

## Inside the Passover Haggadah Bais Chana Online

### *Definitions:*

Pesach

Hagaddah

Seder

Yetzias Mitzrayim

### *Remembering the Exodus – Experiencing Personal Freedom*

What is freedom?

I would feel free if....

#### **Talmud, Pesachim 116B**

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִילוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם."

In each and every generation a person must view himself as though he personally left Egypt.

#### **Devarim, 16:3**

לִמְעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יוֹם יְצִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

....so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

### **Victor Frankel:**

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

### **The Lubavitcher Rebbe: (excerpt from a public letter written before Pesach, 1958)**

A tree needs water, air, sunlight, and strong and deep roots firmly implanted into the ground in order to be healthy and withstand any strong winds or harsh weather conditions. If a tree has all of those needs fulfilled, it is free from any problems. An animal, on the other hand, needs to be mobile; it must be able to roam around, to search for food, to be able to move from one place to another. If an animal has food and water, but is constrained to one spot—like a tree—it would have tremendous anguish and distress; it wouldn't be free at all. By denying it the most essential expression of its character, the ability to run wild, it is, in a sense, imprisoned. A human being, who is an intellectual creature, even if he has the freedom to move around at will [but] is prevented from using his intellect, then he is really not free at all. By denying him the most essential expression of his character, his intelligence, he is being deprived of his true freedom.

True freedom for a Jew is to allow the expression of his or her most essential character, the [Jewish] soul, through Torah and mitzvot, and strengthening [the soul's] bond with G-d.

### **Exodus 8:16**

Let My people go, that they may serve me.

### **Rabbi Dovie Schochet:**

[https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach\\_cdo/aid/3615900/jewish/What-Is-a-Haggadah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/3615900/jewish/What-Is-a-Haggadah.htm)

### **Haggadah Authorship**

The core text of the Haggadah is found in the book of Deuteronomy, in the verses farmers would recite when thanking G-d for taking their ancestors out of Egypt and bringing them to the Promised Land. The Haggadah also contains the Hallel prayer, which contains selections from King David's Psalms.

Many elements of the Haggadah are found in the Mishnah, which was finalized in the first century. The Talmud records a major disagreement between the sages Rav and Shmuel (approx. 230-250

CE) on how the Haggadah should be structured.<sup>4</sup> In practice, it has become common to include the texts recorded by both rabbis in a formula that was crystallized by the **late medieval period**.

**Purpose:**

The Haggadah is more than a user's guide throughout the Passover meal. It engages us in a dynamic experience, giving us the sense that it is we who left Egypt. The Haggadah explores our history, starting from the first Jew, Abraham, and leading us to the climactic Exodus from Egypt. It educates us and challenges us, beginning with the Four Questions, and continuing with The Four Sons.

On a deeper plane, it also tells the story of the Jewish people throughout the ages—how we've suffered. The Haggadah is our secret to survival again and again, undergoing slavery and mass murder. But the Jewish spark within us has not been extinguished. Like the Jews that defeated the Egyptians and were redeemed from their rule, we too have been subjugated to persecution and slaughter, but in the famous words of Mark Twain, "All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains." **The Haggadah is our secret to survival, reminding us where we came from and who we are.**

**Mishnah, Pesachim 10:4**

When teaching his son about the Exodus. **He begins with the Jewish people's disgrace and concludes with their glory.** And he expounds from the passage: "An Aramean tried to destroy my father" (Deuteronomy 26:5), the declaration one recites when presenting his first fruits at the Temple, until he concludes explaining the entire section.

**Maharsha's explanation of why begin with disgrace and end with praise?**

a)

b)

[https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html?smid=fb-share&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0)

## *Chametz vs. Matzah*

חמץ

מצה

## *4 cups of wine*

### **Rabbi Yehudah Prero- Torah.org**

Why do we drink four cups of wine at the Seder?

The most famous answer to this question revolves around two verses in Sh'mos/Exodus (6:6-7): "Therefore, say to the children of Israel 'I am Hashem, and I SHALL TAKE YOU OUT from under the burdens of Egypt; I SHALL RESCUE YOU from their service; I SHALL REDEEM YOU with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I SHALL TAKE YOU TO ME for a people and I shall be a G-d to you....'"

In these two verses, we find what are termed "The Four Expressions of Redemption." G-d said to the nation of Israel using four different expressions that they would be taken out of slavery in Egypt. We therefore drink a cup of wine, on this night that we commemorate our redemption, for each expression of redemption that G-d uttered.

