh. He made us do such hard work. *[Improvise about how bad it was.]*

Adults: How did you escape?

Children: God sent Moshe and Aaron to tell Pharaoh: "Let my people go." When he refused, God sent 10 plagues. *[Improvise describing some of the plagues.]* Finally God brought the most awful plague on the first born of Egypt. Then Pharaoh was really scared so he kicked us out.

Adults: Why are you dressed like that? What is on your shoulder?

Children: We escaped in the middle of the night and had no time to let the dough for our bread rise. The dough that we wrapped in our cloaks and slung over our shoulders turned to matza in the heat of the sun.

Adults: Tell us about your adventures.

Children: Pharaoh changed his mind after releasing us and chased us to the edge of the Red Sea. We would have been caught for sure, but then God split the sea. *[Describe how it felt.]*

Adults: Where are you going now?

Children: To Jerusalem.

ALL: L'Shana Ha-ba-ah Bee'Yerushalayeem!

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא

Ha Lachma Anya: The story of the matza

‘This is the Bread of Poverty and Persecution’

1. The storytelling continues with a look at the matza and its multiple meanings as explained in Aramaic, once the everyday language for Jews in Israel and Mesopotamia.

2. Remove the cloth covering the matzot so that they are in plain view during the telling of the story, the Maggid. **Raise** the three matzot and point out the broken middle matza (left after the afikoman has been hidden).

3. Some Rabbis require the seder plate as well as the matzot to be lifted up as if they were about to be removed from the table even before the meal has begun. This was originally designed to arouse the children to ask questions.

4. Moroccan Jews pass the matzot over everyone’s head while reading together “ha lachma anya.” Some families open the door as a sign of welcoming guests to the seder.



Kadesh
Urchatz
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Maggid

Ha
Lachma
Anya

❖ HA LACHMA ANYA

THIS IS THE BREAD of poverty and persecution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. As it says in the Torah “seven days shall you eat . . . matzot — the bread of poverty and persecution” (Deut. 16:3) so that you may “remember that you were a slave in Egypt . . .” (Deut. 16:12)

LET ALL who are hungry, come and eat
LET ALL who are in need, come and share
the Pesach meal.

THIS YEAR we are still here —
Next year, in the land of Israel.

THIS YEAR we are still slaves —
Next year, free people.

Ha lach-ma an-ya
Dee-acha-lu av-ha-ta-na
B’ar-ah d’meetz-ra-yeem.

Kol deech-feen, yei-tei v’yei-chool,
Kol dee-tzreech, yei-tei v’yeef-sach.

Ha-sha-ta ha-cha,
L’sha-na ha-ba-ah
be-ar-ah d’yis-rael

Ha-sha-ta av-dei,
L’sha-na ha-ba-ah
B’nei cho-reen.

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא

דִּי אֶכְלוּ אַבְהַתְנָא
בְּאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם.

כָּל דְכַפִּין יִיתִי וְיִכֹּל,
כָּל דְצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח.

הַשְּׁתָא הָכָא,
לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה
בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל.

הַשְּׁתָא עַבְדִּי,
לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה
בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.

Uplifting Bread

THE GESTURE of raising the matza of poverty and persecution is an allusion to God's lifting up the poor from the garbage heaps. (*Psalms 113:7*)

The Moroccan custom of passing the matza over the heads of the participants may allude to the Angel of Death who "passed over" the Jewish houses on the night of the tenth plague.

The Bread of Answers

THE RABBIS punned that *anya* means not only poverty but giving answers. This is the bread over which many "answers" will be said. The parent answers the child while pointing at the matza and says: "For the sake of this, God did so much for me when I left Egypt." (*Ex. 13:8*)

Fast Food, Oppression and 'Schindler's List'

SEFORNO, a rabbi of the Italian Renaissance, noted that matza is the original "**fast food.**" Made of flour and salt it bakes quickly, as it must, for slaves have no time to themselves to let their dough rise at its leisure. Quick to prepare and easy to eat, matza is the **bread of a tight schedule** due to the oppressor's unrelenting demands for meeting the production quota. (*Ex. 5*) Perhaps for that reason the Rabbis insisted that today's matza be prepared from start to finish in no more than **18 minutes.**

Matza's Double Identity

As everyone knows, the Jews eat unleavened bread because the dough they brought out from Egypt in their rush to leave, never had a chance to rise. Matza is then the **bread of liberation.** It is a mark of an exodus whose rapid pace overtook them unprepared. The Egyptians who enslaved them, suddenly expelled them after God brought the plague on the first born. The Passover skit (*p. 35*) reenacts the matza of expulsion and exodus.

Yet "*ha lachma,*" the first official explanation for matza in the Haggadah, calls it the "**bread of poverty and persecution**" based on Deuteronomy 16:3, "*You shall eat unleavened bread, bread of 'oni' (distress) — for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly.*" Here matza is a memorial not of liberation, but of slavery. The life of oppression is marked by a pressured, "hurried" pace, for the slaves do not control the rhythm of their existence.

When the Israeli actor, Ezra Dagan, was chosen by Steven Spielberg to play the rabbi in the Holocaust movie *Schindler's List*, he went to visit a friend whose father was a survivor. Ezra wanted to get the personal feel of the Jews who had lived through Auschwitz. Arriving just as his friend's father sat down to eat, Ezra marvelled at the rapid pace at which he consumed everything on his plate. "**Does your father always eat at so frenzied a rate?**" he inquired. "I never noticed it but you are right. It must be a life saving lesson he never unlearned from his years in Nazi forced labor camps."

