מה נשתנה

a seder guide

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The Y'min group would like to dedicate it as a memorial to our late and dearly loved colleague:

RABBI IVOR ABRAMS, may the memory of the righteous be for blessing.

לזכר נשמת הרב ישראל
ליב בן רב חנה הכהן זצ"ל

May our work always be inspired by his example,
of kindness, dedication, and devotion to the community.

We would also like this work to stand in memory of:

MRS RENE BERGER
MRS HANNAH BROER
MR HARRY COOPER
MRS ANNIE COOPER
MR DAVID GARFIELD
MRS DORIS GINGOLD
MRS REBECCAH GOLDBERG
MRS YETTA GRANDITER
MR BILL MARCOVITCH
MRS SARAH RUBIN

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Y'min ימין

the young ministers' group

What is Y'min?

Y'min is a group of young rabbis and ministers who have been meeting regularly for a while to try and break the spiritual deadlock in our mainstream synagogues. We come together to learn, to share ideas, to stimulate one another, to stop ourselves from becoming too set in our ways. We are united in our desire to communicate the sense of excitement that we feel in our Judaism. We have no formal organisation, no hierarchy, no agreed agenda of policies. Perhaps all we have in common is the knowledge that Anglo-Jewish orthodoxy is not as creative as it should be. And we want to do something about it. We want to liberate some of our own energies as teachers, communicators, creators of visions. We want to show that as leaders we can lead. There is a list of our members at the foot of this page.

Why haven't we heard about Y'min before?

For one thing, we have not been in existence for very long. We haven't even told the Jewish Chronicle. For another, we have no desire to make news, strike postures, be controversial. This is our first offering to our collective congregants. We hope you enjoy it.

Why this book?

Well, we had to start somewhere. And Pesach is the Jewish time for beginnings. It is, according to one view, when the world was born. More specifically, it is a time of exodus, of leaving one situation for another. In our case, a symbolic goodbye to the bondage of the minister to convention and committee, and out into the uncharted wilderness of taking our own initiatives. In the course of time, you will have to be the judge of how far we have succeeded.

How was it produced?

In a hurry. It is very much a first effort on our part, and had we had more time we would have made it better. It will,with God's help, be followed by many other projects. We hope that each venture will be a double learning-experience, for us in the writing, for you in the reading. In fact we hope for more than that: that you will yourself tell us what you would like to learn about, and we will try to meet your requests.

It has been produced entirely by ourselves. We avoided typesetting to save money and time. It is, more importantly, very much a collective effort. If you find something in it that you don't like, don't blame anyone individually. The buck, if it stops anywhere, stops with us as a group.

What is it about?

It isn't a conventional Haggada companion. It isn't a series of footnotes to the Pesach story. It isn't full of learned information. Next year, perhaps. What it is is an attempt to stimulate discussion around the seder table, to make you think a little about what happened and why, and to reflect on the problems of the Jewish present in a Pesach-dik way. It isn't only the five great rabbis who talked through the night in Bnei Brak. It should be all of us. Losing our sense of time, immersed in the story which is the story of us all.

The Y'min Group: *Rabbi M. Benzaquen; Rev. M. Berkovitch; Rev. Dr. J. Cohen; Rev. D. Freedman; Rev. Dr. N. Gale; Rabbi P. Ginsbury; Dr. L. Glinert; Rabbi B. Goldberg; Rabbi J. Grunewald; Rabbi C. Harris; Rabbi E. Jackson; Rev. B. Kass; Rabbi Dr. A. Levy; Rabbi A. Plancey; Rabbi B. Rabinowitz; Rabbi J. Sacks; Rev. M. Salasnik; Rev. G. Schneider; Rabbi S. Silberg; Rev. L. Tann; Rabbi Z. Unsdorfer.*

הגדה

In every generation, says the Mishna, each person should see himself as if he had himself gone forth out of Egypt. Haggada means: telling the story of that liberation. But more than that it means reliving it. This - the matza we hold in our hand - is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate. It is not a mere symbol. It is nothing less than the taste that they tasted. If the Holy One,blessed be He, had not brought our fathers out of Egypt, we say, we would still be there. Slaves. We recline,as noblemen once did, to do more than say we are free. To show we are free. That is why this night is different. For we have a duty every day and every night to mention the going out from Egypt in our prayers. But tonight it is more than mention or memory. It is telling the story as if it were our story.

And so it has,amongst the commands,a peculiar place. Although we have a text of the Haggada, the more we elaborate upon it, the further we question and search, the more we are to be praised. Above all, we are bound to tell the story to our children. Again and again the Torah stresses that they will ask and we will have to answer. They must feel that there is something different about tonight. They must feel the need to ask. So that more even than we want to teach, they will want to learn. The worst response there can be is that of the wicked son: What does all this mean to you? If he does not feel personally involved in our history, we have failed. As we have failed if we do not feel involved.

There are two faces of God, two poles of our religious experience. There is the God of the soul. And there is the God of history. The same God revealing Himself in different ways. Of course,we try to find Him at every time, in every place. Perhaps we succeed. But none of us succeeds completely. But at two times of the year each of us is assured that we will, if we do our part of the preparation, meet God. On Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we meet the God of the soul. On Pesach we meet the God of history. To prepare to meet the God of the soul: this is repentance. To prepare to meet the God of history: this means, telling the story.

Our story. The story of the going out. Strange that the going out from Egypt should dominate the Jewish mind, rather than the coming in to Israel. But going out is always where Judaism begins. The going out of Abraham from his birthplace and his father's house. The going out of Moses from life as an Egyptian prince to identification with the sufferings of his brothers. The going out from many Egypts through the long night of exile. To each generation Pesach has taken on its own special meaning as a commentary on the Jewish present: as hope for the future or thanks for the past.

The question is always: where is our place on this map of Jewish wanderings? Where are we going out from? And where are we going to? As we sit as families round the seder table it is a time for reflection and honesty. A time to give an adult answer to the questions of a child.

ארבע כוסות

The four cups: *Everyone is obligated to drink four cups of wine at the seder, each at its appropriate place in the Haggada. Even the poorest must be provided with the means to buy sufficient wine; and if the community does not provide, then he must sell something or borrow for the sake of the command. Someone who does not normally drink wine must nonetheless force himself on this occasion, so long as it will not be dangerous for him.*

Why the four cups? Rabbi Jochanan said: they correspond to the four stages of deliverance: "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements; and I will take you to me as a people ..." [Exodus 6:6-7].

R.Joshua ben Levi said: they correspond to the four cups of Pharaoh [the four times that Pharaoh's cup is mentioned in the story of the dream of the butler in prison, and Joseph's interpretation - Gen. 40:11-13].

R.Levi said: they correspond to the four empires that were to oppress the Jews: the Baylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans.

Others say that they represent the four cups of future retribution; or that they are the four cups of consolation that will eventually be granted to the Jewish people. Or that they stand for the four stages of Jewish history: 1. the choice of Abraham; 2. the exodus from Egypt; 3. the preservation of the Jewish people throughout long periods of exile; 4. the ultimate redemption in the Messianic Age.

Yet others say that the three key commands of Pesach - the Paschal lamb, the matza and the maror - represent the three fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; while the four cups are the four mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, for it was in their merit that we were redeemed.

Perhaps too they suggest the four merits in virtue of which, says the Midrash, the Israelites were saved: 1. that they did not change their names while in Egypt; 2. they did not change their language; 3. they were not wanton; 4. there were no betrayers.

The fifth cup: *In some texts of the Talmud mention is made in the name of Rabbi Tarfon that a fifth cup should be drunk at the seder. Ravad suggests that it reperesents the fifth stage of deliverance, "And I will bring you into the land" [Ex.6:8]. But there was great argument about this fifth cup. Some authorities held that it was obligatory; others that it was desirable; others that it was optional; others that it was wrong to drink more than four. Since the question was not settled, the custom arose to pour out a fifth cup, but not to drink it. When the rabbis had a question that could not be resolved, they would leave it to be answered in due course by the prophet Elijah. And that is how the cup which was filled but not drunk became known as Elijah's cup.* [L.T.]

