

# CEREMONY & CELEBRATION

..... FAMILY EDITION .....

THIS SERIES IS BASED ON THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF  
RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS זצ"ל



PESACH 5781

Educational content provided by Dr. Daniel Rose together with The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust

## Seder Night Companion

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

Rabbi Sacks זצ"ל explains that on the eve of the original Pesach, at the very moment when a new chapter in the life of the Jewish people began, we found out what it means to be a Jew: "About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators" (Radical Then, Radical Now, p. 32). Being a Jew means being both a student and an educator, and Seder night is our opportunity to focus on both these roles.

This educational companion to Seder night will give you some ideas and thoughts on several of the core pages from the Haggadah and how Rabbi Sacks understands them. As well as educational insights, like all *Ceremony & Celebration: Family Editions*, this Pesach instalment also includes activities, stories, and reflection questions in each section, designed to engage all the participants around your Seder table, young and old alike.

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



## MA NISHTANAH



### IN A NUTSHELL

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



### DEEP DIVE

The Torah has two words for inheritance, *yerushah* and *nachalah*, and they represent the two different ways in which a heritage is passed on across the generations. The word *nachalah* comes from the root *nachal*, which also means ‘river’. It represents an inheritance that is merely handed down, without any work on the part of the recipient, as water flows in a river. *Yerushah*, by contrast, means active inheritance. R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch pointed out that *lareshet*, the verbal form of *yerushah*, sometimes means ‘to conquer’ or ‘to capture’. It means actively taking hold of what one has been promised. An inheritance for which one has worked is always more secure than one for which one has not. That is why Judaism encourages children to ask questions. When a child asks, they have already begun the work of preparing to receive. Torah is a

*yerushah*, not a *nachalah*. It needs work on behalf of the child if it is to be passed on across the generations.

Commentary on Ma Nishtanah,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



### FURTHER THOUGHTS

Religious faith has often been seen as naive, blind, accepting. That is not the Jewish way. Judaism is not the suspension of critical intelligence. To the contrary: asking a question is itself a profound expression of faith in the intelligibility of the universe and the meaningfulness of human life. To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer. The fact that throughout history people have devoted their lives to extending the frontiers of knowledge is a compel-

ling testimony to the restlessness of the human spirit and its constant desire to go further, higher, deeper. Far from faith excluding questions, questions testify to faith – that history is not random, that the universe is not impervious to our understanding, that what happens to us is not blind chance. We ask not because we doubt, but because we believe.

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

**How is asking questions “an expression of faith”? Doesn’t it show a lack of faith?**



### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ASK AT YOUR SEDER

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



### A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

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

**Do you get more invested in learning when you are encouraged to ask questions?**





## IN A NUTSHELL

This is the beginning of the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah – the main section where we tell the story of the Exodus. It is also the start of the response to the questions asked in the *Ma Nishtanah*. Before we delve into the depths of the story of the Exodus itself, the Haggadah makes sure we realise how we are personally affected by this historical event. It reminds us that if not for the Exodus, we would still be slaves in Egypt! This passage also explains that the mitzvah of telling the story of Exodus is for everybody, (even the old and wise) and the story should be told at length to make it impactful.



## DEEP DIVE

One of the rules of telling the story on Pesach is that each person must feel as if they had personally left Egypt. History becomes memory. The past becomes the present. At this stage, therefore, we speak of the continuing consequences of the past. Had the Exodus not happened, and the Israelites stayed in

Egypt, none of the subsequent events of Jewish history would have occurred. What and where we are now is the result of what happened then.

There is a fundamental difference between *knowing* and *telling* the story. We do not tell the narrative of the Exodus to know what happened in the past. We do so because each telling engraves that event more thoroughly in our memories, and because each year adds its own insights and interpretations. Judaism is a constant dialogue between past and present, and since the present always changes, there is always a new juxtaposition, a new facet of the story. The Sages said, “There is no house of study without *chiddush*, some new interpretation.’ The story of Pesach never grows old, because the struggle for freedom never ends, and therefore each generation adds its own commentary to the old-new story.