Seforno explained that God rewarded

the Jews who were forced to bake and to eat so quickly (*be-cheepazon*) in Egypt by granting them a quick exodus (*be-cheepazon*) after the original seder. (*Deut. 16:3*) The leisurely pace of the seder today as well as the abundance of food and the comfort of the pillows expresses our liberation from an **(op)pressing schedule.**



An Open Door Policy

BEFORE COMMENCING any meal, Rav Huna of Babylonia used to open the door and announce: "Let all who are in need come and eat." (B.T. Taanit 20b)

Concern for the needy is characteristic of every Jewish celebration. The Torah emphasizes: "You shall rejoice in your festival — with your son and daughter, your male and female servant, the Levi, the stranger, the orphan and the widow in your communities." (Deut 16:14) Maimonides expands and explains this principle:

"When a person eats and drinks at the festive meal he is obligated to provide food for the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, along with the rest of the poor and despondent. But whoever locks the doors of the courtyard, and eats and drinks with his wife and children, and does not provide food and drink for poor or suffering people, this is not a "mitzvah celebration" ("simchat mitzvah") but a "celebration of the belly" ("simchat kray-so") . . . and this kind of celebration is a disgrace." (Maimonides, Festivals 6:18)

We continue this Biblical tradition of hospitality today by collecting money to fund preparations for the holiday by the indigent ("Maot-cheeteem"), and by inviting guests to the seder table. Communities should provide networks of hospitality so that no Jew, whether a newcomer or an elderly person, need spend the holiday alone and forsaken.

Ben Shahn's poster, "Hunger," was used to appeal for help for refugees after World War II. It is modelled on a photograph taken in the Warsaw Ghetto.



"Let all who are hungry"

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Kadesh
Urchatz
Karpas
Yachatz
Maggid

Ha
Lachma
Anyá

'All of Us Are Equal'

AT A SEDER the poor are often invited to eat at the home of the rich. This may reinforce their sense of shame and dependence on others. Therefore we begin by the eating of dry, broken matza which is supposed to be an **equalizer**. Don Isaac Abrabanel explains that the hosts must make clear to the guests: "All of us are equal. Though you are poor, you will not feel estranged at my table for all of us were impoverished in Egyptian bondage."

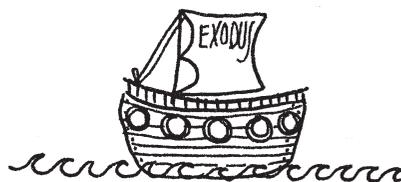
(Don Isaac Abrabanel, Zevach Pesach Haggadah. In 1492 Abrabanel was a cabinet minister to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. When the decree expelling the Jews from Spain was issued, he was offered an exemption. Nevertheless he chose to be expelled in solidarity with all the Jews).

'Needy but Not Necessarily Poor'

SOMETIMES the rich are needy. Though they have lots of food they may not know how to make a seder. Therefore the text says "all those in need" and not only "all who are hungry."

"One should also invite travellers in a strange town far from home for they are certainly sad so far from their families . . . you are obliged to bring them to your home and make them happy on this holiday."

(anonymous medieval Talmudist)



The Jewish Mayflower

DAVID BEN GURION, first prime minister of the State of Israel, described the importance of the memories preserved on Pesach as he argued for the right to a Jewish State in 1947:

"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. 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. They conclude this evening with two statements: *This year, slaves. Next year, free men. This year here. Next year in Jerusalem, in Zion, in Eretz Yisrael.* That is the nature of the Jews."

(Testimony to the British Peel Commission, 1936)

"This year we are slaves"

WHAT CAN these words mean?

We are slaves because yesterday our people were in slavery, and memory makes yesterday real for us.

We are slaves because today there are still people in chains around the world and no one can be truly free while others are in chains.

We are slaves because freedom means more than broken chains. Where there is poverty and hunger and homelessness, there is no freedom; where there is prejudice and bigotry and discrimination, there is no freedom; where there is violence and torture and war, there is no freedom.

And where each of us is less than he or she might be, we are not free, not yet.

And who, this year, can be deaf to the continuing oppression of the downtrodden, who can be blind to the burdens and the rigors that are now to be added to the most vulnerable in our midst?

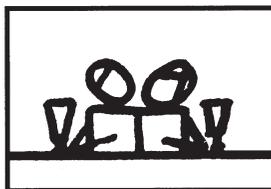
If these things be so, who among us can say that he or she is free?

(Leonard Fein, founder of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, 1985)



Four Questions

מה נשתנה



1. **Pour** the second cup for everyone.
2. **Let** the younger children sing “Ma Nishtana.”



Kadesh
Urchatz
Karpas
Yachatz
Maggid

Four
Questions

❖ MA NISHTANA

HOW 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**.

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

*She-b'chol ha-lei-lot,
anu och-leen,
cha-metz u-matza,
Ha-lai-la ha-zeh, ku-lo matza.*

*She-b'chol ha-lei-lot
anu och-leen
sh'ar y'ra-kot,
Ha-lai-la ha-zeh maror.*

*She-b'chol ha-lei-lot
ein anu mat-bee-leen
afee-lu pa-am echat,
Ha-lai-la ha-zeh, shtei-p'ameem.*

*She-b'chol ha-lei-lot
anu och-leen,
bein yo-shveen u-vein m'su-been,
Ha-lai-la ha-zeh, ku-la-nu m'su-been.*

מה נשתנה

הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה
מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת
אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין
חֶמֶץ וּמַצָּה,
הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מַצָּה.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת
אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין
שָׂאֵר יַרְקוֹת,
הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה מָרוֹר.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת
אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבְּלִין
אֶפְּלוּ פַּעַם אַחַת,
הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת
אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין
בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵין וּבֵין מְסַבֵּין,
הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסַבֵּין.



Prague, 1526

The Four Questions — An Occasion for Reciting or for Inquiring?

The custom of having the youngest child recite the “four questions” has its origin in Rabbinic sources from Second Temple times. However the Mishna in describing the ancient seder service shakes up our usual assumptions:

They fill a second cup of wine for him (the leader of the seder) — and here the child (the inquisitive child) asks his father. If the child lacks intelligence (“daat”), his father teaches him: “How different this night is from all other nights! For on all other nights we eat leavened bread and matza, etc. . . .” (Pesachim 10:4)

The surprising point here is that the four questions are not formulated as questions but as statements of wonder. They are stated by the parent, not by the child — and only if the child lacks the intelligence to ask spontaneously!

