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Experiencing the Exodus:
A Collaborative Commentary on the
Passover Haggadah

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EXPERIENCING THE EXODUS:
A COLLABORATIVE COMMENTARY ON THE PASSOVER HAGGADAH

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR RABBINIC ORDINATION

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March 1, 2007 | 11 Adar 5767

EXPERIENCING THE EXODUS:
A COLLABORATIVE COMMENTARY ON THE PASSOVER HAGGADAH

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THESIS RATIONALE

> בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם
> *(Mishnah Pesachim 10:5)*

Mishnah Pesachim (10:5) states "IN EVERY GENERATION A PERSON IS OBLIGATED TO SEE HER/HIMSELF AS IF S/HE ACTUALLY CAME OUT OF EGYPT." This statement suggests an important question: what is so seminal about this experience that every Jew in every generation must view themselves this way? This second inquiry is what led us to look deeper into the Passover Seder experience, which has come to be the ritual expression of the command found in this teaching.

In looking closely at this statement, and the Pesach Haggadah itself, four lenses of analysis emerged from the Seder itself:

...בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר! "IN EVERY GENERATION..."

Jewish tradition passes on the collective story of our people through traditions and rituals. All the while the story changes and evolves over time. Therefore, no single generation can come to tell the story in the same way, nor can it strive to understand and experience the story in the same way. Each generation knows new hardships; each generation knows new freedoms.

How is the Exodus from Egypt told and passed from one generation to the next? The Haggadah does not simply pass on history in the form of facts, dates and routes traveled. Nor does it tell a simple story in the style of a fable or tall tale. Rather, its purpose is grander than both of these mediums. The Passover Seder is a sacred and powerful experience, which bonds together the community through a common story, informing who we have been and shaping who we will be.

The chapter entitled *The Sacred Narrative of the Exodus Experience*, will delve into these questions by addressing the role of history and sacred narrative; and the evolution and presentation of the Exodus story on the first night of Passover.

...אָדָם...אֶת עַצְמוֹ...| "...A PERSON...HER/HIMSELF..."

The Mishnah does not merely mandate the recitation of the story of our ancestors, but asks us to see ourselves as part of the Exodus narrative. Perhaps for this reason, one of the most universally Jewish sentiments is the identification with the Jewish people as a group that knew slavery and experienced liberation. We do not find ourselves in the same straits that our ancestors endured in Egypt, but we identify with the pain and hardship of their conditions as well as the jubilation and celebration of their deliverance from slavery. The story of the Exodus has become as much a part of us as we have become a part of it.

No matter how this story is incorporated into a person's identity, literally or figuratively, the narrative of the Exodus acts as a guiding force behind how Jews find their place in the world. Just as the lives of the people assembled around the Seder table change, so too must the narrative evolve to find new ways to convey ancient truths to the present generation.

In our chapter *Formation of Personal and Communal Identity in Relationship to the Passover Experience* we explore how identity is constructed, the role of the community on the formation of the self and how the Passover Haggadah accurately reflects the complexities of individual and communal identity. Examples will be given as to how the reader might understand the issues of identity as it relates to the Exodus narrative.

...חַיָּב...| "...IS OBLIGATED TO..."

What actions are Jews required to perform on the night of Passover in order to fulfill their obligation? There are hundreds of traditions associated with the celebration of Passover. We eat certain foods, treating them differently than all other holiday foods. Gathering around the dinner table also stands out as a unique religious expression from the natural synagogue setting of most Jewish observances. From where do these traditions come? Are they traditional customs or religiously mandated acts? Like the nature of

the story that is told and the identities of those present, how does the fulfillment of this obligation change and evolve over time?

In *Laws of the Passover Seder: From Biblical Command to Rabbinic Statute* we will examine the progression of Passover celebration. Beginning with the biblical origins of the Paschal sacrifice and the Festival of *Matzah*, we will move through the stages of its development, ending with the creation of the rabbinic Seder.

לְרָאוֹת...כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם...| "...TO SEE...AS IF S/HE ACTUALLY CAME OUT OF EGYPT."

Due to the diverse personalities of the individuals present at the Seder and the complexity of the narrative, there must be a number of entry points for the messages of this story to be integrated. With all that is riding on this night—the importance of the story, the weight of the tradition, the diversity of those present—how does the Seder, itself, function to bring all of these things together to create an experience likened to coming out of Egypt?

Ritual Process and the Methodology of the Passover Haggadah responds to these concerns by outlining various theories on the effectiveness of ritual. These theories shed light upon how the techniques employed by the Haggadah bring the Exodus narrative to life and how the Seder's rituals craft the Passover celebration to be both reflective and meaningful.

The structure of this thesis came to fruition through the parsing of this verse found in the Mishnah. Not surprisingly, four lenses emerged from our study of this text, four being a common scaffolding for the structure of the Pesach Haggadah.

As explained above, each piece of the Mishnah verse leads into one chapter that is dedicated to exploring the topic presented and the questions raised. The four lenses reflect and define the following four chapters:

Chapter One: Laws of the Passover Seder: From Biblical Command to Rabbinic Statute

Chapter Two: The Sacred Narrative of the Exodus Experience

Chapter Three: Formation of Personal and Communal Identity in Relationship to the Passover Experience

Chapter Four: Ritual Process and the Methodology of the Passover Haggadah

We have decided to organize the chapters according to the ideas that they explore and not according to the chronology of the verse. Moving from the origin of the holiday and its development into a ritualized experience, we elaborate on the commandment to *tell* the story by exploring the structure and the content of its narrative. Realizing that each person hears and relates to the story of the Exodus differently, we consider how the diversity of the participants plays into the effectiveness of the Seder experience for each individual. Lastly, we examine the complexities of this grand experience and try to understand how it incorporates all three dimensions previously mentioned into one single ritual.

Following the enunciation of the four lenses in these chapters, we explore the specific content of the Passover Haggadah. Using the themes presented in these chapters four distinct commentaries elucidate various sections and rituals of the Passover Haggadah. *For further information on the creation of this commentary, see page ? for an introduction to the commentary.*

Like the rabbis of *B'nai B'rak* who stayed up all night discussing the Exodus from Egypt and learning from one another, we decided that this project would best be served by our collaboration. The commandment that birthed the Passover Haggadah requires that one person tell the story to another (Exo. 13:8). We are encouraged to elaborate and unpack the story through *midrash*, questioning, discussion, exegesis, singing and more. This project is of a similar method of inquiry. Based on our own interests and understandings of the tradition, we brought our minds together and shared in the writing and construction of this thesis. Alissa M. Forrest researched heavily and wrote the chapters and accompanying commentaries for the biblical and rabbinic lens as well as the sacred narrative lens. Adam M. Allenberg investigated and compiled the learning on identity formation and ritual process for the chapters and parallel commentaries.

During this journey, both of us have guided and taught the other along the way. The finished product is the result of extensive collaboration and thoughtful construction.

CHAPTER ONE:
LAWS OF THE PASSOVER SEDER: FROM BIBLICAL COMMAND TO RABBINIC STATUTE

> בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם
> In every generation a person is **OBLIGATED** to see her/himself as if s/he actually came out of Egypt.
> (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5)

Ask anyone who joins in the Passover Seder, secular to observant, if you could take away the gefilte fish or *matzah* ball soup from their celebration. Many will tell you that these items are essential to the Passover experience. But are they? Jewish tradition, which is extremely clear in the details of Passover, does not mention that we are obligated to partake of these foods at our Seder table. Therefore we must ask, what are we obligated to do? And where do we look to find and learn about these obligations?