Commentary on Avadim Hayinu,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



## FURTHER THOUGHTS

To be a Jew is to know that over and above history is the task of memory. As Jacob Neusner eloquently wrote: “Civilisation hangs suspended, from generation to generation, by the gossamer strand of memory. If only one cohort of mothers and fathers fails to convey to its children what it has learnt from its parents, then the great chain of learning and wisdom snaps. If the guardians of human knowledge stumble only one time, in their fall collapses the whole edifice of knowledge and understanding” (Neusner on Judaism: Religion and Theology). More than any other faith,

Judaism made this a matter of religious obligation. Pesach is where the past does not die, but lives in the chapter we write in our own lives, and in the story we tell our children.

History and Memory,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. Why does the Haggadah say, “We were slaves in Egypt”? Were you a slave in Egypt?
2. Do you like long stories? Why do you think the Haggadah tells us that the longer we make this story, the better?
3. Why does the Haggadah have to point out that old and wise people still have to do this mitzvah?



## EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

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

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



## THE FOUR CHILDREN



### IN A NUTSHELL

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



### DEEP DIVE

The four children are a vignette of the Jewish people. One asks because he wants to hear the answer. A second asks because he does *not* want to hear the answer. A third asks because he does not understand. The fourth does not ask because he doesn't understand that

he doesn't understand. Ours has never been a monolithic people.

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

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

The wise child will learn simplicity. Each draws strength from the others, as we all draw strength from belonging to a people.

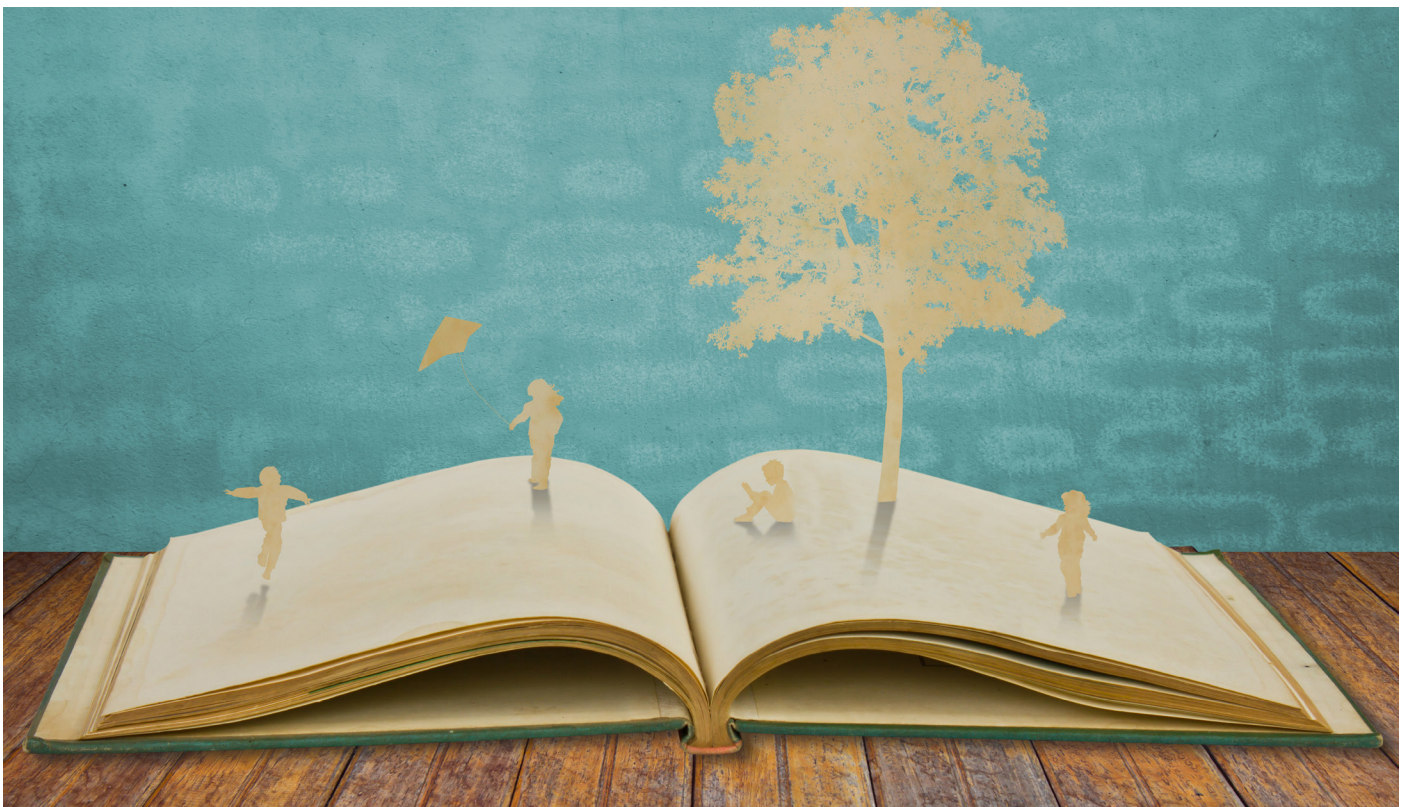
Commentary on The Four Children,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