The intelligent child is expected to notice the changes in the routine and inquire about them. According to the Mishna, then, if all children were intelligent and curious, there would be no recital of a ritual text of four questions!

Nevertheless, *Ma Nishtana* has earned an honored place at the seder. But one who is satisfied with **only** a formal recitation of questions is far from realizing the educational potential the Rabbis sought to develop.

Eliciting Questions

1. Go around the table asking everyone to share one personal question about Pesach or the Exodus.
2. Afterwards, spend some time replying to a few questions by pooling everyone’s collective knowledge.

‘Izzy, Did You Ask a Good Question Today?’

To the Editor:

Isidor I. Rabi, the Nobel laureate in physics was once asked, “Why did you become a scientist, rather than a doctor or lawyer or businessman, like the other immigrant kids in your neighborhood?”

“My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: ‘**Nu? Did you learn anything today?**’ But not my mother. She always asked me a different question. ‘**Izzy,**’ she would say, ‘**Did you ask a good question today?**’ That difference — asking good questions — made me become a scientist.”
(Donald Sheff, New York Times, Jan. 19, 1988)



Otto Geismar, 1927



Kadesh
Urchatz
Karpas
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Maggid

Four
Questions

In Search of the Four Answers

As often happens after the youngest child recites the four questions, the family and guests applaud but do not bother to answer the questions. Since a young child's questions should not go unanswered, we shall present one answer to each of the four questions.

ON ONE HAND, the matza and the maror belong to the menu of the slaves and the oppressed:

1. Why eat plain matza which is hard to digest?

Poor laborers and slaves are fed matza not only because it is cheap but because it is filling and requires a long digestion period. The diet was designed by the oppressor to exploit the people efficiently.

2. Why eat raw, bitter vegetables?

Maror is eaten plain only by the most oppressed workers who are given little time to prepare their meals. With more time they would have made these herbs into a tasty salad.

ON THE OTHER HAND, dipping and reclining typify the manners of the leisure class in Roman times:

3. Why dip twice before eating?

On seder night we are obligated to dip twice — karpas in salt water and maror in charoset — before the meal begins. Even today, finger foods dipped in tangy sauces are typical hors d'oeuvres with cocktails (the first cup of wine) at banquets.

4. Why recline on pillows while drinking wine?

The body language of the free reflects their ease and comfort. Reclining on sofas or pillows, everyone — big and small alike — experiences the freedom of the upper classes. On seder night these foods and these table manners are props and stage directions in the script acted out by all.

(based on Don Isaac Abrabanel, Zevach Pesach)

The Questioning Personality

A Key to Freedom

Why were the Rabbis so insistent that the Exodus story open with a spontaneous question?

First of all, one can view this as an educational device. Teachers know that if they can just get their students to pay attention, get their minds working on something they find interesting, then the teachers have gone a long way towards creating an openness to learning new things. The Rabbis wanted to remind the leaders of the seder not just to focus on the story — but first to make sure to have an active, **attentive audience**.

On a deeper level, the Rabbis may have reflected that questioning is an essential part of the freedom celebrated on the seder night. The whole Talmudic literature is in the form of **questioning and dialogue** — not the meek questioning of inferior to superior but the give-and-take interaction of adamant rivals pitted against one another, and sometimes even against God! (*B.T. Bava Metzia 59 b*)

An essential characteristic of free people is that they notice the world around them, make distinctions and search for meaningful patterns. They want understanding, not inscrutability. **For a slave mentality, nothing is “different”** — all tasks are part of the same meaningless arbitrariness. There is no point in asking if no one answers, no place for questions in a world where the master’s arbitrary orders are the ultimate

justification for the way things are.

In beginning the seder with genuine (not rote) questions, the Rabbis show that we not only **tell** the story of freedom, but we **act** like free people.

Questions in Many Tongues

Traditionally the questions and answers of the seder must be in the vernacular, a language understood by all whatever their age or literacy. Try asking the questions in as many foreign languages as possible (see *The Leader’s Guide* for many translations).

Four Questions: Kibbutz Style

IN EVERY GENERATION one is obligated to ask **new questions**. Though the Haggadah never explicitly makes such a demand, the Mishna does require intelligent children to ask their own questions. Naturally these will reflect their own era. Even the recommended four questions of the youngest child have changed over the generations.

In the early days the Kibbutz Haggadah retooled the four questions to transcend ritual issues and to focus on contemporary historical concerns, such as the battle with the Arabs (1930’s), the Holocaust (1940’s) and the ingathering of 1,000,000 Jewish refugees (1950’s).

Below are four questions asked by children in Kibbutz Ein Harod. It is a shame that we don’t have a copy of the answers the parents gave to these contemporary questions.

Kibbutz Ein Harod 1930’s - 1940’s:

- *Why do people all over the world hate Jews?*
- *When will the Jews return to their land?*
- *When will our land become a fertile garden?*
- *When will there be peace and brotherhood the world over?*

Who needs ‘Ma Nishtana’?

ONCE THE YOUNG pupil, Abaye, was invited to the seder of his teacher Rabbah. While still at the beginning of the seder Rabbah ordered the servants to clear the dishes from the table. Amazed, Abaye asked, “Why are you removing the seder plate before we have even eaten?” Rabbah exclaimed, “Your question has served the same function as the usual four questions of... ‘Ma nishtana.’ Let’s dispense with those set questions and proceed directly to the telling of the story.” (*Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 115b*)

Find the Differences

Before singing the “Ma Nishtana,” prompt the youngest children to see how different this table is from other family meals (length of table, foods, dishes, guests, books, pillows, etc).

The Rabbis As Storytellers

Shmuel's Story: "We were slaves"

- ❖ 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; and 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."