לחמא עניא

This is
The bread of affliction
Our fathers ate
In the land of Egypt.

This is the bread of affliction: *There was the matza of slavery and the matza of freedom. Now, at the beginning of the seder, we see ourselves as slaves back in Egypt. And so we speak of it as the bread of affliction. The bread given to slaves because it is harder to digest, and therefore staves off hunger longer than ordinary bread. In the early middle ages, Abraham Ibn Ezra testified that on his travels to India he was given only unleavened bread for that reason.*

We have just broken the middle matza in two, again to show that we are like poor men who eat their bread in small pieces to conserve their rations. The rabbis also translated lechem oni as 'the bread of answering' - the bread over which we answer the questions that begin the Haggada. Only later, when we have told the story of our enslavement and freedom, do we lift the matza and describe it as the bread we ate in haste when leaving Egypt. The bread of a rapid flight to freedom; the bread which did not have time to rise.

Ha or keha? *There are two texts. Some say: "This is the bread of affliction"; others that "this is like the bread of affliction". The Maggid of Dubnov, as was his custom, illustrated the difference with a story:*

There was once a poor man who went from town to town selling his goods in a losing struggle to earn a living. Eventually he came to a town where business was better, and from that day his fortunes improved until in time he became a rich man. He decided, in his thankfulness, to commemorate each year the day on which his luck changed for the better. He would dress in his clothes that he once wore as a poor man; and he would make great festivities and give gifts to his children. One day his luck changed,

this time for the worse. And he was soon reduced for a second time to poverty. He had nothing left but his old clothes. His children, seeing him dressed in rags, thought that the yearly celebrations had come round again, and they pressed their father for their gifts. He had to tell them with a deep sigh that this time it was different. I used, he said, to dress up like a poor man. But now I really am a poor man. And so - concluded the Maggid - it is with us. Once we had a Temple and we could look back upon our exile in Egypt and say: This is like the bread of affliction. But now we are in exile again, and we must say in sadness: This is the bread of affliction.

Whoever is hungry let him come and eat: *For this year we are all slaves; and so let no-one be ashamed to come and share our food. Perhaps it was originally the custom to make this announcement in the synagogue before*

the seder began. Others suggest that it is a reassurance to guests who have been invited home from the synagogue, that they are genuinely welcomed. An insistence on hospitality and charity has long been associated with Pesach. In the time of the Mishna money was to be provided from communal funds for all the poor to have wine for the four cups. There is an ancient custom of collecting maot chittim, money with which to provide the needy with their Pesach requirements.

There is,in the very invitation, a sense of being-in-exile. Not only in the sentiment that "now we are here, but next year may we be in Israel", but in the very possibility of inviting unexpected guests. For, when the Temple stood, no last-minute additions were allowed to be made to the people who had joined together to purchase a Pesach sacrifice. Now our very exile forces us to share our portion; and teaches us that "charity hastens the redemption".

The model is always Abraham. The man who would sit at the door of his tent, however old and ill he was, waiting for guests. Once three visitors arrived: he ran to invite them in. We know,with the wisdom of hindsight, that they were angels. Could it be that ever since, this has given the Jew a certain excitement in fulfilling the command of hachnasat orchim, of hospitality? The suspicion that one day an unexpected guest will turn out to be the prophet Elijah, announcing the end of our waiting to be redeemed?

מה נשתנה

If there is no-one else to ask, one must ask oneself the questions. Even if one is a sage. The reason is simple. The rabbis wanted us to pursue our questioning as far as possible. For there are many things about the laws of Pesach, as about other Jewish laws, that are on the face of it difficult to understand. And if we left our questions unpursued the laws would come to seem to us as lacking in sense, and in time we would think lightly of them. That is why we must train ourselves to ask about every detail that catches our eye. If the laws were simple the sages would not have stayed up all night expounding them. And shall we do less? [Tsofenat Pane'ach]

Why is this command, of telling the story of the exodus, different from all others? The Bible insists: "You shall tell your son on that day"; "And when your son asks you in the future ..." Why do we need, not to tell ourselves but our children? Why does the whole seder turn upon the naive questions of a child? Because a child has what we lack, and what we need on this of all nights. A child has the innocence of imagination. If we would tell him the story, to him it would seem real; as clear as today. He shames our sophistication, our world-weary wisdom. We cannot fulfil the command of seeing ourselves as if we had been there, without the help of a child. That is how the oldest of all religious memories has always stayed young. Civilisation always destroys the sense of wonder. The mah nishtanah restores it.

עבדים היינו

We were slaves
To Pharaoh in Egypt;
But the Lord our God brought us out
With a strong hand and an outstretched arm.

In the Mah Nishtanah the child has asked about specifics: the small details which catch his attention. Why the matza? Why the bitter herbs? Why the dippings and the reclining? But the adult's reply - "We were slaves ..." - focusses on the wider historical issues which brought the festival into being: Egypt, slavery, God's deliverance.

If the child expected a direct answer to his four questions he would be disappointed. We do indeed, much later on, explain the meaning of the 'Pesach,Matza and Maror'. But we want first to show the child that behind these symbols lie deeper truths. We try to expand his horizon. To give him a sense of the historical background: "For if the Holy One blessed be He had not redeemed our fathers from Egypt, then we and our children and our childrens' children would still be in servitude to Pharaoh in Egypt".

With subtle insight the Avadim Hayyinu tells the child something of crucial importance: that it was the exodus from Egypt that began the long relationship between God and Israel; that without it Israel would never have been liberated from the worship of Egyptian gods; without it God would never have become God of the Jewish people and through them, of mankind. Deep ideas,which we must try to make the child see mean something to him.

Perhaps it is because the Avadim Hayyinu does not directly answer the child, that we add: "Whoever tells about the exodus at length is praiseworthy". We admit to the child that we have not answered his four questions, but that deeper study and further discussion would provide the answers.

There have,though,been commentators who read the Avadim Hayyinu as a point-by-point answer to the Mah Nishtanah. [1] We were slaves - *explains why we eat only bitter herbs, because of the bitterness of servitude; [2]* to Pharaoh in Egypt - *a harsh king in a harsh land, explains why we recline at having broken loose from these double fetters; [3]* But the Lord our God brought us out - *explains why we eat only Matza because of the rushed manner of the departure; [4]* With a strong hand and an outstretched arm - *a double expression of deliverance which accounts for the two dippings. [Vilna Gaon]*

The opening verse of Avadim Hayyinu is taken from Deut.6:21, where we are told to give this as the reply to the Jewish child if he asks at any time the meaning of Jewish law and practise. Not only or specifically on Pesach. This further underlines the sense in which the exodus is central to the whole of Judaism. Many of the basic religious principles of Judaism have this as their explanation, that they are zecher liytsiat mitzrayim, built upon the memory of the exodus.

Had the Holy One blessed be He not brought our fathers out from Egypt, we and our children and their children would still be Pharaoh's

slaves - *this suggests another idea: that so deeply entrenched were the Israelites in the corruptions of Egypt [they had reached, say the rabbis, the 49th of the 50 gates of impurity] that had God not brought us out, our merits would not have sufficed to make us worthy of being saved. This points out for all times a faith beyond pessimism or despair. Even if we are unworthy, the promise eternally remains: that God will rescue us, for His name's sake.* [J.C.]

מתחיל בגנות

"Begin with the shameful,the negative,part of our history; and end with praise." *This is the Mishnaic rule for how to tell the Pesach story. Rav and Shmuel, the Talmudic sages, differed as to what was the shame and what the praise. For Rav we were to begin by describing how our ancestors were originally idolators, and culminate by describing how God brought us near to His service. For Shmuel we were to begin by saying that we were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; but God brought us out with a mighty hand. The disagreement, perhaps, was about the nature of the exodus. Was it to be seen primarily as spiritual liberation from idolatry or as political liberation from slavery?*

For Shmuel the exodus is seen in close-up. It begins with slavery in Egypt and ends with the hasty departure of the Israelites after the tenth plague. For Rav the exodus is part of a much longer spiritual drama, stretching back to the days before Abraham, when Terach, his father, worshipped idols; stretching forwards too to the day when the Israelites stood at the foot of Sinai and heard the voice of God.