### FURTHER THOUGHTS

Through the Haggadah, more than a hundred generations of Jews have handed on their story to their children. The word “*haggadah*” means “relate,” “tell,” “expound.” But it comes from another Hebrew root, [a-g-d] that means “bind,” “join,” “connect”. By reciting the Haggadah, Jews give their children a sense of connectedness to Jews throughout the world and to the Jewish people through time. It joins them to a past and





future, a history and destiny, and makes them characters in its drama. Every other nation known to humankind has been united because its members lived in the same place, spoke the same language, were part of the same culture. Jews alone, dispersed across continents, speaking different languages and participating in different cultures, have been bound together by a narrative, the Pesach narrative, which they tell in the same way on the same night. More than the Haggadah is the story of a people, Jews are the people of a story.

The Story of Stories,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. Which of the four children are you most like (you can answer more than one)?

2. What do you see as the message of including four different children in the Haggadah? What advice would you give to a teacher or parent who has many different types of children to teach?
3. Why do you think that children are the central focus of such an important event as Seder night?



### A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

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

When I started going to school, I couldn't sit still and focus for a minute. My mind would wander and then my

body would wander, and next thing I knew I was being told off, or worse, I would be sent to the Headteacher's office. I wasn't trying to be mischievous or rude. I just couldn't sit in one place for long.

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

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

**Do you see any of the four children in my story? Do you see any of them in your own story?**



## THE TEN PLAGUES



## IN A NUTSHELL

One of the most exciting and colourful parts of the story of the Exodus is the Ten Plagues. There is a custom to spill a drop of wine as we say the name of each plague. There are many reasons given for this, but the most beautiful is that of Abudraham, (a 14th century Rabbi from Spain who is best known for his commentary on the siddur), who interprets it in accordance with the verse, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls” (Proverbs 24:17). We give thanks for the miraculous plagues which brought our ancestors out of Egypt and granted them freedom, but at the same time, we also shed a symbolic tear for those who suffered.



## DEEP DIVE

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

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

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



## FURTHER THOUGHTS

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

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

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



## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. Why do you think God chose these particular plagues?
2. Which do you think was the worst of the Ten Plagues?
3. Who were the plagues really for?



## EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

How many of the plagues can you simulate at your Seder night?

Here are a few ideas (some may require preparation in the days before Seder night):

1. Blood: Spill a little blood onto everyone's plate, and /or (temporarily) confiscate all the bottles/jugs of water from the table.
2. Frogs: Get the children to jump around the table making “ribbit” frog noises.
3. Lice: Ask the children to check everyone's hair for lice. (If you plan this ahead of time, you could even plant some fake lice to find).
4. Wild animals: Collect all the stuffed animals in the house and place them around the table.
5. Pestilence: Throw all of the stuffed animals on the floor and then bury them under the table.
6. Boils: Using forks, give all your guests boils (be gentle!).
7. Hail: Have a snowball/hail fight with cotton balls, pillows, pre-prepared hail made from paper, or other soft materials.
8. Locusts: Have the children lead everyone in making a humming, buzzing noise, and then grow louder, like a swarm of locusts about to descend.
9. Darkness: Blindfold your guests (using scarves) and then try to play a game or continue with a section of the Haggadah.
10. The striking down of the firstborn: Gather all the firstborn children together and take them away.





### IN A NUTSHELL

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



### DEEP DIVE

Why is Shabbat specifically mentioned in *Dayeinu*?

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

as a goal, of a world at peace with itself, recognising the createdness, and thus the integrity, of all people and all forms of life. If Egypt meant slavery, Shabbat is collective freedom, a “foretaste of the World to Come.”