The Sh"lah gives another reason. On this night, we celebrate the birth of the Jewish people as a nation. We read in the Hagadah about our forefathers. Avraham originally worshipped idols. His son Yitzchak had two children, Yaakov and Esav. Yaakov ended up in Egypt where his son Yosef was. However, we do not read of the contributions of our mothers to the development of the nation of Israel. Each cup of wine represents one of our matriarchs. The first cup of wine is used to recite Kiddush, the sanctification of the day. In the Kiddush, we read how G-d has sanctified the nation of Israel with His mitzvos (commandments), which makes the Jewish people unique. Sarah was known for her efforts to spread the word of G-d to those who previously worshipped idols. It is with Kiddush, where we speak of this sanctification of the nation of Israel, that we commemorate Sarah, who exerted efforts to bring others into this fold. We drink the second cup of wine after we

have told the story of the birth of our nation. We have read how Avraham originally worshipped idols. We have read how the nation grew and developed. Rivka's life progressed in a similar fashion. She was born into a family of idol worshipers and she grew to be one of the matriarchs of the nation of Israel. With the second cup of wine, we commemorate Rivka, who overcame an idolatrous background to become the mother of the Jewish people.

After we conclude the Grace After Meals, we drink the third cup. Rachel was the mother of Yosef, who assured that the entire land of Egypt would have sustenance during the years of famine. It is fitting that we remember Rachel, the mother of the one who sustained a nation, after we have completed our meal. The last cup of wine is drunk after we complete Hallel, the praises of G-d. Leah, upon the birth of her son Yehudah, said "This time I shall thank Hashem." Why did Leah thank G-d upon the birth of her fourth son, and not with the previous three? The answer is that Leah realized that Yaakov was to have 12 children between his four wives. When she had her fourth son, she realized that she was given one more than her "share" in the unit that was the base for the nation of Israel. Of course she was thankful with each child. But with Yehudah, Leah knew that she had received something truly special, above and beyond what she should get. Therefore, she thanked Hashem when Yehudah was born. It is fitting that after we finish thanking Hashem for taking us out of Egypt, we remember Leah, who taught the Jewish people how and when to say thank you.

**Rabbi Avi Shafran:**

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/whats-with-the-fours/>

So, on Passover, as we celebrate the birth of the Jewish nation and plant the seed of Jewish identity in the minds of smaller Jews, we are in a sense ourselves "birthing"—giving life to the Jewish future. And, while it may be the father who traditionally leads the seder, he is acting not as teacher but rather in something more akin to a maternal role, as a spiritual nurturer of the children present. Jewish identity, indeed, is dependent on mothers. According to *halakhah* [Jewish law], or Jewish religious tradition, while a Jew's tribal genealogy follows the paternal line, whether a child is a member of the Jewish people or not depends entirely on the status of his or her mother.

**Rabbi Naftali Silberberg, Chabad.org**

Wine is considered a royal drink, one that symbolizes freedom. It is the appropriate beverage for the nights when we celebrate our freedom from Egyptian bondage.

Many reasons are given for drinking four cups of wine. Here are some of them:

When promising to deliver the Jews from Egyptian slavery, G-d used four terms to describe the redemption (Exodus 6:6-8): a) "I shall take you out..." b) "I shall rescue you..." c) "I shall redeem you..." d) "I shall bring you..."

The four cups symbolize our freedom from our four exiles We were liberated from Pharaoh's four evil decrees: a) Slavery. b) The ordered murder of all male progeny by the Hebrew midwives. c) The drowning of all Hebrew boys in the Nile by Egyptian thugs. d) The decree ordering the Israelites to collect their own straw for use in their brick production.

The four cups symbolize our freedom from our four exiles: The Egyptian, Babylonian, and Greek exiles, and our current exile which we hope to be rid of very soon with the coming of Moshiach.

The words "cup of wine" are mentioned four times in Pharaoh's butler's dream (Genesis 40:11-13). According to the Midrash, these cups of wine alluded to the Israelites' liberation.

According to Kabbalah, there are four forces of impurity (anti-divinity, or kelipah). On Passover, when we celebrate our physical freedom, we also celebrate our liberation from these spiritual forces. Our physical departure from Egypt was a reflection of our spiritual one—we were pulled from the clutches of depravity and impurity and set on the path to receiving the Torah and connecting with G-d.

[https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article\\_cdo/aid/2300470/jewish/Pesach-The-Matzos-and-the-Four-Cups-of-Wine.htm](https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/2300470/jewish/Pesach-The-Matzos-and-the-Four-Cups-of-Wine.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach\\_cdo/aid/3971598/jewish/Three-Matzot-Four-Cups-of-Wine.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/3971598/jewish/Three-Matzot-Four-Cups-of-Wine.htm)

## *The Women of Egypt*

### **1)Talmud, Sota, 11B**

Rabbi Akiva taught: In the merit of the righteous women of that generation, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt.