In fact we say both passages. First that of Shmuel,in Avadim Hayyinu, then later that of Rav in the passage which starts, "At first our fathers worshipped idols." For both points of view are true. The going out of Egypt was both a going out and a going to. Going out from physical slavery. Going to the spiritual liberation of Sinai. Nonetheless we place first the physical liberation. Perhaps because while there are still Jews who are enslaved, the victims of tyranny,oppression, hate, we must emphasise above all the need for political freedom.

There is something ironic about saying,immediately after the Mah Nishtanah, "Once we were slaves", when just beforehand,in the Ha Lachma Anya we said the opposite: Now we are slaves, next year let us be free. Are we still slaves? Or was that strictly in the past? Perhaps the point can be put best in a story:

There was once a king who decided to pay a visit to one of the prisons in his realm. Amongst the prisoners there was one who caught his eye as being a man out of place. The man protested his innocence; the king decided to investigate his case; it turned out that he was telling the truth; and he was set free. The man was doubly grateful: he rejoiced not only in his freedom but in his restored sense of justice.

One day though, forgetting everything, he committed a crime, was tried and found guilty, and thrown once again into prison. From time to time the king, unseen, would pay a visit to the prison; and he would hear the man saying to himself: Now I am here, but next year I will be free. The king knew that this is what all prisoners say. And he would pass on. But one night he came and heard the man say to himself: Today is the anniversary of the freedom the king once granted to me,and even now that I languish here I rejoice to remember it. The king, overcome with the memory and with the man's undiminished gratitude, preserved not only in freedom but even in renewed imprisonment, issed a royal pardon. And the man was set free again. This time he did not forget; and ever after he was loyal to the king's laws.

So may it be with us.

וכל המרבה לספר

"The more one tells about the going out from Egypt, the more he is to be praised".

It is not enough just to tell the story. Here, brevity is not the soul of wit. Tonight the story must be elaborated at length. The more, the better. Why? Firstly, so that the story should not be just history. It is our duty to see ourselves as if we were there. Etching each detail on the memory. Secondly, by asking questions, to try to penetrate to deeper meanings. There is after all a duty to mention the going out from Egypt every day and night: "That you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life" [Deut. 9:3]. Tonight the duty is more than that: to speak at length and to ask.

Is the story, after all, so straightforward? Why did the Israelites have to suffer enslavement in Egypt? It did not just happen. It was predicted long before to Abraham, whom God told: "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land not theirs,and shall serve them ... and afterward they shall come out with great wealth" [Gen.15: 13-14]. Was the time in Egypt a punishment? If so, for what sin and by whom? If it was not a punishment, what purpose did it serve? Why did Providence lead Joseph to great rank in Egypt, only to have his and his brothers' children cast down? Were the Israelites unable to appreciate true freedom without first tasting slavery? If so, did they really learn their lesson? Did they not, in the wilderness, often want to be back in Egypt again?

The questions multiply. Is the matza we eat "the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt", or is it the bread of haste that they ate hurrying towards freedom? Are we

supposed to see ourselves back in Egypt? If so, why the symbols of freedom, the wine, the reclining? Are we meant to see ourselves as free? If so, why still the bitter herbs? Why did R.Yose, R.Eliezer and R.Akiva delight in multiplying the number of plagues that befell the Egyptians at the Red Sea? What do we mean when we say that had God performed some of the miracles but not all,dayyenu? Would it have been enough not to have had the sea divided? Would it have been enough to have brought us to Mt Sinai and then not to have given us the Torah? Would it have been enough to have been led out of Egypt and not given the land of Israel?

Thinking of the meaning of the exodus can raise conflicts and seeming contradictions. But the Haggada encourages us to face them. We are told to talk them through. Each time,we should see something new. For in Judaism being in doubt is not taboo. So long as we search in earnest for an answer. And so long as we realise that our knowledge and understanding are limited. Not finding an answer does not mean that there is none to be found.

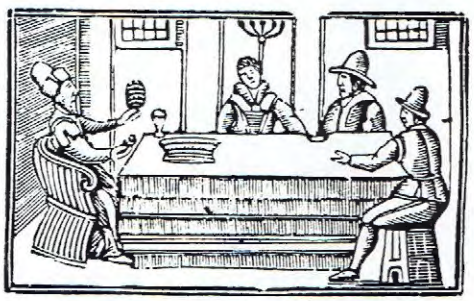
The rabbis said: the person who is shy to ask does not learn [Ethics of the Fathers 2:6]. This, then, is the first principle of the Haggada: learning to grapple with our doubts.

There is a further sense as well. Perhaps we should translate the instruction as "the more one speaks out about the exodus the more he is praised". The Torah draws from the exodus the lesson that we should not wrong or oppress others,"for you know the heart of the stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt" [Ex. 23:9]. We must always be in the forefront of those who speak out against the oppression of others.

There is a third sense of speaking out. There is a great psychological need to talk through the conflicts we face, in our religion, our marriages, our children, our whole network of personal problems. Conflicts are rarely resolved without communication. Lack of communication is often what started them in the first place.

The family grouped together round the seder table, spanning the generations, and sharing the discussion, is the model of how things should be in the Jewish home. And the Haggada proceeds by telling us about the five great rabbis who stayed up the whole night in Bnei Brak, so immersed in the discussion that they did not notice the dawn. They were all great, learned and experienced men. But as people, each was different: a different background, outlook, views and feelings. Each was able to learn from the others. Perhaps they too had their conflicts and doubts. Sitting together and speaking as friends, perhaps they too had their spiritual burden eased. *[G.S.]*

four sons



A conversation piece

The characters: four brothers:

Chayim - *the bright spark of the family. First class honours in maths. Two years at an Israeli yeshiva. Religious. Works in computing. Wants, eventually, to go on aliyah. Obviously, a chacham.*

Roger - *an up-and-coming advertising executive. Will go far, probably further than is polite. Drives a sports-car. Especially on Shabbat. Jewish commitment minimal, but doesn't want to offend the family by not coming to seder. A bit of a rasha.*

Tom - *studying at yeshiva in England. Very religious. Has shied away from any higher secular education. Firm, but a little naive, in his religious beliefs.*

Shelley - *younger than the rest and still at school. A floating Jew: goes along with the tide. Goes to shul but finds it boring. Doesn't feel strongly enough about Judaism one way or another to make any major decision about it. He is our she'eno yodea lish'ol, who doesn't quite know what to ask.*

Ch. *It seems to me that the Pesach story raises the questions of our time. There were the Israelites, wanting more than anything else a quiet life. There were the Egyptians, persecuting the Jews even when it was manifestly against their interest to carry on doing so. And there was Moses, trying to persuade each of them in turn that there was some higher meaning to what was going on. In the end it took the strong hand of God to get the Israelites out, because both the Israelites and the Egyptians kept ignoring the real message of what was going on around them. And here we are, all of us, born after the holocaust and the birth of Israel - the two most epic events since the fall of the second Temple - and we are doing the same all over again. Acting as if nothing had happened. Wanting a quiet life. We are still not without our modern-day Egyptians. What we don't have is a Moses. That's why, Roger, I think you're fooling yourself. You can't live your life as if you weren't a Jew. It wouldn't have convinced Pharaoh, or Haman, or Hitler. I admit that you have never found anything inspiring in Judaism. But that's because you never looked for a Moses, a real teacher. But like it or not, after the holocaust, any Jew outside Israel is living in Egypt. He can't close his eyes to history.*