Throughout the Tanach the commandment and the obligation to observe Pesach, the sacrifice and all its rituals, as well as the Festival of Unleavened Bread is expressed by God and often repeated by the leaders of the Israelites. The Exodus from Egypt is central to the Israelites' experience and identity, and commemorating this historical event becomes fundamental to their communal rituals. The Seder experience originates in these Biblical commandments and evolves from there into the rituals and traditions we observe today.

Pesach in the Book of Exodus

The first time that the celebration of Passover is mentioned in the Tanach is in the book of Exodus, Chapter 12 verses 3-28. The Israelites have not even left Egypt and they are already being told to commemorate this event. The Exodus is impending and God is about to bring the 10th plague. God instructs Moses and Aaron of the rituals of Pesach (vv. 3-20) and then Moses relays the instructions

to the Israelites (vv. 21-28). The first part of God's instructions is the laws relating specifically to the sacrificial meal that will occur immediately before the Exodus:

Exodus 12:3-13- The Pesach of Egypt **(a.k.a. The Paschal Offering Immediately before the Exodus)**			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה "*Pesach* offering to Adonai" Exo. 12:11	This is a domestic celebration, occurring in the home of the Israelites.[1] The 14th of Aviv, approx. the night of the full moon	Whole Israelite Community	• On the 10th of Aviv each man takes a lamb/goat without blemish for his household (i.e. extended family)[2] and protects it until the 14th. • If the household cannot eat the entire lamb, they are to share it with their neighbor. • On the 14th day of Aviv/Nissan, every Israelite will slaughter it sometime between late afternoon and sunset (twilight).[3] • They are to take the blood of the sacrifice and put it on the 2 doorposts and the lintel of the house in which they were going to eat. • That same night they will eat the lamb roasted over fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. The lamb cannot be cooked in any other way and any leftovers must be burned in the morning. • They eat it hurriedly with their loins girded, sandals on their feet and a staff in their hand.

Held in the individual households of the Israelites, the Passover celebration begins as a domestic celebration. Yet there is still a sense of community to this celebration. Not able to keep the remains of the goat or lamb as leftovers[4], many families joined together under one roof to eat the sacrifice. Assuming that the participants would be together all night, blood was only placed on the doorposts of the houses in which the Israelites ate the lamb. When God saw the blood, God would pass over their celebratory homes and protect them from the plague.[5] The night before the Exodus is the only time that blood is to be placed on the doorposts as part of the Passover rituals.

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[1] Later it becomes a pilgrimage festival held at the central sanctuary: Deut. 16:1-2, 2 Kings 23:21-23, 2 Chron. 30:1-2. 13-15; 35:1-19.
[2] Propp, p. 388
[3] ibid., p. 391
[4] Nahum M. Sarna, explains that the lamb is an indispensable part of the ritual. The leftovers still have their sacred status, therefore cannot be eaten after the ritual is complete (p. 56)
[5] Propp, p. 393

AT NIGHT ON THE 15TH OF NISAN

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת עַד אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וְשָׁחֲטוּ אֹתוֹ כֹּל קְהַל עֲדַת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם... וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה

You shall keep watch over it (lamb) until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembled congregation of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight… They shall eat the flesh that same night.
Exodus 12:6, 8a

The rituals celebrating the Exodus from Egypt involve both the communal offering of a sacrifice and a family meal. The family sacrifices the lamb between the late afternoon and sunset on the 14th day of the first month, later to be called Nisan. The meat is eaten later that night which is technically the 15th of Nisan. In the instructions that follow, Moses and Aaron are told that "you shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day." (Exo. 12:16) The celebration on the first day involves the *Pesach* offering and a special meal at night that includes roasted lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

PESACH, MATZAH, & MAROR

וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה צְלִי־אֵשׁ וּמַצּוֹת עַל־מְרֹרִים יֹאכְלֻהוּ

They shall eat the flesh on that night, roasted in fire; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
Exodus 12:8

The Israelites are told specifically to eat the lamb roasted over fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This instruction becomes central to later Passover celebrations. Rabban Gamliel used to say: Anyone who has not explained the significance of three things during the Pesach Seder has not yet fulfilled their duty: The three are the *Pesach* lamb, the *matzah* and the *maror*. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5) The menu for this first Passover celebration provides the prototype of the Passover celebration.

Pesach, first mentioned in Exodus 12:11, refers to both the paschal rite and the animal killed, and is central to the Passover Eve celebrations. There is no explanation given, thus implying that it was a known term to the Israelites. There are three meanings typically associated with the root of *Pesach* (pey, shin, het): "to have compassion," "to protect," and "to skip/pass over." These meanings are derived from Exodus 12:13: "And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over (פָּסַחְתִּי) you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." The notion of skipping is also found in 1 Kings 18:21, "Elijah approached all the people and said, 'How long will you keep jumping (פֹּסְחִים) between two opinions?" The word *Pesach* can also be interpreted as פֶּה סָח "the mouth talks" stressing the importance of putting the meaning of this event into words.[6] The specific instruction for teaching the meaning of this ritual appears later in the text. Finally, Nahum Sarna explains that in the Tanach only the 14th day of the first month can be called Pesach. It is on that day that the families make the *Pesach* offering.[7] Later, in the Tanach it becomes a custom to combine *hag ha'mazot* and Pesach into one celebration and call the entire seven days Pesach, but the 14th day of the first month, the only time in which the *Pesach* is offered, is actually Pesach.[8]

The Israelites, in this particular situation, are told to eat the lamb *roasted* over fire and are specifically told not to cook it with water or eat it raw. In Deuteronomy 16 the instructions change. The Israelites are told to boil it in water and in 2 Chronicles 35, it mentions both the use of fire and boiling. Typically sacrifices were boiled.[9] Roasting is faster than boiling and on the night before the

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[6] Elia, p. xxiv

[7] The timing of Pesach is confusing. The Tanach, Exodus 12:6-8, explains that the Pesach offering is slaughtered before sunset on the 14th of Nisan. The meat of the offering is to be eaten later that night. Thus, based on the principles of the Hebrew Calendar, the meal occurs on the 15th of Nisan. Since the sacrifice is made on the 14th of Nisan, Pesach is the 14th of Nisan. However, we no longer practice the Pesach offering. Thus the rituals of Passover begin with the meal that occurs on the 15th of Nisan.

[8] Sarna, p. 56

[9] Etz Hayim, p. 382

Exodus they must eat it quickly because of the impending departure, and so, roasting it makes the most sense.

Matzot, unleavened bread, is introduced here without explanation. This implies that *matzah* was well known to the Israelites and its origin was independent from the Exodus events.[10] In the Tanach, when an offering is made to Adonai, it is often accompanied by unleavened bread. In fact, whenever a baked good is offered to God it is unleavened bread (Exo. 23:18; 29:2; 34:25; Lev. 2.5, 11; 6:9-10; 7:12; 10:12; Judg. 6:19-21; 2 Kgs 23:9). Since this meal was part of a sacrificial ritual, unleavened bread would naturally be one of its entrees. In addition, *matzot* was an ordinary food item when there was a need for hurried preparation (Gen 19:3, Judg. 6:19, 1 Sam 28:24),[11] which was the case in this situation. In Exodus 13:3 *matzah* is connected specifically to the remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.