(Deut. 6:20-23)

What if

- ❖ **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.

EVEN IF all of us were wise, all of us discerning, all of us veteran scholars, and all of us knowledgeable in Torah, it would still be a mitzvah for us to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

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

עבדים היינו

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים.
ויציאנו יי אלהינו משם,
ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה.

Optional Song:

עבדים היינו, היינו,
עפה בני חורין, בני חורין.

Avadeem hayeenu, hayeenu,
Ata bnei choreen, bnei choreen.



Kadesh

Urchatz

Karpas

Yachatz

Maggid

We Were
Slaves

ואלו לא הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אבותינו
ממצרים, הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו,
משעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים.

ואפלו כלנו חכמים,
כלנו נבונים, כלנו זקנים,
כלנו יודעים את התורה,
מצוה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים.

וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים,
הרי זה משבח.

Children ask the Best Questions

A kindergarden child once asked the teacher: "What does it mean to be a slave? Is it like being the cleaning lady who doesn't speak English?" Try to answer the child's question.

"By Tomorrow Today Will Be a Story"

Isaac Bashevis Singer:

"When a day passes, it is no longer there. What remains of it? Nothing more than a story. If stories weren't told or books weren't written, humans would live like the beasts, only for the day."

Reb Zebulun said, "Today we live, but by tomorrow today will be a story. **The whole world, all human life, is one long story.**"

Children are as puzzled by passing time as grownups. What happens to a day once it is gone? Where are all our yesterdays with their joys and sorrows? Literature helps us remember the past with its many moods. **To the storyteller yesterday is still here** as are the years and the decades gone by.

In stories time does not vanish. Neither do people and animals. For the writer and his readers, all creatures go on living forever. What happened long ago is still present.

(I.B. Singer, Nobel prize laureate, Yiddish literature, from Zlateh the Goat)

Shmuel vs. Rav: Competing Stories

After the youngest child has asked the four questions and everyone else has added their own questions, then it's time to tell the story that will explain why for us this night is different from all other nights. The Rabbis recommended:

"The parent should teach according to the intelligence and personality of each child. Begin with describing the **degradation** and culminate with the **liberation.**" (*Mishna Pesachim 10:2*)

However, Rav and Shmuel, the Babylonian rabbis, disagreed about the central story to be told at this point in the seder:

Shmuel said: Start with "We were slaves in the land of Egypt" (*Deut. 6.20*) and move from physical enslavement to political liberation. (*see page 44*)

Rav said: Start with Terach, Abraham's father and the state of idolatry to which we had descended. "**Once upon a time our ancestors were slaves of idolatry who worshipped pagan gods.** Now — since Mount Sinai — God has brought us close to the Divine service." (*see page 72*)

The editors of the Haggadah bring both stories: first Shmuel's "We were slaves" and later, after the Four Children, Rav's story.



Trieste Haggadah, 1864

The Longest Seder: The Five Rabbis of Bnai B'rak

בְּנֵי בְרַק

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!"

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



Kadesh
Urchatz
Karpas
Yachatz
Maggid

The Five Rabbis

Recalling the Exodus Every Night

RABBI ELAZAR son of Azarya said: "Even though I am like a man of seventy, I had never understood why the going out from Egypt should be mentioned at night-time [in the Sh'ma], until **Ben Zoma** explained it to me from 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!

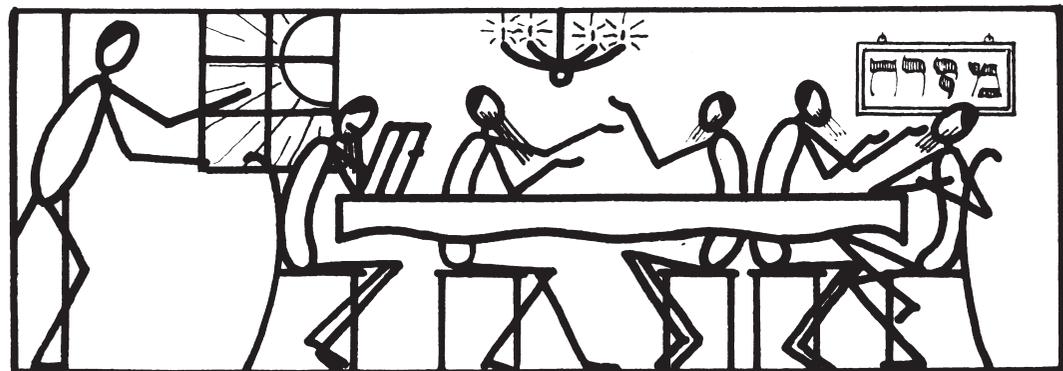
BUT 'All the days of your life' means the nights as well!"

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)

אָמַר רַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה: הֲרִי אֲנִי כְּבֹן שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, וְלֹא זָכִיתִי, שֶׁתֵּאָמַר יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלוֹת עַד שֶׁדַּרְשָׁה בֶּן זֹמָא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר, אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ." "יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - הַיָּמִים, "כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - הַלַּיְלוֹת. וְחֻכְמַיִם אוֹמְרִים: "יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, "כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ" - לְהַבִּיא לְיָמוֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ.



Otto Geismar, 1927

Ben-Zoma vs. the Rabbis: Will the Seder Be Superseded?

THE TALMUD RELATES that Ben-Zoma felt that the Messianic redemption would wipe out the memories of all previous troubles and rescues. The Rabbis insisted that while the Messianic redemption would be the greater one, we must still recall the earlier ones, including the Exodus.

This argument has to do with the importance of memory. For Ben-Zoma, contemporary events have the decisive weight. Some modern Zionist thinkers like Ben-Gurion seem to prefer this position, arguing that the founding of Israel has made 2000 years of exilic experience irrelevant. In their view, the Bible, reflecting the experience of a sovereign people in its land, must be the pivotal educating force for Jewish culture, not the Talmud which grew in the shadow of destruction and conquest by the Romans. Similarly, some might argue that the enormity of the Holocaust makes the recalling of all previous sufferings of the Jews seem trivial and irrelevant.