R. *Chayim, I agree with you. History has a meaning. It's just that you are reading it the wrong way. The way I look at it,for the last two thousand years it isn't the others who have suffered the plagues: it's been us. One persecution after another. And we've been stubborn like the Egyptians: we've refused to let our Jewish identity go. We were wrong,and I for one have taken the message. I don't want any children of mine to grow up branded and stigmatised. I don't want anyone, least of all them, even to know they are Jews. I can't help what I was born into; but I can see to it that my children are not born with my dis-advantage. And when we read that bit in the Haggada about the wicked son: "if he had been there, he would not have been saved" - it didn't set my teeth on edge. On the contrary. Had I been there I would have preferred not to have been saved. Saved for what? For the wilderness? For a religion that would only have made me feel guilty every time I did something wrong? For a history of suffering? No thanks. I would rather have stayed there and waited for a more philo-semitic Pharaoh, and I would have brought up my children as well-behaved Egyptians.*

T. *Frankly, I don't understand either of you. You can argue about the message of history all night, but what difference does it make? We are Jews, we have mitzvot to keep, and it has been the same all along, in the times when we prospered as a people, and even when we have been under sentence of death as a people. When I learn chumash, I'm back in the wilderness;*

when I learn Mishnah, I'm with Rabbi Judah the Prince in second-century Israel; when I learn Gemarra I'm in Babylon; and when I read Rashi I'm in medieval France. When I put on tefillin I am doing what Jews have done throughout history and in every corner of the world. History and geography, time and place, don't mean anything to Judaism. All that matters is learning and doing. What I don't understand about you, Roger, is how you really think you can get any happiness out of the life you lead. Money and success are fine now, but what about in ten years' time, or twenty? And as for you, Chayim, why you have to ask so many questions is beyond me. I don't see why you have to relate Judaism to issues of our time. Frankly, the less Judaism has to do with 'our time' the better. You should never have gone to university.

Sh. *I think Chayim and Roger have a point. But what puzzles me is this. Chayim talks about the religious meaning of events. But: if the hand of God was in the setting up of the State of Israel, then where was God at Auschwitz? And if God wasn't at Auschwitz, when He was needed, what makes us think He has anything to do with Israel? You can't answer questions like that - so what's the point of asking them?*

Ch. *The point of asking is to make us realise that, one way or another, a Jew today has to live his life as if he were about to leave Egypt. I don't claim to have the answers. Perhaps it would be impious even to suggest an explanation of the holocaust. But two things are as clear as day. One: after Auschwitz no Jew can risk the gamble of assimilation. We can't decide to make ourselves at home in a non-Jewish world. Two: now that there is a state of Israel, there is somewhere for a Jew to feel at home. I admit, I am still here. I haven't gone on aliyah yet. I hope one day I will. But even while I'm here in England, something has changed for our generation. We must be aware that we are Jews. We can't hide from history. And if all that means is that we mix socially with other Jews, or that we give donations to Israel, then we are trivialising something which must not be trivialised if we are not all to end up like Roger. That is why I went to Israel, and to yeshiva, to study. That is why I keep my Judaism. If being Jewish meant enough, to the Nazis, to kill for, then it must mean enough for me to live for. If not, then we will have been guilty of making the holocaust meaningless.*

R. *I don't see how anything you or any other Jew can do, can change the past. I sympathise with the secular Zionists. They don't believe in God. They just believe in defending themselves in their own country, because they don't think that anyone else will do it for them: man or God. I think they are right. But on the other hand I don't see why I should join them. I think I can defend myself better by quietly letting everyone forget I am a Jew. It's easier that way, and more comfortable, and I don't see anything wrong with enjoying life.*

T. *I think you have a point, Roger. I think Chayim worries too much. I don't feel the need to go on aliyah. Frankly, I think Judaism is stronger in Golders Green or Gateshead than in Israel. The job of a Jew is to keep to the Torah, wherever he is. And he should live amongst other Jews who do the same, wherever they happen to be. I think that the holocaust is a problem for Jews who put their faith in assimilation. But for orthodox Jews it is no easier and no harder to understand than any of the other sufferings we have been through. Our duty is to have faith and not ask questions. Your trouble, Roger, is simply your yetser hora, your superficial attitude towards pleasure. If you would try and keep your mania for pleasure in check and learn what it is to davven properly, to keep a mitzvah with the right intentions, if you simply owned up for once to having a soul, then I think we might make*

a frum Jew out of you yet.

Sh. *All of this just confuses me. Tom enjoys his Judaism - good for him. Roger, according to Tom, doesn't know what he's missing. But it obviously doesn't worry Roger, who seems to me to be having a good time. Chayim argues that the past imposes a duty on Jews to be Jews. Roger says that the past teaches us that we should give up Judaism as a gamble that went wrong. You can't all be right. I give up.*

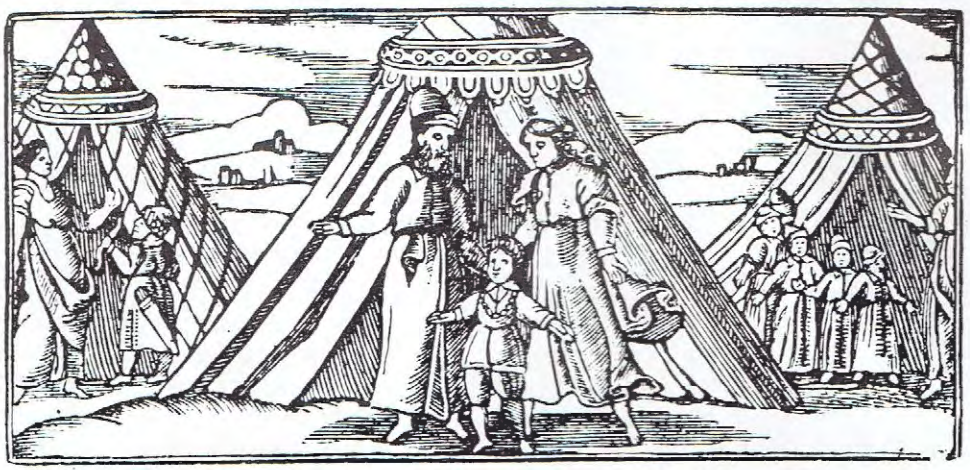
Ch. *Well, then, a toast: Next year in Jerusalem.*

R. *Next year in Chelsea.*

T. *Next year in Stamford Hill.*

Sh. *Next year, still, in doubt.*

ארבעה בנים



Educational insights based on The Four Sons

Four sons, each different. The Haggada describes how three of them ask their questions, while the fourth remains silent.

[1] The wise son asks, "What are the testimonies, statutes and laws which the Lord our God has commanded you?" By calling Him 'our' God he declares himself to be a member of the congregation of Israel. His question is evidence of a desire to learn, and of an analytical mind. We must try to see that he is given the kind of Jewish education that will further stimulate him, and that will keep Torah study at the heart of his general intellectual development.

[2] The second son asks, "What is this service to you?" In effect he is placing a distance between himself and the Jewish community. He would rather assimilate and deny four thousand years of Jewish history. His question does not really seek an answer. It is more an expression of scorn.

[3] The third son is called simple. This means: he asks, but in his limited comprehension he cannot fully grasp the depth of the issues his question raises. He deserves a gentle reply, in keeping with his understanding: do not speak above him, but to him.

[4] The fourth son does not yet know how to ask. His powers of understanding are undeveloped. But the point of the Haggada here is: no child is ever too young to be nurtured into the ways of Torah Judaism. In a recent report on illiteracy, Professor Bullock suggested that parents should begin to talk to their babies from birth - "bathe your baby with words". It is an insight that Judaism shares.

The Haggada stresses the differences between children at their various stages of development. How is this related to recent findings in psychology?

It is known that children constantly develop their attitudes throughout their growth into adulthood. From birth to puberty the primary influence is - parents. Recent studies show the high correlation between the religious attitudes of children and their parents [as high as 74%]. But as children grow older, the influence of parents declines and other social factors become increasingly important. This is most marked at the beginning

of adolescence. And this creates a major Jewish problem. For it is this period, from 12/13 onwards, which is the critical period when attitudes are cystallised. And it is just then that most children stop their Jewish education, while their general education continues.