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

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



### FURTHER THOUGHTS

The Exodus was more than an event in the past. It was a precursor of redemption in the future. Israel, as Moses warned, would not dwell securely in its land. It would forget its moral and spiritual vocation. It would be attracted to the pagan culture of its neighbours. By so doing it would lose its reason for existence and find itself unable, at times of crisis, to summon the shared vision and collective energy needed to prevail against neighbouring imperial



ILLUSTRATION BY RINAT GILBOA, TAKEN FROM THE KOREN YOUTH HAGGADA  
(USED WITH PERMISSION OF KOREN PUBLISHERS JERUSALEM LTD.)

powers. It would suffer defeat and exile. But despair would never prevail. In the past, God had brought His people from slavery to freedom and from exile to the land, and therefore He would do so again. The Jewish people never completely lost faith in God, because its Prophets knew that God would never completely lose faith in His people. History intimated destiny. What happened once would happen again. That is what lies behind the words with which the Haggadah begins: “Now we are here; next year in the land of Israel. Now – slaves; next year we shall be free.” The Jewish people kept the vision alive. It is not too much to say that the vision kept the Jewish people alive ...

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

rebirth of Israel, the land, the state, the nation, and the people. Micah’s vision, and Ezekiel’s, and Moses’, came true.

Pesach and the Rebirth of Israel,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. Would it really have been “enough” if God had stopped at any of these stages?
2. What do you see as the message behind listing the 15 stages in *Dayeinu*?
3. Where do you think the story of the Exodus actually ends?



### A STORY FOR THE NIGHT OF STORIES

Natan Sharansky is a hero of the Jewish people. Growing up in the Soviet Union, when it was almost impossible to live a Jewish life, he knew the term

“Jew” only as something to hide. But then in 1967, following Israel’s dramatic victory in the Six-Day War, Jews began to reconnect to their ancestral faith with pride. Many began to dream of returning to their homeland but were prevented by the Soviet authorities. They became known as *refuseniks*. Sharansky, who was arrested at the age of 29 for his Zionist activities, was arguably the most famous *refusenik*, with thousands of people campaigning for his release from the Soviet Gulag prison system in Siberia. He gained his freedom in 1986 and realised his lifelong dream to immigrate to the State of Israel.

At the beginning of the coronavirus global pandemic, when many Jews around the world were facing the notion of a Pesach Seder without their family around the table for the first time, he was interviewed about his experience of Pesach in the Gulag. The Soviet authorities knew the importance of Seder night, and cruelly ensured that Sharansky was in solitary confinement, where he was served nothing but three pieces of dry bread and three cups of water per day.

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

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

**Will it be easier or harder for you to relate to the themes of Pesach during this year’s Seder, compared to other years?**

Prime Minister Shimon Peres welcomes Natan Sharansky at Ben-Gurion Airport following his release in 1986  
(PHOTO: NATI HARNIK, GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE)





## CHAD GADYA



### IN A NUTSHELL

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



### DEEP DIVE

The theme of *Chad Gadya* is the destructive cycle of vengeance and retaliation. In one interpretation, the young goat represents Israel. The "father" who bought it for two coins is God, who redeemed Israel from Egypt through His two representatives, Moses and Aaron. The cat is Assyria, which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. The dog is Babylonia, which defeated the southern kingdom of Judah. The stick is Persia, which replaced Babylonia as the imperial power in the sixth century BCE. The fire is the Greeks, who defeated the Persians in the days of Alexander the Great. The water is Rome, which superseded ancient Greece. The ox is Islam, which defeated the Romans in Palestine in the seventh century. The slaughterer is Christianity – specifically the Crusaders, who fought Islam in Palestine and elsewhere, murdering Jews on the way. The Angel of Death is the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine until the First World War. The song

concludes with an expression of faith that "this too shall pass" and the Jewish people will return to their land. So it has been in our days.

One Little Goat,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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

Commentary on Chad Gadya,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

**Living at the turn of the 21st century, do you feel this song and the message behind it is still relevant to Jewish history?**



### FURTHER THOUGHTS

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

I find it almost unbearably moving that a people that has known so much suffering can summon the moral courage to

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

One Little Goat,  
*The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*

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



### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND ASK AT YOUR SEDER

1. Why do you think we end the Seder with a song for children?
2. How do you think the message of the song is connected to the Seder night?
3. How does this song connect to our lives today?