Merorim/Maror, bitter herbs, is a generic term that "probably referred originally to the kind of pungent condiment with which pastoral nomads habitually seasoned their meals of roasted flesh."[12] As part of the Passover meal it took on deeper symbolism. William Propp explains that *merorim* "is not just the name of a plant but also an abstract plural, 'bitterness,'"[13] as seen in Lamentations 3:15, "He has filled me with bitterness (מְרוֹרִים)." These herbs are also directly connected to the travails of slavery in Egypt—"The Egyptians ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter (וַיְמָרְרוּ) for them with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field." (Exo. 1:13-14) This herb that was first a traditional seasoning for roasted meats, later carries forth a greater message when eaten as part of this ritual meal.

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[10] Sarna, p. 55
[11] Propp, p. 393
[12] Sarna, p. 55
[13] Propp, p. 394

Finally, the Israelites are also told to eat the *Pesach* frantically with their loins girded, sandals on their feet and a staff in their hand. Why do they eat it in this fashion? The "loins girded" was a standard type of dress consisting of a flowing shirt-like garment that was tied with a belt. They were on the brink of departure. This garment allowed the person to easily move and was thus often worn on long journeys. The staff was sometimes associated with "girded loins" as seen is 2 Kings 4:29. Sandals were typically worn outside, but since the Israelites were preparing themselves for departure, they wore them inside making this occasion an exceptional instance.[14] *Hippazon* translated as hurriedly or frantically is only used in relationship to the Exodus. It connotes haste informed by anxiety and fear. In Deuteronomy 16:3 Israel's *hippazon* is associated with the unleavened bread. Rapid eating is not a typical behavior and is brought on here in anticipation of their immediate departure.[15]

After God provides the instructions for the night before the Exodus, God immediately turns the focus to future commemorations. This celebration is not a one-time event. Each year on this day, people are to gather together to remember the Exodus from Egypt. The next set of instruction thus provides Moses and Aaron with the requirements for remembering and celebrating their Exodus from Egypt in the future. God explains that these newly ordained rituals will be observed because God brought them out of Egypt on this very day.

[14] Propp, p. 397 and Sarna, p. 56
[15] Propp, p. 397-398 and Sarna, p. 56

Exodus 12:14-20- The Pesach for All Generations (a.k.a. The Festival of Matzot)				
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Why observe it?**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
הַמַּצּוֹת (Feast of) Unleavened Bread	A domestic celebration, occurring in the home of the Israelites In the first month, Aviv, from the 14th day in the evening until the 21st day in the evening.	On this day God brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt	Whole Israelite Community	• This is a day of remembrance that will be celebrated as a festival to Adonai by all future generations. • The celebration is now seven days • From the first day to the seventh day (7 days) no one is to eat unleavened bread or anything with leaven. This is true for the stranger or citizen of the country. Not only can you not eat leaven in your house, but you cannot eat leavened bread anywhere in your settlements. • On the first day, leaven shall be removed from your house. • The first day and the seventh day will be sacred days. On these days no one is to perform any work except for the food that he/she will eat that day.

This second half of God's instructions does not pertain to the approaching Exodus and they are not specifically for the Israelites who are about to depart from Egypt. These instructions are to be passed on to future generations, so they will know how to remember the upcoming events.

THIS IS A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לָכֶם לְזִכָּרוֹן וְחַגֹּתֶם אֹתוֹ חַג לַיהוָה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם תָּחָגֻּהוּ

This day shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it as a festival to Adonai throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time.
Exodus 12:14

God explains to Moses and Aaron, that this day, the 15th of the first month, will be a day of remembrance in every generation. What does a day of remembrance entail? Nahum Sarna explains that *Zikkaron*- "remembrance, memorial," (zayin, kof, resh) connotes more than recalling events from the past. It means, "to be mindful, to pay heed, signifying a sharp focusing of attention upon someone or something. It embraces concern and involvement…[It] is active, not passive."[16] This event is not just any event. The Exodus is to become a significant part of Israel's memory. (See

[16] Sarna, p. 13

chapter 2.) Recalling this event in every generation will strengthen one's faith and identity, transforming their behavior and bonding them as a community. It also entails the performing of certain ritual actions and foods that help to teach and pass on the message of the event. (See chapter 4). Remembering is central to the Passover celebration and how one remembers the Exodus from Egypt is central to the evolution of this holiday.

SACRED DAYS

וּבַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלָאכָה לֹא־יֵעָשֶׂה בָהֶם אַךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל לְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ הוּא לְבַדּוֹ יֵעָשֶׂה לָכֶם

You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared for you.
Exodus 12:16

The first and last days of the festival are elevated above the other days of the festival. They are called, "sacred occasions." It is an ambiguous term that is associated with the Holiness Code in the Book of Leviticus. The verb k-r-' may mean "to proclaim" or "to summon, invite." Accordingly, one could understand מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ as "a sacred assembly, convocation," indicating that on an occasion so designated, the community is summoned for common worship and celebration.[17] The text provides information about the importance of the first day. The 15th of Nisan is the night of the *Pesach* in Egypt and the beginning of the events of the Israelites' Exodus. But there is no information provided for the significance of the 7th day, the last day of the festival. In fact, there is no reason provided for why the celebration lasts for seven days. One suggestion is that it is a link to the custom for holidays associated with the Temple or *mishkan*, such as Sukkot, to be seven days. Rabbinic tradition suggests that on the seventh day after the Exodus, the pursuing

[17] Levine, p. 154

Egyptian army drowned in the Sea of Reeds.[18] However, the ritual prescribed for the day does not suggest this connection.

THE FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַמַּצּוֹת... בָּרִאשׁן בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בָּעֶרֶב תֹּאכְלוּ מַצֹּת
עַד יוֹם הָאֶחָד וְעֶשְׂרִים לַחֹדֶשׁ בָּעֶרֶב: שִׁבְעַת יָמִים שְׂאֹר לֹא יִמָּצֵא בְּבָתֵּיכֶם

You shall observe the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread... In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. No leaven shall be found in your houses for seven days.
Exodus 12:17a, 18-19a

The focus of this future celebration is on unleavened bread. There is no mention of the *Pesach*. Immediately following the instructions to make this a day of remembrance, the Israelites are told to remove leaven from their homes and settlement and to eat *matzot* for seven days. No reason is given for its removal or how it should be removed. Later in the chapter, verses 34[19] and 39[20] can possibly provide the foundation for the prohibition of leaven stating that when the Israelites left Egypt frantically they had no time to let the dough rise. But the text does not actually make a connection. Sarna explains that "since leaven is also forbidden with certain types of sacrifices that are wholly unconnected with the Passover, it must be banned on other grounds, perhaps because of its use in some pagan rite."[21] Whether or not the ban of leaven and the command to eat *matzot* was originally connected to the events of the Exodus is unclear. However, as the commemoration developed, this connection was made. (See the commentary on *Matzah*, p. 120)

[18] Etz Hayim, p. 392
[19] "So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders." (Exo. 12:34)
[20] "And they baked unleavened cakes of dough that they had taken out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay; nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves." (Exo. 12:39)
[21] Sarna, p. 58

There are noticeable differences between the Pesach of Egypt and the Pesach of Future Generations. The original celebration focused on the *Pesach* offering and the meal that followed. The Pesach in the future is no longer a one-night event. Rather, it is a seven day celebration that focuses on eating *matzot* and removing leaven from the house and settlement. There is no mention of the *Pesach* offering, *maror*, putting blood on the doorposts, or eating in haste. In these original instructions there is a clear differentiation between Pesach—the night of the 14th of the first month, and the Festival of Unleavened Bread—the following seven days. The only commonality is eating *matzot*.