During this stage three main factors are at work:

[a] peer influence: during adolescence children spend less time at home, more time with friends. What other teenagers think and do becomes a larger influence.

[b] the media: parental influence is further weakened by the media explosion: the values communicated by radio, television, films and the press;

[c] education consistency: the value of a formal programme of Jewish education is strengthened or weakened to the extent by which it is complemented by the informal effect of a Torah-oriented home life.

The Jewish tradition knew, long ago, of the problems of parent/child conflict. The Torah describes the problem of the 'stubborn and rebellious son' [see Deut. ch.21]. Learning is a process of acquiring values from the environment; and if the home reflects a positive attitude towards Judaism, in general children will follow the same course. The responsibility is placed, by the Torah, firmly on the shoulders of parents: "Listen, my son, to the instruction of your father and do not forsake the teachings of your mother" [Proverbs 1:8]. The parent is par excellence the teacher, and must exercise guidance throughout the whole process of his child's development. This is the principle stated in the Shema: "And you shall teach them diligently to your children" [Deut. 6:7].

One of the findings of the Plowden Report certainly applies to our children at Hebrew Classes and Jewish Day Schools. Success varies in relation to parental interest. If the value system of the home accords with the content of Jewish lessons, the child will give a more positive performance. If not, he will suffer a conflict which may damage his development. We must therefore give our children the backing of a committed home environment. We must treat each child as an individual, for the four sons show how different children may be. And above all, as parents, we must teach by example. Through love and tenderness we shall succeed in raising a generation committed to Torah Judaism. [M.B.]

לא
אחד
בלבד


Der Stürmer

Wochenblatt zum Kampfe um die Wahrheit

Herausgeber: Julius Streicher

Nürnberg, im Mai 1934

Jüdischer Mordplan

gegen die nichtjüdische Menschheit aufgedeckt

Das Blutverbrechen

Judenopfer

Die Juden sind unser Unglück!

Not only one
Has risen against us
To destroy us,
But in every generation ...

[The medieval accusation of the blood libel, revived here in Julius Streicher's Nazi newspaper Der Sturmer, May 1934.]

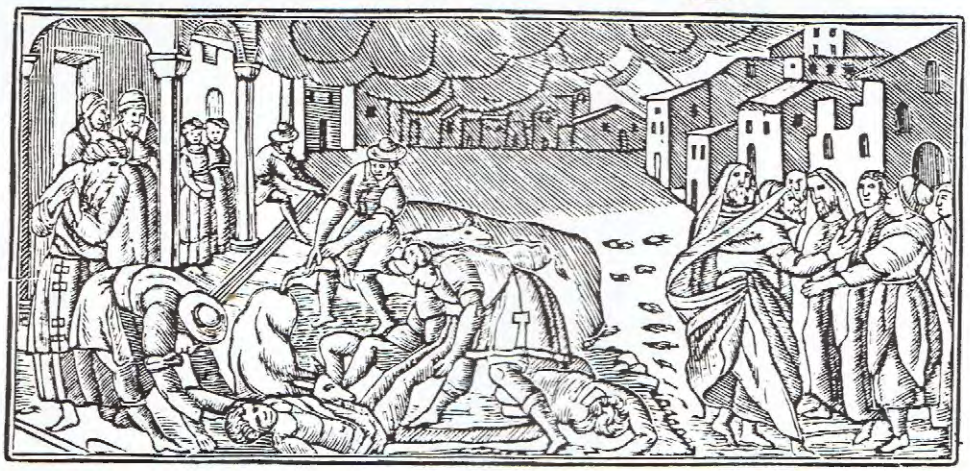
Pesach and the holocaust

"On Friday, March 2nd 1945, we reached Mauthausen... in those last few difficult weeks that we spent in the concentration camp, some of us worked in the unloading of cars of grain for the warehouse. A number of times our small group succeeded in taking a little bit of wheat from the warehouse. The religious Jews among us gave up their bread rations in exchange for wheat. In this fashion they accumulated a small quantity of wheat for Pesach. They crushed the grains of wheat with a hammer into a kind of flour. This they baked into matzot and so some tens of Jews were able to conduct the two sedarim.

Late at night, when the guards had left our block, several tables were set up in the washing room. We lit two candles, each participant received one matza. One of us began reciting the Haggada in a tremulous voice, the rest repeated it after him weeping, their voices choked with sobs. Thus did a small group of Jews, in the shadow of death, conduct the two sedarim in the Mauthausen concentration camp." *[Mordechai Eliav, Ani Ma'amin, p.192]*

"The winter of 5705 [1945] was a difficult one in the Feihingen concentration camp in Germany ... But in this death camp there were some who stubbornly held fast to their Judaism until the last moment. Passover was coming. How does one refrain from eating chametz? A few days before Pesach one of the S.S. men entered the foundry where I was working as a sign-maker. He asked if I could prepare some targets for rifle practice. At the moment an idea sprang into my mind and I proposed it to him. I would prepare targets with figures of soldiers attached to them. But I would need a quantity of flour with which to prepare the paste ... ultimately I received 15 kilos of flour. When I got the flour to the foundry I told my friends of the miracle - and it is impossible to describe their joy. The will to live, which was almost extinguished, was kindled anew. We 'liberated' some wood, scraped a table with glass, and 'kashered' it with hot bricks...we began to bake matzot ...On the night of the first seder we gathered in the foundry as the marranos did in ancient Spain. We started awesomely, "We were slaves". Each of us had three matzot. In place of wine we used water sweetened with sugar. We had potatoes for karpas and white beets for maror. Salt and water were not in short supply. We recited the Haggada from some siddurim which we had succeeded in hiding all this time. When we were about halfway through the Haggada, Azriel began to preach to us not to despair and to withstand the test of affliction, for redemption was near ...
[Eliav, op.cit.,p.183; both quotations taken from I.Rosenbaum, Holocaust and Halakhah, KTAV, 1976]

the plagues



A drama in ten acts based on the comments of Malbim and Rabbi Yaakov Etlinger.

The characters:

FRED: an Egyptian in the street. Your average man.
LUDWIG: a thinking Egyptian. A bit of an intellectual, not easily convinced.
OZ: a member of Pharaoh's magic circle.
PHARAOH: king of Egypt. A hard-hearted man.

ACT 1: BLOOD

Dawn by the Nile. Pharaoh is greeting the Sun 'god' on the'divine' river. Moshe challenges him privately. No go. All Egypt's drinking water turns to blood.

Fred: *Rather unpleasant,all this blood ...*
Ludwig: *Egypt's god of life is down. Is this Jewish God real? But maybe it's just Moshe's magic. After all, he used his stick to bring the blood ...*
Oz: *Amazing illusion. They make water look like blood. Must see if I can manage it.*
Pharaoh: *See: Moshe's just doing magic.*

ACT 2: FROGS AND/OR CROCODILES

Pharaoh's palace. Moshe now issues a public warning. From nowhere, frogs [or crocodiles] fill the Nile and actually crawl ashore. Into the palace, into kitchens ... Moshe prays for them to go,and those on land just die.

Fred: *This isn't getting any better at all ...*
Ludwig: *It looks as if Egypt's god of life has submitted to the God of the Jews. But maybe it's just that magic stick again ...*
Oz: *Let's get in amongst the frogs and pretend that we are controlling them ...*
Pharaoh: *Those magicians are just a sham. But maybe Moshe is too ... Let him ask his God to stop it in the morning, when magic clearly has no effect. Oh - he's done it. But Moshe said they'd vanish, and instead they just died. Better luck next time,Moshe.*

ACT 3: LICE

No warning. This time they'll learn the hard way. Human lice get out of hand. The ground crawls with them. They remain as a permanent torment to Egypt.