### **2)Arizal:**

The last generation before the coming of Moshiach is the reincarnation of the generation of the Exodus.

### **3)Midrash, Tanchuma, Pekudei 9:**

What did the daughters of Israel do? They would draw water from the river, and G-d would summon small fish to appear in their pails, some of which they would sell and some of which they would cook. (With the proceeds, they would) buy wine and go out to the fields to feed their husbands....

...because of their righteous acts of using mirrors to stimulate the passions of their husbands in the midst of grueling labor, these women merited to raise an entire nation, as alluded to in the verses that state, “All the legions of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:41), and “G-d took the legions of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt” (ibid. 12:51).

#### **4)Chana Weisberg – TheJewishWoman.org**

The Talmud comments: “There were three excellent leaders for Israel. They were Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” From where did Miriam derive her courage and vision?

Miriam’s name has two meanings, both exemplifying the qualities of her character.

**The first, from the Hebrew root *mar*, is**

**“bitterness.”** Miriam was born at the time when the oppression of the exile had reached its worst. “They [the Egyptians] embittered [*vayemareru*, from the root *mar*] their lives with hard work” ([Exodus 1:14](#)).



Born into the harshest period of servitude, Miriam felt the bitterness and ache of her people. Her earliest years were formed by the heartbreaking reality of the Jewish exile.

Witnessing the murders and the torment, she wept with her brethren, praying incessantly and hoping beyond hope for a better future. Miriam was personally exposed to the decrees of the wicked Pharaoh; no one could understand the bitterness of the exile better than Miriam.

**The other meaning of Miriam’s name is “rebellion” (from the root *meri*).** Despite being born into the most difficult period of oppression, Miriam rebelled from her earliest age against the slave mentality engulfing her people. Though she felt their pain acutely, she would not succumb to fear or despair. Though she was exposed to abject cruelty, she would not yield to moral corruption or apathy. Bravely and resolutely, she kept vigilant watch over the faith in the promise of redemption.

...This was Miriam, the mother of rebellion. Rebelling against the status quo, fighting against apathy and cruelty. Bravely, she and her mother disregarded Pharaoh’s edict to murder the infant boys, even providing food and necessities for their survival. (Rashi, Ex. 1:17) G-d repaid these valiant women by granting them “houses”: from them issued the dynasties of priesthood, Levites and kingship. (Rashi, Ex. 1:21) Such positions of leadership could be filled only by the descendants of such women, who would pass on their moral strength and convictions, enabling them to prevail over any acts of immorality or injustice. This was Miriam. She encompassed the dual qualities of feeling the intensity of pain, while at the same time rebelling against its overpowering hold, to discover a seed of faith and yearning deep within.

Decades later, on the shores of the Red Sea.... “Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines, dancing. And

Miriam answered them, ‘Sing to the L-rd . . .’ ([Exodus 15:20–21](#)). Moses and the men sang their song. And then Miriam and the women rose to sing their song.

Rashi ([Exodus 15:20](#)) explains how the women had these tambourines with them. “The righteous women of that generation were confident that the Holy One, Blessed be He, would make miracles for them, so they prepared tambourines and dances.” When the Jewish people left Egypt, they left hastily. So hastily, in fact, that they were not even able to finish baking their bread, and it baked flat on their backs as matzah. The women were not concerned about their physical sustenance; they were certain that G-d would provide. They lived in a higher dimension, beyond the natural reality. Yet, despite their haste, the women took the time to prepare well in advance something that they felt would be essential. After hundreds of years in bitter exile—after witnessing acts of utter barbarism, after weeping rivers of tears for the babies torn from their arms, after seeing their children cemented alive into brick walls to fill missing quotas—what did these women prepare while still slaves in Egypt? What was on the minds of these women who had seen affliction beyond the human breaking point? What was on the hearts of these women who bore anguish too much to fathom? What did their worn, tired, tortured, and beaten bodies carry out of Egypt? Tambourines. Instruments with which to sing and praise their G-d for the miracles they knew would come to be. This was the strength of Miriam. A feminine strength born out of bitterness, a faith sewed amidst despair. This was the strength of the women who left Egypt, equipped with tambourines and dances of joy and faith.

## *The Ten Plagues:*

### **By: Chana Slavaticki**

Several years ago, there was a study conducted in Israel in which children of various ages were asked “What value is most important to your parents?” The children responded by saying things such as “teeth brushing,” “eating all the vegetables on our plates,” “not jumping on the couch,” and “cleaning up our rooms.”