God has finished explaining the rituals for the meal prior to the Exodus and has set forth the requirements for the Festival of Unleavened Bread that will be celebrated in every generation. Moses now turns towards the elders of Israel and relays, with interpretation and clarification, the instructions for the *Pesach*.

Exodus 12:21-28- Moses Relays the Instructions for the *Pesach*			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
No specific name is given	A domestic celebration, occurring in the homes of the Israelites Instructions are given specifically for the night before the Exodus and there is general mentioned made about observing it in the future.	Whole Israelite Community	• Pick out lambs for your family and slaughter the *Pesach* offering. • Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin, and apply it to the 2 doorposts and lintel. • No one should go outside of his/her home until morning. God will see the blood on your lintel and doorposts and pass over your house as God harms the Egyptians with the plague. • You shall observe this matter as a rule for you and all future generations. And when you enter the land that Adonai has promised, you will also observe this rite. • When you child says to you, "What is this rite to you?" you shall say, "It is the *Pesach* offering to Adonai because God passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when God harmed Egypt, but saved our houses."

In relaying the previous instructions Moses states that "You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for you and for your descendants. And when you enter the land that Adonai

will give you, as God has promised, you shall observe this rite." (Exo. 12:24-25) It is no wonder that a child will ask, "What do you mean by this rite?" (Exo. 12:26) It is not clear in Moses' instructions what the "this" is, in his statement "You shall observe this as an institution." Ramban explains that the reference is to the slaughtering of the *Pesach* offering, not to the daubing of the blood.[22] In addition, the answer that Moses says to give to the child's question would also point to "this" referring to the *Pesach* offering, "It is the *Pesach* offering to Adonai" (Exo. 12:27). The blood is only commanded for the Pesach in Egypt because of the specific circumstance, the tenth plague, on that night. Furthermore, Moses' instructions do not specifically mention a meal as part of this institution for all time. However, the term used here for the *Pesach* offering, זֶבַח־פֶּסַח, implies a meal. *Zevach* is a term associated with the meal that is eaten as part of the sacrificial ritual. Even though the festival meal is not mentioned in Moses' instructions, it can be assumed that the Israelites understood from its name that a meal would take place as part of this ritual. As mentioned above, a meal would generally include *matzot* and *maror* as part of its menu.

REENACTING THE FIRST PASSOVER

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְחָק־לְךָ וּלְבָנֶיךָ עַד־עוֹלָם

You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for you and for your descendants.
Exodus 12:24

Moses' instruction in Exodus 12:24 commands future generations to reenact the first Passover. Each year on the 15th day of Nisan, Jews are to create an experience that is reminiscent of this first Passover. They are to participate in the same rituals and actions as their ancestors did on the night before they departed Egypt. Reenactment of this moment is central to the Passover celebration.

[22] ibid., p. 60

The Israelites have departed or are in the process of departing from Egypt[23]. God gives Moses and Aaron the regulations of the *Pesach* offering.

Exodus 12:43-49- The Law of the *Pesach* (or Defining the Participants)			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
פֶּסַח *Pesach* Offering	There is no mention	Whole Israelite Community	Theses are the laws of the *Pesach* offering: • No foreigner shall eat it. • A slave who has been bought can eat of it, only after he has been circumcised. • No bound or hired servant may eat of it • It shall be eaten in one house, the meat cannot be taken outside the house • You cannot break a bone of it • The entire community of Israel shall offer it. • If a foreigner who dwells with you wants to offer a *Pesach* to Adonai, all his males must be circumcised, then he can be allowed to offer it and he will be as a citizen of the land. But any one who is uncircumcised may not eat of it. • There is one law for the citizen and the foreigner that dwells with you.

The instructions for the Passover celebrations have been addressed to the whole Israelite community (כָּל־עֲדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, Exo. 12:3). Here it states that the entire community shall offer the *Pesach*. But who is considered part of this Israelite community? These laws of the *Pesach* offering specifically define who are the people being redeemed by specifically stating who is excluded from the ritual. Unlike the definitions of other sacrifices found at the beginning of Leviticus, the *Pesach* offering is defined by those who eat it, emphasizing the communal nature of this sacrifice.

The law states no bound or hired slave—a non-Israelite wage earner, or a foreigner may eat the paschal lamb. A foreigner is a non-Israelite who resides in the land temporarily, perhaps for business. He does not have the same religious or historical background, therefore is not obligated to practice the rituals. However, a slave who has been bought can eat of it after he has been

[23] It is not clear from the text.

circumcised. Likewise, a foreigner can eat of it if all his men have been circumcised. If a man is uncircumcised he may not eat of it. As seen, circumcision is the primary emphasis. It is the physical symbol of God's covenant and separates the Israelite men from all other nations. Sarna explains that the importance of circumcision "frames the story of Israel's redemption from Egyptian slavery. This emphasis was forcefully expressed in 4:24-26, when Moses set out to return to Egypt to commence his mission of liberation, and it is now stressed once again at the moment of the successful fulfillment of that mission."[24] Additionally, rabbinic tradition (Mehilta Bo) interprets "בְּדָמַיִךְ חָיִי" in Ezekiel 16:6 as two bloods—the blood of the *Pesach* sacrifice and the blood of circumcision. It then states that for these two reasons, the Israelites were worthy of redemption and thus freed from Egypt. The original notion of Pesach was separation. The blood on the doorpost of the houses in the first Pesach celebration in Egypt clearly separated the Israelites from the Egyptians by God striking certain houses and passing over (פָּסַח) others. In this section, boundaries are clearly being defined.

God has just freed the Israelites from the land of Egypt. Moses speaks to the people.

Exodus 13:3-10: The Seven Day Festival			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
חַג לַיהוָה Festival of Adonai (this is the name for the 7th day)	This will be done in the month of Aviv when God brings them into the land of the Canaanities, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites, which God promised to their ancestors. This occurs every year.	Whole Israelite Community	• Remember this day, that you went free from Egypt. Do not eat leavened bread. • Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. No leavened bread shall be found with you or found in your territory. • On the seventh day there shall be a festival to Adonai • Explain to your son that day, "It is because of what Adonai did for me when I went free from Egypt."

[24] Sarna, p. 63

In speaking to the people, Moses reiterates that the Israelites are supposed to remember this day, when God freed them with a mighty hand from the house of bondage. The sentence construction of 13:3 implies that remembering this day is equated with not eating leavened bread.[25] *Matzah* thus becomes a symbol for remembering and actualizing the experience.