The Rabbis maintained that history should add, but not erase memories. Recent dramatic historical events may indeed be accorded prominence, but we should never forget our earlier experiences. In their view, even in the Messianic Era when war, poverty, and human suffering have been eradicated, it will still be incumbent to remember daily the saga of bondage and liberation.



“Moses kills the Egyptian taskmaster” (Ex. 2:11)

Julius Schnorr

Personal Recollections: “My Most Unusual Seder”

The seder is as much a family renewal ceremony as a remembrance of ancient Egypt. Sharing family memories with the younger members as well as involving the guests, who may feel homesick, will contribute to the bonding of all participants.

1. Ask the participants, especially the guests, to share a special seder

memory. (See Contemporary Seder Stories in supplement, pages S-5,13,17,29,32 for great seders in Jewish history.)

2. Ask the participants, especially the oldest ones, to recall their best or their worst moment at the old family seder. (For example, the seder when I had stage fright in the middle of the four questions).

Storytelling: Multiple Options

‘The more one expounds and embellishes the story, the more commendable it is’

The Haggadah recommends that parents now go beyond the text of the Haggadah and improvise dramatically in retelling the story of the Exodus. **The traditional Haggadah does not include a script for the storyteller** nor even bring the appropriate Biblical chapters.

Some parents like to tell the story in their own words. Others ask the children to retell what they have learned in school under three major headings:

1. What was it like to be a slave?
2. What do you know about Moshe as a baby and as a young man?
3. 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.)

Many parents prefer to use a script. Try reading aloud one of the following selections (pages 48-55).



Kadesh

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Storytelling

A Philosopher at Home: David Hartman

OUR FAMILY labors a long time at our seder trying to grasp the first part of the Haggadah: *“We were slaves in the land of Egypt.”* I ask my children: **What do you think it feels like to be a slave?**

ONCE I TOLD my four-year-old a story about a boy who did not see his Daddy for a year: “The boy had a birthday and Daddy couldn’t come. Then Daddy called and said, ‘I’m going to come home.’ The boy invited all his friends to come and see his Daddy, because he loved him. He said, ‘**Abba is coming home.**’ He watched his Mommy cook kugel, his Daddy’s favorite. Just after his friends had come, Abba called to say, ‘The boss won’t let me come.’ The little boy said, ‘What do you mean, the boss won’t let you come? Tell him your son wants you home. Everybody wants you. We miss you!’”

SUDDENLY I could not help it, I started crying and my son started crying about the kid in the story. I created this dialogue of the Abba trying to explain to his little son: “I can’t make my own decisions. The boss decides my movements for me.” We felt the loneliness of the little boy who wanted so much to see his father but who knew that his love is not enough to bring him home. **That is what it means to be a slave. You can’t control your life.**

(That is the story I tell when my child is four. At twelve, I tell another story. At sixteen, still another. On Pesach night I am a multi-faceted storyteller because my autobiography encompasses so many dimensions).



Otto Geismar 1927

The Duty to Give Memories

The haggadah transforms parents into storytellers. It is a very serious task to tell stories. My parents bring me into contact with my historical roots, with my grandparents and a world other than me. **Whether it is relevant, the child will decide; but the parent must witness to a history and a memory that is needed in order to realize that there is a dimension to existence beyond the self.** People who learn to honor their parents escape narcissism and acquire a memory. The parents are the feeders of history.

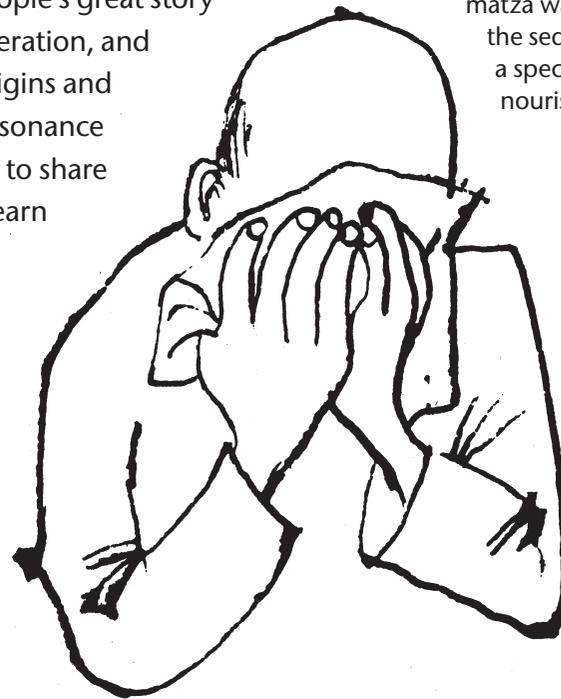
Parents should not determine their children's future, but they must open for them their past.

In many ways we are today human beings in search of a narrative who may find our personal story by reconnecting to our people's great story of wandering and homecoming, of oppression and liberation, and of near annihilation and rescue. By returning to our origins and following the journey of our people we offer deeper resonance to our personal lives and develop a common language to share our fears and our dreams. In retelling the Exodus we learn to commemorate the moments of family and national crisis and to celebrate with profound gratitude our emergence into a better life.

(David Hartman, Jewish Philosopher, Jerusalem)

Ben Shahn, "Weeping Man"

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Not By Bread Alone

IN THE SPRING OF 1945 a father and his teenage son shared the harsh labor in the Nazi camp. The father suggested a pact between them to save part of what little bread they received. After several days of saving the father reported to his son sheepishly: "I am sorry but I have given away our whole store of bread to a new arrival." "Why?" asked the son in desperation. The father explained, "There are two reasons: First, he needed food even more than we and second, I exchanged the bread for a miniature haggadah." Several days later using this haggadah, the father was able to raise people's spirits by conducting a seder for many inmates. Even though matza was unavailable, the seder gave everyone a special kind of nourishment — hope.