When the parents of these children were asked what were the most important values they wanted to impart to their children, their responses were radically different. They mentioned things such as having a strong moral compass, being a mentch, appreciation and enthusiasm about Torah and Yiddishkeit, and helping their children develop into independent and productive adults. Why didn’t their children hear these messages? The answer can be learned from this week’s Parsha.

Many wonder why Hashem decided to bring Ten Makkos upon the Egyptians, when he simply could have destroyed them in one swift motion. What was the point of extending the process through these seemingly random plagues? The Abarbanel explains that the plagues served an important educational purpose. They came to prove three important principles that Pharaoh vehemently denied; Hashem’s existence, Hashem’s providence and Hashem’s ability to alter nature. R’ Yehudah’s mnemonic of “D’tzach, Adash, B’achav” groups the Makkos into three groups, and each group achieved one of the aforementioned objectives.



The blood, frogs, and lice, proved that there is a G-d. The blood and frogs attacked the Nile River, and demonstrated that what the Eypgtians believed in as their deity, actually had no power. Following the plague of lice, the Eypgtian sorcerers said “This is the finger of Hashem” (Sh’mos 8:15). Wild animals, dead animals, and boils proved that there is divine providence. In fact, before the 4th plague, Hashem shared his objective which was “In order that you know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth” (Sh’mot 8:18). In these plagues Hashem demonstrated his hashgacha by distinguishing between the Egyptians and the Jews. The next 3, the hail, locusts and darkness, demonstrated that Hashem could change the rules of nature so that the Eypgtians would recognize “that there is none like Me in the entire earth” (Sh’mot 9:14).

Yetzias Mitzrayim, however, was not merely a one-time experience, where the Jewish people left a geographical location. The Hebrew word Mitzrayim shares the same root as the word “meitzarim” which means limitations. The things that limit us, and make us self-centered as opposed to G-d centered can be seen as our own personal Mitzrayim. Seen from this perspective, the ten makkos are the ten building blocks to our personal exodus. Let’s look at the first two, as seen through the lens of Chassidic teachings (Likutei Sichos, volume 1).

In the first plague the cold waters of the Nile River turned into blood. Blood, by its very nature is warm and represents life and vitality. The first step to spiritual growth is to get heated up and passionate about spirituality. The second plague was that the frogs which are cold-water amphibians spread all over Mitzrayim and according to the Midrash, even infiltrated the hot ovens. The hot ovens of Egypt, represent passion and excitement about things that are “Egyptian,” and that we should not get that excited about. The frogs cooled down the hot ovens. In matters of Kedusha, it is important that we warm ourselves up, and generate excitement and enthusiasm, and in areas that are not particularly holy, but we are very enthusiastic about, it would be suitable to tone that down a little.

Research has shown that positive emotions enhance learning and help us retain information more easily, while negative emotions hamper our ability to concentrate. Today, virtually every Jewish school has come to recognize that the study of Torah solely as an academic pursuit can be cold and will not adequately warm and inspire the hearts of our students, and make them care about it. When we demonstrate warmth and enthusiasm about a Mitzvah, our students and children see that, and associate the Mitzvah with warm positive feelings.

So what do we want our children to see as most important to us? Not jumping on the couch, or running to do another person a favor? The only way they will know is by how much enthusiasm we generate in each scenario.

**When the Lubavitcher Rebbe Self Quarantined for Seder – Rabbi Pinni Dunner**

.....Some people will literally be by themselves, solitary, with no one to do the Seder with at all. “How can we do Seder by ourselves?” they ask me. “Doesn’t the Pesach Seder need to be done with family and guests?”

.....Rabbi Jacobson shared: “A few weeks ago, I led a workshop for single mothers, and at the end of the session, I took questions from the women and encouraged them to ask any question that was on their mind. One of the ladies put her hand up, and this is what she asked me... it’s a crazy story. A few months ago,” she said, “it was Pesach. The thing is, my ex-husband and I went through a very difficult breakup. After years in court over our kids, we finally settled on a shared custody arrangement, which means that we alternate Jewish holidays. This past Pesach it was my turn – my children were coming to me for Seder and I was so excited. I changed over my home for Pesach and prepared everything beautifully; it was going to be just me and the kids.