YOU SHALL TELL

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
And you shall tell to your child on that day.
Exodus 13:8a

Casually placed in a subsequent set of instructions is one of the most central commandments of the Passover celebration: And you shall tell to your child on that day, "It is because of what Adonai did for me when I went free from Egypt." (Exo. 13:8) The verb הִגַּדְתָּ "tell" is the basis for the book containing the prayers, rituals and readings for the first nights of Passover. Haggadah, the name of this book, has the same root and means, "The Telling." In Exodus 12:26-27, parents are told how to answer their child when he or she asks, "What do you mean by this rite?" But in this set of instructions, parents are told not to even wait for their children to ask questions. They must take the initiative for explaining the meaning of these rituals.[26]

But what exactly are the parents supposed to tell their children? The Torah explains that there are two times a year when a Jew must relate the story of the Exodus from Egypt: *Havaat Bikkurim*, when bringing the first fruits, and during the Passover celebration. In Deuteronomy 26:5-10, the Torah presents the text that is to be recited when presenting the fruit to Adonai. (See chapter 2, p. 55 for the text.). A specific text is not mandated for the retelling on Passover, there is only a

[25] "And Moses said to the people, '*Remember this day*, (on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how Adonai freed you from it with a mighty hand), *no leavened bread shall be eaten*.'" (Exo. 13:3)
[26] Sarna, p. 66

general comment about the content. Furthermore, the instruction to recite the story at the time of the first fruits uses the verbs וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ -"you should respond and say." It implies that one is only required to recite the following text. The instructions for telling the story to your children on Passover uses the verb וְהִגַּדְתָּ- "you should tell," which implies explanation rather than minimally stating the ideas. The commandment cannot be fulfilled by simply telling the story or opening up the Torah and reading the Torah portions—Shemot, Va'era, Bo and half of Beshalah—that tell the story of the Exodus. This verb demands more than recitation. It calls for one to translate and elaborate the story through exegesis, discussions, debates, additional readings, questions and conceptualization. The Mishnah in Pesachim (10:4) furthers this idea by using the verb לדרוש "to expound upon" which provides a sense of learning, discussing and analyzing. As will be discussed later, the Mishnah mandates beginning with the same text that is used for *Havaat Bikkurim*, "My father was a wandering Aramean…"(Deut. 26:5-10), but requires that one elaborates on this text.

Additionally, when are parents supposed to explain, "It is because of what Adonai did for me when I went free from Egypt?" The verse says "on that day." Which day is it suggesting? It should be explained on the day in which God commanded the *Pesach* to be offered. Based on the instructions in Exodus 12:14,[27], "that day" refers to the 14th day of Nissan, the day in which the *Pesach* offering is presented to Adonai. The same question is asked in the Haggadah (See Commentary to "The Rabbis of B'nai B'rak, Rabbi Elazar & the Four Children, p. 132)

PESACH IN LEVITICUS, NUMBERS & DEUTERONOMY

Immediately before the original instructions for the Passover celebrations, the calendar is reformed to reflect a new religious life and the importance of the Exodus. Exodus 34 briefly reminds the

[27] "This day (referring to the previous information about the day that the *peach* is offered) shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it as a festival to Adonai throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time." (Exo. 12:14)

Israelites about their obligations for Pesach and the other festivals, after the incident with the Golden Calf. Chapter 23 in Leviticus once again presents a detailed calendar of the annual festivals celebrated in biblical times and the sacrifices that are required throughout the year. It is immersed in the descriptions of ritual legislation and is a statement of priestly tradition. Levine labels this chapter "The Calendar of Sacred Time."

Leviticus 23: 4-8- Priestly Passover Instructions			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
On the 14th day of Aviv: פֶּסַח לַיהוָה *Pesach offering to Adonai* On the 15th day of Aviv: חַג הַמַּצוֹת לַיהוָה *Festival of Unleavened Bread to Adonai*	14th & 15th days of Aviv. It occurs for seven days. It does not mentioned where the offering is made, where one celebrates the Festival of Unleavened Bread or where one is located during the seven days.	Whole Israelite People	• In the first month, on the 14th day of that month, at twilight, present a *Pesach* offering to Adonai. • The 15th day of that month is a Festival of Unleavened Bread. • You shall eat unleavened bread for 7 days • On the 1st day and the 7th day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion. You shall not do laborious work on those days. • Seven days you shall make fire offerings to Adonai

In these instructions the eating of the *matzah* is not bound up with the sacrifice. They are presented as two separate rituals. Milgrom explains that "the consensus holds that both the *Pesach* and the *massot* originated as first fruit festivals, the former observed by shepherds and the latter, by farmers, to ensure the fertility of their respective flocks and crops."[28] At this point in the evolution of the Passover celebration, they are mentioned together for the first time, but remain as two separate rituals.

The observances that take place during the seven days following the 14th day of the first month are mentioned multiple times in the Book of Exodus and are called by two names: חַג הַמַּצוֹת and חַג לַיהוָה. In this account, the names are combined: חַג הַמַּצוֹת לַיהוָה. Eating *matzah* for seven days in now officially associated with the term חַג, "festival." The term חַג means "turn, twist,

[28] Milgrom, *Anchor Bible: Leviticus 23-27*p. 1972

dance out of happiness" (1 Sam 30:16, Ps 42:5), and its nominal form in Arabic means "pilgrimage, procession, festal gathering."[29] The first חג appears in Moses' demand of Pharaoh in Ex. 10:9 "We will all go, young and old. We will go with our sons and daughters, our flocks and herds, for we must observe Adonai's *hag*." A חג is a family affair similar to the family gathering on the night before the Exodus (Exo. 12:3-13). People of all generations are not only to come together for the *Pesach* offering, the entire seven days is also suppose to be family celebration.

Traditionally, a חג is associated with a pilgrimage. In Exodus 23:17 and 34:23 it states, "three times a year all your males shall appear before the Sovereign, Adonai." These verses prescribe an appearance at a local altar. There is no mention of needing to make a journey to a centralized sanctuary to make the sacrifice. Thus the חג mentioned in the Leviticus instructions is not a pilgrimage, but can be better described as a community festival.[30]

The Israelites have just finished building and dedicating the Tabernacle and altar, and the purification of the Levites has just occurred. As the Israelites are making the final preparations for their departure from Sinai, they observe the first Passover sacrifice in the wilderness. It is the first anniversary of the Exodus from Egypt.

[29] ibid., p. 1974
[30] ibid.

Numbers 9: 1-14- The Second Passover			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**

הַפֶּסַח
 	
The *Pesach* Offering
 	
There are a number of variations of פֶּסַח
	A year after the Exodus from the land of Egypt.
	
	In the wilderness of Sinai.
	
	In "normal" circumstances: 14th day of the 1st month at twilight
	
	If impure from corpse or on long journey at that time, then: 14th day of the 2nd month at twilight
		One set of instructions is given for the whole Israelite community.
		
		Another set of instructions is given to the men who were impure because of the corpse or people who would be gone on a long journey when it should be offered.
		
		The stranger is specifically mentioned, but has same laws as the citizens.
			God spoke to Moses saying:
			• Offer the *Pesach* offering at its appointed time
			• Offer it on the 14th day of the first month, at twilight, at its appointed time
			• Offer it in accordance to all its rules and rites.
			
			Moses instructed the Israelites to offer the *Pesach* offering
			The Israelites offered it in the 1st month, on the 14th day of that month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai. The Israelites followed what God commanded Moses.
			
			Some men were impure because of the corpse and could not offer the *Pesach* on that day. These men also want to offer it. Moses and Aaron consult with God and God instructs:
			• If people are impure because of a corpse or on a long journey at the time that they would offer a *Pesach* offering to Adonai, they shall offer it in the 2nd month on the 14th day of that month, at twilight.
			  • They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs[31]
			  • They shall not leave any of it over until morning.
			  • The shall not break a bone of it.
			  • They shall offer it in strict accord with the law of the *Pesach* offering.
			• If a person who is pure and not on a journey refrains from offering the *Pesach*, that person shall be cut off from the community because he did not offer it at its set time. That person bears the guilt
			When a stranger resides with you offers the *Pesach* to Adonai, he must offer it in accordance to the rules and rites of the *Pesach*. There is one law for the stranger and citizen.