Heroic Women and Baby Moses

retold by Diana Craig (*The Young Moses*)

In one small corner of Egypt, just where the great river Nile runs into the sea, there lived some people called Israelites. They had come from Israel to Egypt many years before to look for food.

God had promised to look after the Israelites in their new home, and at first everyone was very happy. There was plenty to eat, and they grew strong and had lots of children. Soon their families filled the land.

But then everything changed. The king of Egypt, who was called the Pharaoh, died, and a new Pharaoh became king. He hated the Jews.

"There are so many of them," he grumbled. "Just think what would happen if they turned against us.

"They might even take sides with our enemies. We must stop them!"

So he thought of a plan. "We'll make them our slaves," he announced with an evil grin. "We'll work them so hard they won't even have time to think of fighting us . . . with a bit of luck they may even die of exhaustion!"

So the Jews slaved from sunrise to sunset, making bricks and moving huge stones to build Egyptian cities. When they were not building cities, they had to dig the fields and plant all the wheat and barley.

The Jews were exhausted, just as the Pharaoh had hoped. But they didn't die. In fact, they didn't even get ill. They stayed just as strong and healthy as ever. The Pharaoh's wicked plan wasn't working.

So he had another idea. He told the nurses that they must kill all Israelite baby boys as soon as they were born. But the nurses knew that God would not approve if they did such a terrible thing, so they made up an excuse.

"We're so sorry, Your Majesty," they lied, not daring to look the Pharaoh in the eye. "But the babies are born so quickly that we never get there in time."

"All right then," replied the Pharaoh angrily.

"They'll just have to be thrown in the river instead!"

All the Jewish mothers were terrified and tried to hide their babies. One mother hid her newborn boy in a corner of her house. If anyone heard him crying and wondered about the noise, she knew what to say.

"It's a sick sheep I'm looking after," she would tell them. "Funny, isn't it, how they sound just like babies when they're ill?" No one suspected anything.

But soon the baby grew too big to hide. "I know what I'll do," thought his mother. "I'll make a little ark of reeds and float the baby on the river, near where the Pharaoh's daughter comes to wash every morning, and she's sure to find him. She has no children of her own, and she's not nearly as cruel as that wicked king. Perhaps she'll feel sorry for my baby and save him."

So the mother took a big basket and painted the outside with black, sticky stuff called pitch, to stop the

(Continued on page 52)



Kadesh

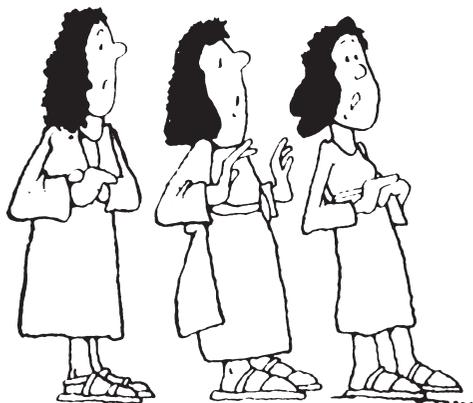
Urchatz

Karpas

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Storytelling



Leon Baxter

Who will be Today's Midwives?

ONE SUNDAY morning in 1941 in Nazi-occupied Netherlands, a mysterious character rode up on his bicycle and entered the Calvinist Church. He ascended the podium and read aloud the story of the midwives who saved the Hebrew babies and defied Pharaoh's policy of genocide. "Who is today's Pharaoh?" he asked. "Hitler," the congregation replied. "Who are today's Hebrew babies?" "The Jews." "Who will be today's midwives?" He left the church, leaving his question hanging in the air.

During the war (1941-1945) numerous families from this little church hid Jews and other resisters from the Nazis.

(See the full story In the Leader's Guide)

The Shifra and Puah Award

AL AXELROD, the Hillel rabbi at Brandeis University in the 1960's, established this annual award for non-violent resistance to tyranny. He named it after the midwives who resisted and outsmarted Pharaoh and saved the Hebrew infants from drowning. (In Tel Aviv the maternity hospital is located at the intersection of Shifra and Puah Street).

To whom would you give this award this year? *(In 1849 Harriet Tubman deserved such an award. See page 99).*

Churchill's Favorite Story

ABOUT THE EXODUS Churchill wrote: "the most decisive leap-forward ever discernable in the human story."

(Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, who led the Allies in World War II, the greatest war of liberation ever fought, sent this quote from his essay on Moses in a personal letter to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion).

The Batya Parent Association

THE NAME of the Biblical heroine, the daughter of Pharaoh who adopts Moses, is not mentioned in the Bible.

One rabbinic midrash calls her "Batya" which means "the daughter of God" and regards her as a convert to Judaism. Her adoption of Moses was motivated, they suggest, by her infertility. Appropriately the American association of adoptive Jewish parents with infertility problems is called "Batya."



Leon Baxter

water from getting in. Then she laid the baby inside and put the basket among the reeds near the river bank. She told her daughter, Miriam, to stay and see what happened.

Sure enough, the princess came down to the water's edge and stopped the basket. She sent one of her servants to fetch it, and she was amazed to see a little

baby tucked up snugly inside.

"Whatever are you doing here?" she exclaimed, picking him up and giving him a cuddle. And then she guessed the truth. "You must be one of the Jewish babies, and your mother has hidden you here for safety. Well, I don't care what my father says, I won't throw you in the river."

Moses Comes of Age

When the little boy was old enough, his mother took him back to the princess. "From now on, I shall be his mother," the princess said, "and I'll call him Moses, because I took him from the water." So Moses was brought up like an Egyptian prince, and had everything he could wish for.