Fred: *Yerrch!*
Ludwig: *You know ...perhaps the Jews' God does exist ... somewhere.*
Oz: *I can't make magic work on such little things. Let's try medicines and pesticides to get rid of them. No,it's no good. They won't go away. It's a miracle, alright. Got to hand it to Moshe. That God of his is an amazing performer.*

Pharaoh: *It can't be magic, so Oz tells me ... but didn't the lice come without warning? It must be an Egyptian god who is at work!*

ACT 4: WILD CREATURES

Dawn by the Nile. Another warning. Dangerous creatures fearlessly roam the streets, the Palace, eventually making their lairs in Egyptian homes. But the Jews are spared! Now Moshe tests Pharaoh's good faith: the creatures start retreating before Pharaoh has completed his side of the deal.

Fred: *This is ridiculous. My next door neighbour was killed. Why isn't anyone doing something?*

Ludwig: *I really am coming round gradually to the opinion that the Jews' God does seem able to look after them sometimes.*

Oz: *No comment. I give in. It's all too much for me.*

Pharaoh: *O.K. I grant you. Their God seems to look after them. But let them hold prayers here, or even in the desert ... Hang on! The creatures are going. Forget it!*

ACT 5: PESTILENCE

A public warning - and a long one. Then, in a flash, all animals in the open are dead. Except the Jewish-owned ones.

Fred: *There's death everywhere these days. Do you think we'll be next?*

Ludwig: *Yes, you know, the Jews' God seems to have a foothold down here in Egypt ...*

Oz: *[silence]*

Pharaoh: *No. Their God can't look after them <u>that</u> well. There was definitely one Jewish-owned animal that died. [Actually, it belonged to someone of mixed descent.]*

ACT 6: BOILS

No warning - they'll learn by retribution. Moses tosses soot from the furnace into the air, and all the Egyptians - but not the Jews - get boils that never go away.

Fred: *Ouch. I can't bear it. Might we die?*

Ludwig: *Yes, the Jewish God is strong. But is He a match for the sun god and the gods of the sky?*

Oz: *I really must try this trick. Help! I've got boils myself now. This is definitely my last try. From now on Pharaoh is on his own.*

Pharaoh: *I've had enough ... perhaps ...but no! No-one is going to tell <u>me</u> what to do.*

ACT 7: HAIL

Dawn by the Nile. A warning to get indoors. A stupendous burst of hail actually wipes out everyone in the open. A second miracle: hail mixed with fire. Crops largely destroyed. But Egypt still left with something to lose ...

Fred: *So many Egyptians got killed ...*

Ludwig: *The God of the Jews seems to be able to control the clouds.*

Pharaoh: *Their God kindly warned us. We should have listened. He's clearly on our side. And anyway, Moshe said the thunder would stop and then the hail. But I could hear it <u>after</u> the hail. He's a fraud ... My advisers say I should let them go. But how can their God be a God of good <u>and</u> evil? If he's evil, take sacrifices for Him. But no need to take your children then ...*

ACT 8: LOCUSTS

A public warning. Then a stupendous wind brings a record storm of locusts to eat what's left. Their remains threaten to infect every home in Egypt. Then - gone with the wind. Not one remained as a souvenir.

Fred: *If this goes on we'll definitely die. There's no food left to eat. We'll starve. Why don't we let the Jews go if that's what they want?*

Ludwig: *Amazing - this Jewish God seems to control the wind as well.*

Pharaoh: *I've sinned. Stop the locusts. They'll infect us all.*

ACT 9: DARKNESS

No warning. They'll just have to learn the hard way. Thick vapours, or perhaps a paralysing spiritual light, bring three days of no seeing and three days

of no moving.

Fred: *Help! I can't see. I can't move. What's going on? If we can't get off our seats we'll die of starvation.*

Ludwig: *More and more interesting. Their God prevails even against the gods of the sun, moon and stars. Do you suppose He is synonymous with Nature?*

Pharaoh: *I was wrong. Your God is a God of good. So go with your children. But now there's no reason to take your herds - He can't want sacrifices. Anyway, Moshe only said,'Let my people go'. He's a fraud. No more negotiations... Another plague coming? I don't care.*

ACT 10: DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN

Ample warning of this from the outset. Death of all firstborn Egyptians anywhere in the world, and firstborn livestock. Non-Egyptian firstborn in Egypt die too.

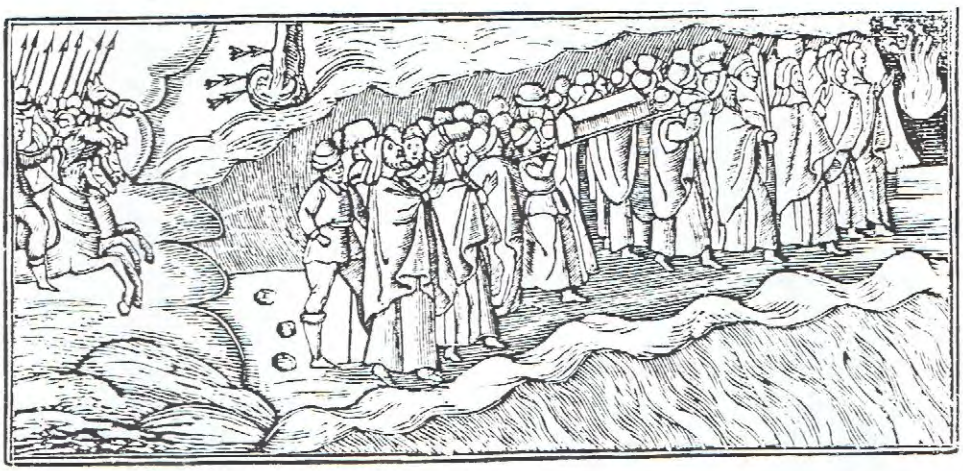
Fred: *Don't just let the Jews go. Drive them out! This is the end.*

Ludwig: *Fascinating. So their God doesn't even need to use natural forces. Death came out of 'thin air'. Who is this God of theirs? He's not like any of ours.*

Pharaoh: *Our idols and sanctified sons [firstborn] are wiped out. Even foreigners got no help from their gods.... Take the lot and go!*

Exeunt, the Israelites. *[L.G.]*

דיינו

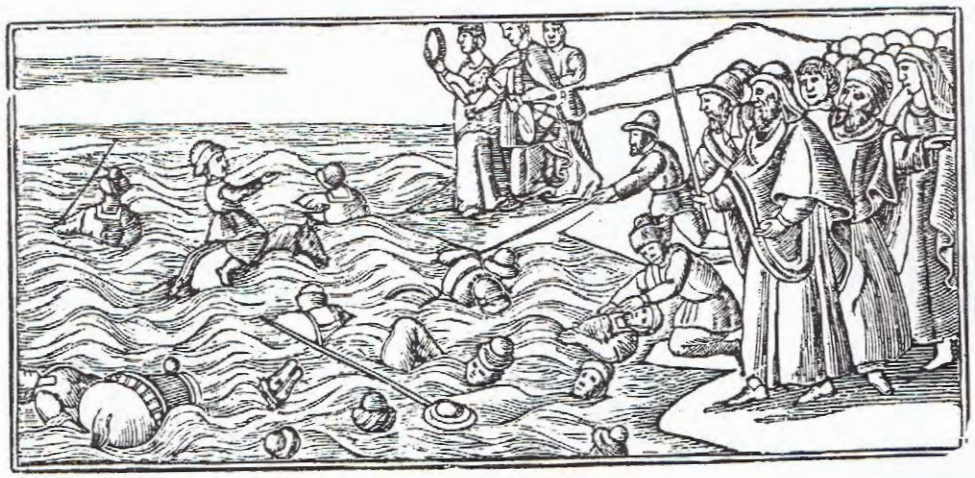


R. Yose Haglili, R. Eliezer and R.Akiva have been debating how many plagues the Egyptians were smitten by at the Red Sea. In a sudden contrast of mood the Haggada turns to God's acts of kindness to Israel, and says that for each, had it been all, it would have been enough. Enough for our eternal indebtedness. Dayyenu is a poem of thanksgiving, and perhaps tacitly an atonement for the sustained lack of gratitude of those who actually lived through the events - the Israelites for whom each miracle seemed insufficient.

Perhaps it is so, that the spirit of thanksgiving only comes with time. Those who lived in the daily presence of miracles could not see the enormity of what was being enacted on their behalf. How often, to later Jews, would even a fragment of one of those wonders have been sufficient. We grow wise too late.