### EXPERIENCING THE SEDER

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

## EDUCATIONAL COMPANION TO THE QUESTIONS

### MA NISHTANAH

1. Learning through questions makes the educational process engaging and empowering for the learner.
2. Any question asked from a desire for knowledge without secondary agenda is a good question. There are no bad questions in this case.
3. Not all questions have answers, or at least answers that we as finite humans can find or understand. Some questions only the infinite God can answer. But we don't stop asking the questions. The questions are more important than the answers.

### AVADIM HAYINU

1. As a nation, we have a national memory and identity. So when the Haggadah speaks of our experience in Egypt as slaves, while this refers to a specific generation and historical time period, as a nation we have that experience implanted in our memory and identity. The Haggadah encourages us to re-experience this every year on Seder night, and *Avadim Hayinu* reminds us that the experience does impact us directly, for if God had not redeemed us, we would be slaves ourselves to this day.
2. A good story told well can have a big impact. A powerful story is experiential, in that the listener can imagine they are living the story, or at least empathise and identify with the characters. The longer and more detailed the story is, the more chance this will happen. So the Haggadah encourages us to tell the story at length, and engage with it, so we can experience the story as fully as possible.
3. Because Seder night is not about "learning" or "reading" or "understanding" but rather about experiencing and living the story, the Haggadah tells us that even wise and experienced people who have done this many times before still have to tell the story. Because each year it is a new experience.

### THE FOUR CHILDREN

1. Obviously all answers are legitimate, but in the ensuing discussion it is worth encouraging everyone to realise that each of us is all of the four children at different times in our lives (or even at different times of the day!)
2. All children are different and have different educational needs. Insightful parents and teachers realise this and try their hardest to cater to those individual needs.
3. Children are the main focus of the evening because this night more than any other is when we pass on our national heritage to the next generation. Even though the process of learning about and re-experiencing the Exodus is a task which takes a lifetime, it begins when we are children, laying the foundation of our Jewish identity and allowing the national narrative to become part of our very core. We take our cue from the Torah itself, which focuses on the questions children will ask about the Exodus.

### THE TEN PLAGUES

1. Each plague attacked a different aspect of the Egyptian society's physical and spiritual needs. The Egyptians could probably have managed without one or two or even more of the elements that were attacked, but this was a systematic destruction of their way of life.
2. Every plague was terrible and designed to attack a different aspect of Egyptian society and cause problems. If you have to choose one... it doesn't get more terrible than the final plague.
3. God could have taken the Israelites out of Egypt without any miracles or fuss. But He chose to take the Egyptians on an educational journey, because the process was important. And even more important than the direct impact on the Egyptians was the impact on the world who was watching (or at least heard reports) and effect on the Israelites themselves. The plagues were as much for these other groups as they were for Pharaoh and the Egyptians, if not more so.

### DAYEINU

1. Full redemption from Egypt was the establishing of a sovereign nation in the Promised Land, with the Temple at the centre of its religious life. If God had stopped short of this at any of the previous stages, then it would not have been complete redemption.
2. The message behind *Dayeinu* is that each individual stage was miraculous and magnificent, and worthy of praise and gratitude.
3. While the physical redemption ended with the liberation from slavery and leaving the geographical boundaries of Egypt, and the spiritual redemption took place at the Giving of the Torah on Sinai, the full religio-social redemption was only achieved once the Jews entered the Land of Israel and built a society there based on the Torah.

### CHAD GADYA

1. The whole of the Seder is focused on children, and on transmitting our heritage to the next generation. This song (and the others at the conclusion of the Seder) are fun to sing, and also contain a strong educational message. A great way to end the Seder night journey.
2. The message of *Chad Gadya* is that while it may seem during our history that there are powerful forces who will dominate and even destroy us, these forces come and go, and only God decides who survives in the long term. And if you consider Jewish history, it is clear that He has decided that the Jewish people have a destiny to fulfil, and therefore we have outlasted all these powerful nations who have tried to destroy us.
3. Modern Jewish history reflects this same message. In the 20th century, an enemy of the Jewish people came closer than ever before to wiping them out, yet not only did the Jewish people survive, but in fact just three years later returned to their ancestral homeland, and re-established sovereignty there, and are now thriving like never before. We are part of a generation that is living the fulfilment of the message of this song.

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