But as the years went by, one thing began to bother Moses more and more. **Although he lived with the Egyptians, he knew he wasn't one of them.** He knew he was really a Jew. He saw how cruel the Egyptians were to his people and it made him very angry. How could the Egyptians treat them so badly? They hadn't done anything wrong. **It just wasn't fair.**

One day, when Moses had grown up, he decided to visit one of the building sites and see for himself what was going on. He caught sight of one of the Egyptian slave drivers beating a Hebrew slave. Moses completely lost his temper. He picked up a stone and smashed it on the slave driver's head. The man fell to the ground, dead. Moses was horrified at what he had done.

Quickly, he buried the body in the sand.

"Don't breathe a word of what's happened, or the Pharaoh will have me killed!" he warned the slave. But the man just couldn't help telling his brother, and his brother told his aunt, and his aunt told her friend . . . and soon everyone knew.

The next day, Moses visited another building site, and saw a big, strong slave bullying a small, weak slave.

"Stop that, you great bully!" shouted Moses.

"Just you try and make me!" the slave answered back cheekily. "You can't boss me about, or I'll tell the Pharaoh how you killed one of his men!"

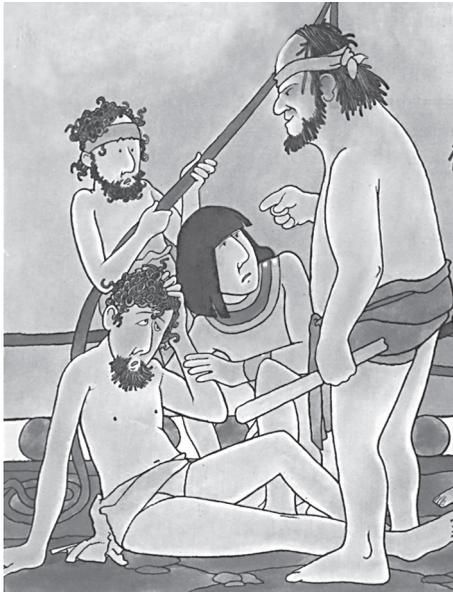
Moses was terrified. His secret was out, and he knew that when the Pharaoh heard, that would be the end of him.

So, that night, he packed a few clothes and some food and, with a last, longing look at his home, he crept away.



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Storytelling



Leon Baxter

Returning Moses to the Haggadah

SOME HAVE ARGUED that Moses was deliberately excluded from the Haggadah to avoid deifying a human leader. Certainly the hero of the traditional Haggadah is and should be God. But it is likely that Moses was often mentioned in the rabbinic seder when parents told their children the story of the Exodus. We have introduced Moses explicitly into our Haggadah as recommended by Moses Maimonides: *“It is a mitzvah to tell the children about the Exodus even if they did not ask . . . If the children are mature and wise, tell them all that happened to us in Egypt and all the miracles God did for us by means of Moses”* (Laws of Chametz and Matza 7:2)

Moses’ Identity Crisis

What kind of spiritual transformation can come from an act of murder? What has ensued in the years between Moses’ being taken to live in Pharaoh’s palace and this act?

Being free, Moses was not prey to the slave psychology. However, growing up as Pharaoh’s grandson thrust him into an equal danger — the ambivalence of **dual identity**. He was Hebrew and Egyptian. By birth he belongs to the oppressed, but he is nurtured as a member of the oppressing group. It is wishful thinking to assume that Moses was immune to the comforts and privileges of his station in life.

There must have been times when Moses felt like a **traitor** to his people, especially as he relaxed on a hot day, a fine robe draping his body, servants offering him pomegranates, figs, and dates, while his people worked in the hot sun building pyramids. I wouldn’t doubt that sometimes Moses wept in silent helplessness as he tried to unravel the dilemma of appearing to be an Egyptian while knowing himself a Jew. He is a **stranger** in Egypt and a stranger to himself because he cannot live his true identity.

Nothing is so vital to psychological well-being as identity. Through **identity** we know our place in the world. If that identity is seriously divided or defined by a society as negative, we are insecure in the world and insecure in ourselves. Moses was possibly the first person in history to have to ask, Who am I? Everyone else in the ancient world knew.

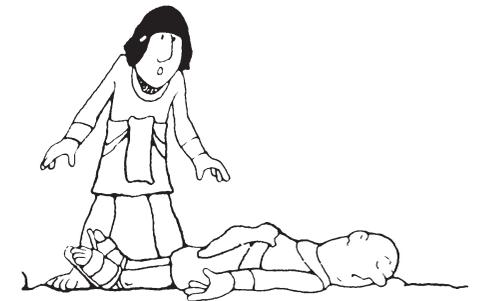
They knew because society conferred identity on them. Moses had no alternative but to confer identity on himself.

His first attempt to do so comes when he goes to face the suffering part of himself in the persons of his enslaved people. He looks on their burdens and weeps, saying *“Woe is me for you! Would that I could die for you.”* (Midrash Rabbah) He feels their suffering as his own. It is a moment of intense compassion, charged with the emotion of a life-and-death conflict. Because true compassion compels one to act, he does. He kills an Egyptian.

Psychologically he “kills” a hated part of himself. Moses projects his self-hatred outward onto one who most closely resembles that hated Egyptian part of himself. He wants to be a part of his people, and murdering an Egyptian was the way to come home. But this solution does not work adequately.

I imagine him looking at what he has done. He feels no exultation, no sense of freedom or wholeness. Instead, he is engulfed by remorse, shame, and guilt. He is more of a **stranger** now than he could have ever imagined possible.

(Julius Lester, Civil Rights Activist, U.S.A.)