But what, really, does the poem mean? The commentators wrestled with the self-evident problems. Surely, if the Sea had not divided it would not have been enough, for the Israelites would have been caught and recaptured. But it would, they answer: for God need not have made Pharaoh pursue them in the first place. They might have left naturally without need of the splitting of the Sea. And what does it mean to say that it would have been enough if God had not supplied our needs in the wilderness? Perhaps, that it would have been possible to choose a route that led through inhabited country where they could have bought food with the wealth they had brought out with them, and not have had need of bread from

heaven, and water from the rock and the well. And would it have been enough had God not given us the Torah? Yes: we might have sufficed with the teachings of Moses, without the unique direct revelation of God to the Israelites at Sinai. And so with all of them - the promised end might have been achieved without the miracle, in some natural way. Why then the miracle? To reveal God's love for His people, that for them He was prepared to transform nature,and temporarily suspend the laws He had implanted in the works of creation.



The term ma'alot, used in the introduction to dayyenu is suggestive of other associations. It is usually translated as 'favours'. But it may also mean 'ascents'. And so the commentators found connections between this ascending hymn of praise, with its 15 steps, 15 miracles, and other places when we find an ascent of 15 phases. There were fifteen generations between Abraham, to whom was granted a prophetic glimpse of the exodus, and Solomon who built the Temple with which dayyenu ends. In the Temple itself there were 15 steps from the forecourt to the inner court. And on each step the Levites sung a different psalm of praise - the 15 'psalms of ascent' [Psalms 120-134].

The fifteen miracles mentioned in dayyenu also correspond to the fifteen phases into which the seder service is divided.

R.Judah Loewe of Prague, the MAHARAL, found a further significance. The moon takes 15 days to grow from invisibility to a complete sphere. As each night we gain a fuller sight of the moon, so with each miracle the Israelites gained a fuller sense of the splendour of God. And just as we never see, standing on earth, the other side of the moon even when it is full, so as beings of the earth we never see God in His entirety: even Moses was only granted sight of the 'back' of God. The analogy goes deeper. For in reality it is not the moon which alters during its phases, but only our perception of it. And so too the power of God in history never alters. When at times we feel that it has shrunk to invisibility, the fault lies with us and our perspective.

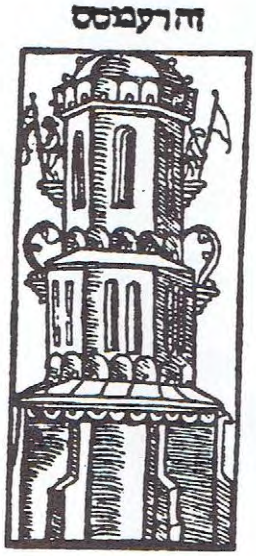
Perhaps that is in the end the point of dayyenu. To train our perspective from one where our situation in life is seen as inadequate, unsatisfying, making us anxious and competitive, to one where we can see in all around us the blessings of God. Who is rich? He who can turn in thanks to God and say: dayyenu. *[M.S.]*

פסח
מצה
מרור

At last we reach the answers to the Mah Nishtanah. The child asked about the matza and maror. And when the Temple stood he asked about the Pesach sacrifice as well. Everything has led up to this moment. We have described what happened: the history. And now we can do more than talk. We can hold up the matza and maror and show that freedom and oppression are not just abstract concepts: they leave a taste in the mouth. And there too is the bone representing what would once have been the sacrifice. We may not point to it, because in this case a symbol must not be mistaken for reality. But this too leaves a concrete impression. Once we had a Temple, now we do not, and there is the evidence in front of us.

Why do we insist on an explanation? There are many acts in Judaism that we do to remind us of things. But nowhere is there quite this insistence that we should put into words what they are meant to signify. MAHARSHA explains that the Pesach, Matza, and Maror were intended not merely to celebrate the going out of Egypt, but actually to achieve in the Israelites the right state of mind, a willingness to leave. Perhaps he means that the Pesach sacrifice was, as Maimonides says, commanded of the Israelites in Egypt to make them show that they had liberated themselves from the idolatry of Egypt: "the Egyptians worshipped Aries, and therefore abstained from killing sheep, and held shepherds in contempt". Perhaps the Maror was intended to make them taste the full bitterness of their situation, and leave without regrets; and we know that this was necessary because several times in the wilderness the Israelites expressed the desire to be back in Egypt. And the matza: to make them sense the haste with which they had to leave, and to give them no chance for second thoughts. For us too, it is not enough merely to eat: we must spell it out in words, what these objects mean. Their message has not become less vital with the passing of the millenia.

The right state of mind: we cannot sit around the seder table, in the presence of the Pesach, Matza and Maror, and not think of the Jews in the Soviet Union, in Arab lands, and under tyranny anywhere. While we recline like free men, they taste to the full the bread of affliction; the Maror of political oppression; they have had the courage to offer up the Pesach sacrifice, of rejecting the idols of their environment.



Perhaps Rabban Gamliel could be read as saying: he who does not mention these things as they exist in the present has not fulfilled his duty. May the Almighty hear our protest and their cry. [N.G.]

הלל

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch wrote:"Of all the books of the Holy Scriptures,save the Five Books of Moses themselves, the Book of Psalms has had the greatest influence on the Jewish mind and spirit". But of the 150 psalms, six stand apart: those that constitute the Hallel [Ps. 113-118]. No festive service would be complete without them. They represent joy, thanksgiving and redemption.

When was the Hallel first recited? The Talmud offers many answers: it was said by Joshua, Deborah, Hezekiah, Esther, or even by Moses himself. But its significance is not confined to a particular set of events: the prophets instituted that "at every epoch and at every trouble, when Israel are redeemed they should recite the Hallel in thankfulness for their delivery."

So on the seder night, when each Jew must see himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt, the Hallel stands as the natural sign of our thanks to God for our salvation.

In the time of the Temple, Hallel was sung by the Levites when the Paschal sacrifice was brought. Later, at night, when each household ate of the sacrifice, they too said the Hallel following the words of Isaiah: "You shall have a song, as in the night when a feast is hallowed". The singing was often with such gusto that the Talmud records the saying: "Hallel cracks the ceiling".

In Psalm 114, the second paragraph of Hallel, there are references to the Exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the revelation at Sinai. This in effect closes the first part of the evening. Whereas the seder will continue, the Haggada or narrative has now reached its fitting conclusion. The Torah has been given and the redemption is complete.

After the meal, the second half of Hallel is recited. In keeping with the Talmudic idea that the month of Nisan not only brought deliverance in the past but will do so again in the future, the Hallel now alludes to the resurrection of the dead, and to the messianic era.

Perhaps this is why we divide it into two parts, saying part before, and part after, the meal. Or it may be that having the meal in the middle makes the eating itself an act of Divine service and praise.

It is conceivable also that the Hallel was interrupted deliberately to fulfil the teaching of Proverbs: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls". It may be that we pause to reflect on the suffering of our fellow creatures, the Egyptians, whom God reluctantly destroyed at the time of the exodus. The rabbis tell that the angels wished to sing praise when the Red Sea divided, but God rebuked them saying: "The work of My hands is being destroyed, and you wish to sing a song of praise?"

Though it is not clear whether the Hallel represents, during the seder, a part of the story or a song of praise, it is inseparable from the Haggada. The opening verse of the Hallel is, after all, the best summary of the meaning of the seder as a whole. It reads: "Praise the Lord. Praise, you servants of the Lord" - to which the Talmudic sages added the comment: "Until now you were servants of Pharaoh. Now you are servants of the Lord". *[D.F.]*

שפוך חמתך

"Pour out Thy wrath ..."

As we pour out the cup of Elijah we add a strange little prayer: "Pour out Your wrath upon the nations who do not acknowledge You ..." Strange because it strikes the reader as angrily revengeful. Not at all typical of the spirit of Judaism; not in line with the spirit of Pesach, when we spill drops of wine remembering the plagues: though the Egyptians were enemies, they too were human beings, the works of God's hand.