I was so happy about them being with me, that I told everyone: my family, my friends, my neighbors. Then, one hour before yomtov, I got a phone call from my ex – for some reason, the kids were not going to be coming. I almost fainted from shock and heartache. I was also so ashamed. I guess I could have called my parents, or I could have called my neighbors – and gone to them for the Seder. But how could I actually do that? I had told everyone my kids were coming! Truth is, I did not have the energy to even be with anyone. I felt completely and totally numb – dry and lifeless. So I did the Seder by myself. On my own. It was the worst and most bitter Seder I have ever had. I just sat there crying the whole way through. Weeping. It wasn’t Pesach. It was Tisha B’Av. I did not have to eat Maror. I—my entire life!—was Maror. Yes, I went through the Haggadah and ate the Matzah; but the entire Seder took me 25 minutes. Rabbi Jacobson, did I do the right thing? Did I fulfil my Seder obligation? Was it even called a Seder? Because it did not feel like a proper Pesach.

Rabbi Jacobson told me – and believe me, as a public speaker, I know exactly what he means – sometimes your most inspirational moments in a speech are not prepared. They are a gift from God. You can prepare for hours. And then inspiration drops into your lap. Right then and there, Rabbi YY Jacobson had such a moment. “Lady,” he said, “in 1988 the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s wife died, and he was left on his own, as they sadly had no children. She passed away in February, and two months later was Pesach. Every year the Rebbe and his Rebbetzen had Seder together, but this year he was on his own, totally by himself. Who would the Rebbe conduct the Passover Seder with?” “I recall that a young boy, Ari Halberstam – who was later tragically gunned down on Brooklyn Bridge, in 1994 – approached the Rebbe after Maariv on the first night of Pesach and, on behalf of his mother, invited the Rebbe to his home for Seder. Ari’s family lived at 706 Eastern Parkway, just one block away from ‘770’. The Rebbe smiled at Ari, and shook his head. He thanked him profusely, but told Ari he would be having the Seder in his private office in ‘770’.”

“I was a yeshiva student at the time,” continued Rabbi Jacobson, “so I am a first-hand witness to this story. In fact, the Rebbe’s longstanding assistant Rabbi Leibel Groner offered to stay with the Rebbe, but the Rebbe sent him home to have Seder with his wife and children.” “And so, the great Lubavitcher Rebbe – the man who inspired countless people around the world for their Seders,

who personally undertook to provide a meaningful Pesach Seder for Israeli Army personnel who were on duty on the first night of Pesach via his shlichim in Eretz Yisrael – had the Seder on his own. Not one other person was present. As the Talmud says: if you are on your own, you ask yourself the ‘Ma Nishtana’ questions, and then you answer them to yourself.”

“A few of us yeshiva boys did not go home that night; we waited outside in the street – and after a couple of hours, the Rebbe opened the door to welcome Eliyahu Hanavi and recite Shefoch Chamatcha. He walked outside holding a candle and his Haggadah, said the prayer, gave us a wave, and then went back inside to finish the Seder — by himself.” “My dear lady,” said Rabbi Jacobson, “if it was good enough for the Lubavitcher Rebbe to have the Seder on his own, trust me, your Seder was perfect! He could have had his Seder with 100 people, 1000 people, or 10,000 people. He personally arranged for all the army Seders in Israel to be sponsored. He was responsible for hundreds of thousands of people celebrating Pesach on Seder night, from Kathmandu to Alaska, from San Francisco to New Zealand. But at the end of the day, he went and did the Seder on his own. He didn’t need anyone else to be close to God. He didn’t need adulation. He didn’t need validation. He sat alone and relived the Exodus from Egypt.”

“I was only 15 at the time,” concluded Rabbi Jacobson, “but despite my youth, I felt sad that the Rebbe had nobody to be with for the Seder. Why did he not invite even one person to be with him? But today, after hearing your story, I may have discovered the answer—and it is just a personal feeling. As a true Jewish leader, the Rebbe wished to empower all those souls who would ever need to do their Seder alone. He wanted them to know that their solitary Passover Seder was powerful, meaningful, and real. Jewish history and the Divine presence would dwell at their Seder just as it does at a Seder that has many people there.”

Over the past couple of weeks, as the coronavirus crisis has unfolded across the world, and the reality of our isolated situations has become ever more evident – this incredible and very moving story about the Lubavitcher Rebbe has been at the forefront of my mind. This year, so many people – probably more people than at any other time in Jewish history – will be having the Seder on their own or without their families. All of our Seders will be diminished, and anxiety will be hovering in the air. And all of us will be thinking to ourselves – ‘is this really a proper Seder?’ I think Rabbi Jacobson’s story about the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1988 answers that question, and it eases any doubts we may have about our impending ‘depleted’ experience. After all, “if it was good enough for the Lubavitcher Rebbe to have the Seder on his own, trust me, your Seder is going to be just perfect!”