Once again instructions to offer the *Pesach* occur immediately before a departure. However, the circumstances are much different. It is one year after their departure from Egypt and they are immersed in national identity formation. They have experienced the difficulties of the desert, received the teachings of God, and have built the tabernacle. They have already participated in the specific rituals of the *Pesach* offering, thus detailed instructions are no longer needed. The Israelites heard the rules and rites in Egypt, therefore when they are told to "offer it in accordance with all its

[31] Numbers 9:11 mentions the requirements of unleavened bread and bitter herbs that are found in Exodus 12. The requirement to roast over the fire is missing here. This verse is also the source for the Hillel Sandwich, in which *maror* and *matzah* are eaten together.

rules and regulations," (Num. 9:3) they probably refer back to the only other time that Passover was celebrated—the night before the Exodus. The offering is now called הַפֶּסַח with a hey in front of it. The offering is not any *Pesach* offering, it is THE *Pesach* offering. The *Pesach* is now being defined specifically in relationship to this special occasion and is assigned special meaning. Furthermore the word צִוָּה "command" is used, "Just as Adonai commanded Moses, so the Israelites did." (Num. 9:5) God does not simply say these instructions. They are a commandment. This verb is used again in verse 8.

This section brings up the issue of what happens if someone is not able to observe this commandment at its appropriate time. An alternative time is given for people who are on a long journey or impure. People who were impure for a number of reasons are not able to participate in communal rituals and people who are on a long journey cannot always get back in time to fulfill the obligations of the sacred calendar. The temporary impurity or absence results in their inability to fulfill another mitzvah. The importance of Pesach is emphasized through the ordination of a second time in the calendar to observe these rituals and commemorate the Exodus.

These instructions also specifically mention the גֵּר, "stranger." Here גֵּר is not the same as the foreigner (בֶּן־נֵכָר) in Ex. 12:43. The stranger is a "resident alien" or a "protected stranger." Strangers had attached themselves to the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt and remained with them. (Exo. 12:38, 48) They could not own land and were largely day labors or artisans. As seen here, the stranger had equal protection with the Israelite under law, but did not have the same legal status and privileges, nor was bound by the same obligations.[32] The foreigner is a non-Israelite who resides in the land temporarily, usually for commerce. They are in the land briefly for business. The stranger can participate in the Passover rituals; the foreigner cannot unless he converts.

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[32] Milgrom, *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*, p. 398-399.

Deuteronomy mandates a major shift in religious practices. It limits sacrificial worship to a single place, prohibiting sacrificing at local altars (Deut. 12). This change affects the religious life of individuals, the sacrificial system, the celebration of festivals, etc. Chapter 16 of Deuteronomy describes the pilgrimage festivals. These festivals are mentioned here in order to make the point that their observance must be at the chosen sanctuary.

Deuteronomy 16: 1-8- Passover in a Centralized System (also The Combining of *Pesach* and *Hag HaMatzot*)			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
פֶּסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַפֶּסַח There is mention of the *Pesach* offering and the 7 days thereafter that one does not eat leavened products, but there is not one name that is given to this combination.	In the month of Aviv. It does not mention a specific day. The *Pesach* offering is made at a centralized location on the first night. After the first night they can journey home. The gathering on the 7th day is in their hometown.	Whole Israelite community	• In the month of Aviv make a *Pesach* offering to Adonai because it was in the month of Aviv, at night, that Adonai freed you from Egypt. • You shall slaughter the *Pesach* to Adonai from the flock and the herd, in the place that Adonai chooses. • You shall not each anything leavened with it. • For the 7 days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, "bread of affliction" because you hurriedly departed from the land of Egypt. This shall always happen. • For 7 days no leaven shall be found with you in all your territory • None of the flesh of what you slaughtered on the evening of the first day shall be left until morning. • You are not allowed to slaughter the *Pesach* sacrifice in any settlements that Adonai is giving you. Only at the place that Adonai will choose to establish God's name. • Only at the established place, in the evening, at sundown, the time of day when you departed from Egypt will you slaughter the *Pesach* offering[33]. • You shall cook and eat it at the place that Adonai will choose • In the morning you can start back on your journey home. • After eating unleavened bread for 6 days, on the 7th day you shall gather (in your hometown) for Adonai and do no work.

There are many differences between what is mentioned here about the Pesach and the Festival of Unleavened Bread and what is mentioned in the other books of the Torah. The emphasis here is on the newly ordained practice of offering sacrifices at a central location. The previous celebrations were strictly a home celebration and this new ordinance will change the nature of the

[33] Originally the Pesach sacrifice was connected to the protection from the 10th plague. Based on Deut. 16:6, the Pesach is seen as the beginning of the Exodus.

celebration. Now they are to travel to a designated spot to offer the *Pesach* and then can travel home to celebrate the rest of the festival. In addition, these new instructions tell them that they should cook it and eat it at the chosen spot. The meal no longer takes place as a family gathering in their home. Even though these instructions are given here, the enforcement of the limitation of sacrifice to a single place does not occur in the Bible until the days of Joshua and later in the days of David and Solomon.[34] Centralization cannot go into effect until the Israelites enter their allotted territory, west of the Jordan, and hold it securely. Security is necessarily so they can travel safely and not have to worry about their homes being attacked while they are gone. These conditions were first met in the days of Joshua and then once and for all in the days of David and Solomon.[35]

Another difference is what can be used for the *Pesach* offering. In Exodus 12:24-25 the sacrifice could only come from the flock. Now it can also come from the herd. Halachic exegesis has "resolved the conflict in favor of Exodus, limiting the *Pesach* offering to sheep and goats and taking the large cattle of our verse (Deut. 16:2) as referring to extra offerings in honor of the festival."[36] This resolution comes from the instruction in 2 Chronicles 35:7-13, which tries to resolve the difference. In Chronicles, the cattle are separate from the *Pesach* offering. They are donated for use in the time of the *Pesach* offering, but are not specifically for the *Pesach*. They are to be used as "sacred offerings." Furthermore, cattle are much larger than sheep and goats. It is also a possibility that when the Pesach was a home ritual, the cattle would have been too much to consume. Now that it is a centralized practice, cattle would help feed the larger numbers.

As noted before, there is also a difference between how the meat is cooked in these instructions and the Pesach in Egypt. In Exodus 12:8-9 it states that the flesh must be roasted. Here it uses וּבָשַׁלְתָּ meaning "to boil in water." 2 Chronicles 35:13 also uses the same root and says

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[34] Tigay, p. 118
[35] ibid., p. 123
[36] ibid., p. 153

that it was "in fire" and then uses the root in conjunction with the sacred offerings and says that it can be in pots, cauldrons and pans. Perhaps the root can mean any type of cooking, thus solving the conflict.

This set of instructions also combines the Pesach and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which until here were two separate rituals. The *Pesach* refers only to the sacrifice offered at the end (twilight) of the 14th day of the first month. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, technically only refers to the 7 day festival that begins on the 15th day. (Lev. 23:5-6) As explained by Tigay, "the *Pesach* sacrifice commemorates the sacrifice made by the Israelites on the night before the Exodus, while the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates the fact that the following morning they had to bake unleavened bread in their rush to leave Egypt."[37] Eating the unleavened bread because of the hasty departure could be the reason for eating it during the 7 days. But it can't be the reason for eating it the night before the departure. Unleavened bread was originally part of the menu for sacrificial meals. Eating it is part of both rituals, but the reason for eating it was different. Deuteronomy 16:3 combines the reasons for eating the unleavened bread into one as well as combining the two practices.

THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION

לֹא־תֹאכַל עָלָיו חָמֵץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֵּאָכֵל־עָלָיו מַצוֹת **לֶחֶם עֹנִי** כִּי בְחִפָּזוֹן יָצָאתָ
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ׃

"You shall not eat anything leavened with it (the Pesach); for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of affliction—for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live."
(Deuteronomy 16:3)

Eating unleavened bread throughout the Pesach rituals is now connected to the hasty departure. The act of eating this "bread of affliction" helps to remember the day of departure. The

[37] ibid., p. 152

first *Pesach* is to be reenacted across all generations. Not only is a parent supposed to explain the rituals, but it is also an obligation to reenact the Israelites' experience by eating unleavened bread. One must perform certain actions in order to remember and convey the meaning of the Exodus from Egypt. Eating the *matza*, *maror* and *korban Pesach* helped to fulfill the obligation of reenactment and instruction. They ultimately function as audio-visual aids in the educational tone of the celebration.[38]

PESACH IN PRE & POST EXILIC TIMES

Throughout the Torah there are multiple times in which the narrative provides instructions for celebrating Passover. By the last account in Deuteronomy, all the commandments regarding the Passover celebrations have been laid out. Yet, throughout the Prophets and Writings, there are additional descriptions of Passover celebrations. These accounts show a transition. In the Torah all the instructions are being given to the Israelites who participated in the Exodus. This event was a significant moment in their personal history. But what happens when this generation dies and the future generations are supposed to follow the instructions given in the Torah? The descriptions of Passover in the Prophets and Writings provide accounts of how future generations, no longer personally connected to the event, observed the instructions given to their ancestors.

The first time that the celebration of Passover is mentioned in the post- Torah scriptures is in the Book of Joshua, 5:10-12. All the people who had come out of Egypt had died. The original group of Israelites had all been circumcised, but the people who had been born after the Exodus and during the desert wandering had never been circumcised. Immediately before the Passover celebration, Joshua has the entire community circumcised and they remained in what would subsequently be named Gilgal until they recovered.

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[38] Cohen and Brander, p. 9

Joshua 5:10-12: The First Passover in the Land			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
הַפֶּסַח	In Gilgal, in the steppes of Jericho 14th day on the month and the next 7 days	Whole Israelite Community	• Encamped in Gilgal the Israelites offer the *Pesach* offering on the 14th day of the month, towards the evening. • On the day after the *Pesach* offering, they ate of the produce of the country, unleavened bread and parched grain. • On that same day, when they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased.

This Passover celebration is connected to both (1) the circumcision that takes place immediately before the offering and (2) being in Canaan, the Promised Land. In Exodus 12:43-50 it states that no uncircumcised man can eat *Pesach* or participate in the rituals. Since this new generation was not circumcised they couldn't participate in the Passover rituals. Once they were circumcised, symbolizing their identity with the Israelite people and relationship with God, they could fulfill the mitzvah to commemorate this moment in their national history. As mentioned earlier in the description of Exodus 12:43-49, circumcision and the *Pesach* offering are often connected in Jewish tradition. Here is another example.

This celebration is also the first time they are observing Passover in the Promised Land. At this point in the narrative they have recently entered the land and have not obtained security, therefore, they are still not obligated to observe the laws for centralized sacrificial worship. However, they are to fulfill the commandment in Leviticus 23:10-14 that when you enter the land, you shall bring the first sheaf. Thus this Passover celebration is also connected to the new grain. Both the *Pesach* and the new grain are eaten at the same time. The practice of eating these two products together would later be impossible during Passover.

In the Books of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles there are two accounts of King Josiah's Passover celebration. In 2 Kings, Josiah was ruling Judah and instituted reforms in response to the discovery of a covenant scroll in the House of Adonai. He assembles the whole nation, reads to them from

the scroll and tells them to fulfill its terms with all their heart and soul. The nation agrees. Josiah purifies the Temple and priests, eliminates the local Israelite shrines and brings all the priests to Jerusalem. After this reformation, the king commands the people to perform the *Pesach* sacrifice.

As mentioned in this section, (2 Kings 23:22) the *Pesach* had not been offered (in the ways commanded before) during the days of the judges of Israel or the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. Only now in the 18th year of Josiah is it being offered.

2 Kings 23:21-23: King Josiah's Passover- Version I			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
פֶּסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ	18th year of King Josiah It does not mention specifically when during that year, but it can be assumed that since it was done according to the scroll then it would take place on the 14th of the first month	Whole Israelite Community	• The king commanded all the people to offer the *Pesach* offering to Adonai, your God, as written in the scroll of the covenant.

The renewal of the covenant and the celebration of Pesach are connected. To fulfill the covenant they must follow the instructions of the *Pesach*. The first Passover in Egypt is the beginning stage of a national and individual process.[39] The Israelites left the idolaters of Egypt to become their own people. So is the case in the time of Josiah. First they abandon their idolatrous practices and then they celebrate Pesach. The importance of Passover is emphasized by the limited information provided about Josiah's time. In describing the community's efforts to get rid of all the symbols of idolatry and to re-purify the temple, the only observance that is commanded is Pesach. The celebration of Pesach is central to this reformation process. Just as the first Passover celebration marked the beginning of the Israelites' change from being an enslaved people to a free nation, the current reform process marks a change in the behavior and attitude of Josiah's people.

[39] Fishbane, p.426

In the 2 Chronicles account Josiah purifies the Temple and begins to reform the people's practices. The scroll is then found. Afterwards, Josiah extends his reforms to further points in the northern tribes. 2 Chronicles explains that since the time of the prophet Samuel, no Passover like this one had been kept in Israel.

2 Chronicles 35: 1-19: King Josiah's Passover- Version II			
What is it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
פֶּסַח לַיהוָה הַפֶּסַח חַג הַמַּצּוֹת	18th year of the reign of King Josiah In Jerusalem	Whole Israelite community participates, but it is now centered around the priests and Levites.	• Josiah keeps the Pesach for Adonai in Jerusalem • The *Pesach* is offered on the 14th day of the first month • Josiah reinstates the priest in their shifts and rallies them to the service of the House of Adonai • He tells the priests that after they sanctify themselves, they should slaughter the *Pesach* offering and prepare it for their kinsmen according to the word of God given by Moses. • Josiah donates to the people small cattle, lambs and goats for the *Pesach* offering • His officers give a freewill offering to the people, priests and Levites. • Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chiefs of the House of God, donated small and large cattle to the priests for the *Pesach* offering • The officers of the Levites donate small and large cattle to the Levites for the *Pesach* offering. • At the service, the king commands the priests to stand at their posts and the Levites in their divisions • They slaughter the *Pesach* offering. The priests receive the blood and dash it, while the Levites flayed the animals. • They remove the parts to be burnt, distributing them to the people, and making sacrifices to Adonai as prescribed in the scroll of Moses. • They do the same for the cattle • They roast the *Pesach* offering, while the sacred offerings they boil in pots • They make the *Pesach* offering and the burnt offering on the altar that day, according to the command of King Josiah • All the Israelites who are present make the *Pesach* offering at that time and the feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

None of the information provided in this account of the Pesach celebration is mentioned in 2 Kings. The 2 Chronicles version involves two important developments:[40] (1) the prominence of Levites in cultic affairs and (2) transformation of the Paschal offering into a Temple sacrifice like all

[40] Berlin and Brettler, p. 1821

others. In the original Passover celebration in Egypt, the members of each household offered the sacrifice. There was no official person to offer it for the community. Later on when the priests and Levites were involved in the sacrificial rites, they were not mentioned in the specific instructions for the *Pesach*. Now the priests and Levites hold a prominent role in the Pesach rites and the individual Israelites are less involved in the procedures. Furthermore, the laws set forth in Deuteronomy for a centralized sacrificial system are not actualized at the time of Josiah.