Chronicles

**News
of the Past**

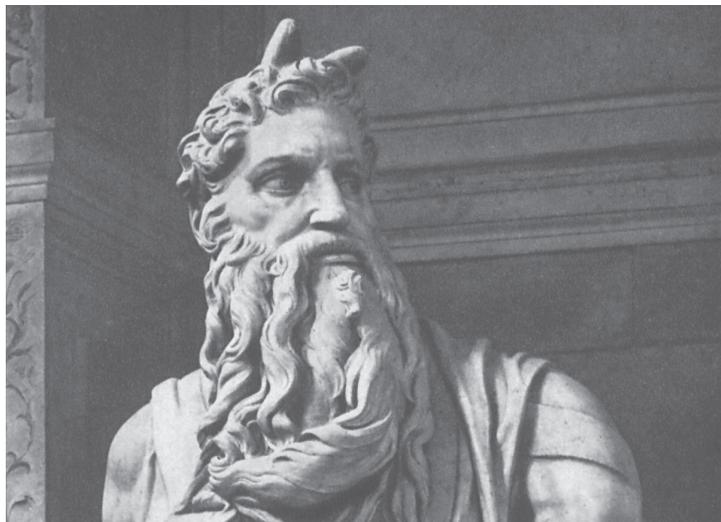
15 Aviv 2524 © The Reubeni Foundation

Dr. Israel Eldad and Moshe Aumann, Editors

WE QUIT EGYPT TODAY

Pharaoh gives in to Moses as 10th plague wipes out Kingdom's First-born.

Rameses, 15 Aviv — Moses' oft-repeated plea to Pharaoh Merneptah, to "let my people go," was finally heard today, just after midnight, when the king of Egypt, badly shaken by the death of his eldest son, not only agreed to Moses' request, but actually insisted that the Israelites leave the country immediately. Pharaoh had sent for the Israelite leaders as soon as word had reached him that all of Egypt's first-born — including Pharaoh's — had been "mysteriously" struck down at midnight.



Moses and Aaron had expected the call. They had left for Rameses several hours earlier, after Moses had told reporters: "The period of hag-

gling is over. This time we are going to tell Pharaoh briefly and precisely: Tonight we leave. And I think that this time Pharaoh will relent."

Pharaoh Capitulates

Merneptah, surrounded by his Council of Magicians, addressed Moses and Aaron in these words:

"Rise up and get you forth from among my people — you and the Children of Israel — and go serve Adonai as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds and be gone!"

But then Merneptah began to mention terms and limitations.

To the consternation of those

present, Moses dared to interrupt Pharaoh, as he curtly rejected all conditions. This was unprecedented in the palace, and contrary to the sacred protocol, in which Moses is well-versed.

Moses declared emphatically that he had been willing to discuss terms before God smote the land of Egypt — but not any more. A smitten people, he added, does not dictate terms; it has to accept them.

Sudden Death Strikes Men and Cattle

Last night, at the exact hour of midnight, God stretched out his hand against Egypt for the tenth time and struck down every first-born Egyptian son, from the first-born of Pharaoh to the first-born of the lowliest prisoner in the land. Even the first born among the cattle died.

It is difficult to describe the woe and wailing of the bereaved mothers and the terrible fear and sense of catastrophe that have descended upon Egypt. This night will be marked forever in the annals of Egypt as a night of indescribable horror and suffering.

Hebrews Spared

A summary check of Israelite homes in the Goshen province reveals that the Angel of Death, on his way to smite the sons of Egypt, passed over the families of the Hebrews and left them intact.

It seems the Children of Israel were under God's special protection tonight, for not only are all the firstborn sons still alive — but no Israelite died in the course of the night, even of so-called natural causes.



Kadesh
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"Chronicles"



Palace is Stormed by Egyptian Mobs

Rameses, 13 Aviv — A huge crowd yesterday staged a mass demonstration before the Palace of Merneptah. The demonstrators threw stones at the police and troops in an attempt to break through to the Palace.

Order of the Day Sons of Jacob: Tribes of Israel!

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. This day shall be unto you the first day of all days till the end of time. For today you have been delivered from slavery unto freedom. Today you have become a nation.

Egypt, with its taskmasters and its heathen beliefs, is behind you. In front of you is the desert, vast and terrible. But this terrifying wilderness leads to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the land of your fathers. Be not dismayed. For if you will remain faithful to the

covenant and willingly undertake all the sacrifices Adonai may exact from you — then He will allow no harm to come to you, and your enemy shall not overpower you.

As you have emerged today from bondage unto freedom, so shall you be free tomorrow in the land of your fathers.

Hear, O Israel: Adonai our God, Adonai is one!

MOSES, The Son of Amram

Exodus Instructions

1. All Israelites of military age are to report immediately to their respective tribes.
2. Each tribe will camp separately under its own standard.
3. Everyone is to follow the instructions of our police, so as to avoid crowding, and to arrange themselves speedily in the order prescribed.

600,000 Gathering at Succoth

The Children of Israel — 600,000 strong — are on the move. Under the leadership of Moses, the man of God, they are preparing to leave Egypt after a stay there of over 200 years, the last 86 years of which were spent in bitter slavery.

Hard to Believe!

How strange it all is, how difficult to believe! Only yesterday we were toiling for a cruel master; today we are free men, leaving the House of Bondage behind us forever, on our way to a new life — a life we have never before known.

Through the centuries we have not forgotten the land of Canaan and God's promise to our forefathers. The long years of servitude only strengthened our longing for liberty. These many months we have witnessed with our own eyes the signs and portents, as we have watched the powerful kingdom of Egypt, with its host of servants, its mighty army, and its cunning magicians, reel under the impact of the ten plagues.

Nonetheless it all seems like a dream. It seems as if our people, in their thousands and tens of thousands, were moving eastward, not of their own volition, but irresistibly, as

though bewitched by the inspired man who waved his magic wand and commanded us to go forth.

How shall we overcome the dangers threatening us on our path — the merciless desert, the turbulent sea, the powerful nations barring our way? How shall we traverse the desert, cross the sea, and conquer the promised land, when we are only a handful of tribes, unlearned in the arts of war and government?

We are an erring people, a nation of slaves without law or government; we are but wandering tribes, clans and families.

Moses, man of God, make us into a nation, give us the Law, guide our steps so that we shall not come to the Promised Land like a flock of sheep. We are ready — each tribe under its own standard, yet one people, descended from one ancestor, and believing in one God.

THE EDITORS