For a long time people have felt some embarrassment at the seder table when they read this prayer, especially when non-Jews were present at the table. Yet it is right that we should recite it, for it represents the other side of the story of our people in the chronicles of civilization. Especially at Pesach time, when the snows melted and Christian children were found dead in the forests, we were accused time and again of murdering these innocent lives. The four cups of joy became for Jews cups of bitter tears. And the prayer reflects the deep feelings of our helplessness and the fears of our persecuted forebears. A mirror of what we pray is a buried and primitive age.

The prayer,together with Elijah's cup, stand between the two halves of Hallel: the part before the meal referring to redemption in the past, that after indicating deliverance in the future. Hence these two insertions: for Elijah, in Jewish tradition, will be the person who announces the future Messianic Age; and, as our prayer suggests, it will be an age in which there will be an end to those who do not care about Israel's teachings and who mock her role in the world.

The recitation of Shefoch chamatecha is accompanied by a unique custom: the opening of the door. It is so ancient a practise that

we do not know its original reason, and can only speculate. Some say that it is a reminder of the old procedure of opening the gates of the Temple for the pilgrims exactly at midnight; others that it was a precaution against slanderers and apostates who might be standing behind the door. The reverse, though, is more likely: the Jews in Egypt at the first seder of all time were in fear and were forbidden to open the door and go out. We throw the door open to demonstrate our confidence in the future - to show that we do not fear our enemies. And we express our faith that at some seder night in the future we shall open the door to welcome the prophet Elijah, announcing the coming of the Redeemer. [Y.G.]

חד גדיא

What is Had Gadya doing there at the end of the Haggada? We have had a lovely seder, we have come out of Egypt, we are feeling really good - and then we sing this song about the law of the jungle, what swallows up is swallowed up, a song with a variety of jolly tunes but with the uneasy theme that there is after all no real security.

Added to the seder in a further attempt to keep the children awake, the songs are inspirational or educational: touchingly simple praises of God like Ki Lo Na'eh or straight teaching like 'Who knows One?'. But what is the purpose of including Had Gadya?

The keenest minds were puzzled. There is a huge literature on the meaning of Had Gadya, and why it forms the climax to the Haggada. Four distinct catagories of interpretation, each interesting in its own way, have been suggested.

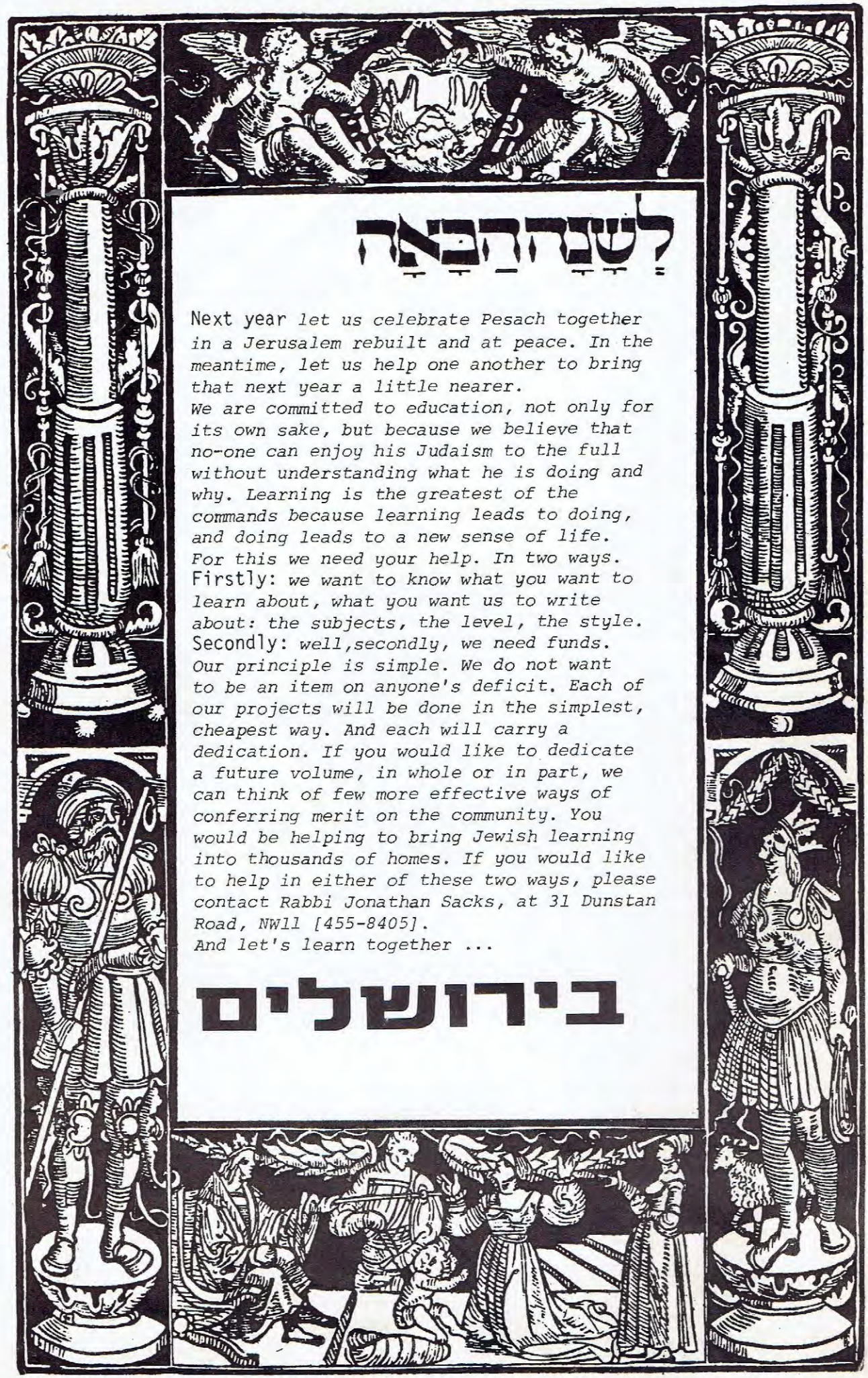
[1] Favourite among them is the allegorical. The innocent kid symbolises the Jewish people; God is 'father', Moses and Aaron are the two zuzim. The cat is Assyria, the dog Babylonia, the stick Persia and so on to the Greeks and Romans. All the oppressors of Israel perish one by one, so that by the end the victim, Israel, is the sole survivor. A more subtle historical explanation views the cat as Egypt - both sly operators. The dog is Amalek, attacking peaceful passers-by. The fire is the 'auto-da-fe' in which victims of the Spanish Inquisition were burnt to death.

[2] Identifying the verse with biblical incidents is an obvious way of explaining the song. Thus: Joseph is the kid sold into slavery. The stick is Moses' staff; the fire is that which was used to melt down the ornaments for the Golden Calf. For each figure a counterpart in Chumash is found, until God, in Torah and Haggada alike, redeems His people.

[3] A philosophical treatment also yields a rich harvest. Ranging from the purely speculative - what was the dog's motive in attacking the cat? - to the fundamental - does Divine Providence invariably use a wicked instrument to execute judgement on the wicked? - abundant food for thought is provided. This is not a pointless pastime. The basic theme of Had Gadya - as you treat others, they will treat you - is not an abstract principle but a guiding rule of social behaviour.

[4] On a spiritual level the song offers a sterner challenge. The special soul of man comes to him from above. But degeneration may come in stages from innocence to animal desire to burning passion to spiritual extinction. Viewed as imagery of the soul, Had Gadya teaches that eventually account has to be made for they way we have treated our own souls.

So which is it? A cruel nursery-rhyme or a deeply spiritual hymn? On the seder night when so many questions are asked, one more at the end is not amiss. And in discussing the answer, there rises to the fore the destiny of our people, and the debt we owe Him who always, in trouble, in the end, brings us out. [C.H.]



לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה

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בירושלים