This account is also important because it harmonizes the different legal texts about Pesach found earlier in the Bible. As explained earlier, Exodus12:3-5 explains that the *Pesach* offering must be a sheep or a goat and it must be roasted, not cooked in water (b-sh-l) or consumed raw. Deuteronomy 16 states that cattle as well as sheep and goats are accepted. In addition, it explains that it must be boiled (b-sh-l). 2 Chronicles 35 now states that the *Pesach* offering must be lambs or goats (in accordance with Exodus) and the "sacred offering" that is offered with the *Pesach* offering is from the cattle. Chronicles also combines the ideas of roasted and boiled in verse 13, "They boiled the *Pesach* offering in fire." Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler explain that the "Chronicles formulation reflects a bold step: Chronicles has changed the simple, straightforward meaning of Deuteronomy and, moreover, this interpretation creates a heretofore nonexistent accompanying sacrifice. Chronicles' innovations were adopted, in varying form, in later Second Temple compositions (e.g the book of Jubilees) as well as rabbinic circles (see the variant traditions in Sifre Deut. 129, etc)"[41]

King Hezekiah reigns after David and Solomon and his stature is equivalent to Josiah. He unites the north and south and symbolizes the reunification of all Israel around the Temple in Jerusalem.

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[41] ibid, p. 1821-1822

Chronicles focuses on Hezekiah's religious achievements and emphasizes proper observance of cultic procedures in post-exilic times.[42] In the first month of the first year of his reign he opened the doors of the House of Adonai and began clean up and rededication of the Temple. The Passover celebration is found in the middle of Chapters 29-31, which presents Hezekiah's religious reforms.

2 Chronicles 30: 1-27- Hezekiah's Passover Celebration			
What's it Called?	**Location & Time**	**Participants**	**Procedure**
פֶּסַח לַיהוָה הַפֶּסַח חַג הַמַּצּוֹת	14th day of the SECOND month because the priests and Levites were not purified and many were not in Jerusalem during the first month It states that nothing like this had happened in Jerusalem since the time of King Solomon son of David of Israel	Only the Israelites in Jerusalem. A decree was sent throughout Israel, to come to Israel to keep *Pesach*, but not everyone came. Many were not purified, therefore the Levites offered the *Pesach* on behalf of them. It specifically states that all the congregation of Judah, the priests and Levites and all the congregation of Israel, and the resident aliens who came from the land of Israel and who lived in Judah, rejoiced during the seven days and the extra seven days	• Hezekiah sends word to all Israel and Judah, writes letters to Ephraim and Manasseh to come to the House of Adonai in Jerusalem to keep the *Pesach* for Adonai, God of Israel. • The king and his officers and the congregation in Jerusalem agree to keep the *Pesach* in the second month, for at the time (the first month), they were not able to keep it because not enough priests had sanctified themselves, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem. • The king and the entire congregation issued a decree and proclaimed throughout all Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan that they come and keep *Pesach* for Adonai, God of Israel in Jerusalem. (The text explains that not often did they act in accord with what was written). • The letters proclaim (v. 6-9): "O you Israelites! Return to Adoni, God of your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you who escaped from the hand of the king of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and brothers who trespassed against Adonai, God of their fathers and He turned them into a horror, as you see. Now do not be stiff-necked like your fathers; submit yourselves to Adonai and come to His sanctuary, which he consecrated forever, and serve Adonai your God so that His anger may turn back from you. If you return to Adonai, your brothers and children will be regarded with compassion by their captors, and will return to this land, for Adonai is gracious and merciful; He will not turn His face from you if you return to Him." • As the couriers pass from town to town, some laughed at them and some were contrite and came to Jerusalem • A great crowd assembles in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. • They remove the altars and incense stands in Jerusalem • They offer the *Pesach* on the 14th of the second month • The priests and Levites are ashamed, they sanctify themselves and bring a burnt offering to the House of Adonai. • They take their stations according to the Teaching of Moses. The priests dashes the blood they received from the Levites. • Since many of the congregation has not sanctified themselves, the Levites are in charge of slaughtering the *Pesach* offering for everyone who is not clean. Many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, have not purified themselves, yet they eat the paschal sacrifice in violation of what was written. • Hezekiah prays for them: "The good Adonai will provide atonement for everyone who set his mind on worshiping God, Adonai, God of his fathers, even if he is not

[42] ibid, p. 1808

			purified for the sanctuary." Adonai hears Hezekiah and heals the people. • The Israelites in Jerusalem keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. The priests and the Levites praised Adonai daily with instruments, the Levites make offerings of well-being and confess to Adonai. • All the congregation resolves to keep seven more days. • King Hezekiah and the officers contribute bulls and sheep. • There is great rejoicing in Jerusalem. • The Levite and priests bless the people and their voice iss heard and their prayer goes up to heaven.

In this celebration the emphasis is placed on the need for priests and the centralization of cultic practices. Since these two requirements (purification of priests and assembling in Jerusalem) were not met at the proper time to celebrate *Pesach* (the first month), the community referred to the ruling presented in Numbers 9—if people are impure at the time of *Pesach*, they can offer the sacrifice in the second month. Purity is also central to this celebration of Pesach. Since the people had not sanctified themselves and were impure, the Levites assisted them in their observance by offering the sacrifice for them.

Hezekiah's plea to the people to return to the proper cult practices is directly related to *Pesach*, and thus emphasizes the importance of *Pesach* to the cult. Once again the *Pesach* offering is the first act after the well-being and thanksgiving offering that were made directly after they consecrated themselves to Adonai. The people had strayed from God's teachings and religious practices. Through a call to join together in Jerusalem to observe the Passover rituals, Hezekiah is encouraging the people to return to God and the cult observances.

This Passover observance is the only time in which there is an additional seven days of celebration. It is not clear what occurs during these seven days, but from the text it seems the people are only participating in rituals of joy; they are not refraining from eating leavened bread. Baruch Bokser explains

> Both of the 2 Chronicles' accounts of royally sponsored festivities, as well as the briefer account in 2 Kings, highlight the celebratory quality of the events, reflecting the character of the national holiday which was now centralized in Jerusalem—or, at least, assumed to be centralized there. It is unclear whether the two occasions

> referred to in the texts were exceptional or whether Passover was chosen for the special celebration because it inherently lent itself to joyous festivity. In any event, the text adds the elements of extra sacrifices, rejoicing, and praises to God. As Israel's song at the sea indicates, in Exodus 15, it is not inappropriate for people to sing and praise God in response to an act of divine redemption.[43]

The celebration of return to the teachings of Adonai is interwoven with the Passover rituals. The commemoration of their ancestors' movement away from idolatry to Adonai reflects their current return to God.

Under the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia, there is a return from the Babylonian exile and a restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. Chapters 4-6 of Ezra focus on rebuilding identity and rebuilding the Temple. These two ideas go hand in hand. The Temple has just been completed on the 3rd of the month of Adar in the 6th year of the reign of King Darius. The Israelites, the priests, the Levites and all the other exiles celebrate the dedication of the House of God with sacrifices and then appointed the priests and Levities to their duties according to what was written in the Book of Moses. The next event that is mentioned is the celebration of Pesach.

Ezra 6:19-22- The Returned Exiles' Passover Celebration

What is it Called?	Location & Time	Participants	Procedure
הַפֶּסַח חַג הַמַּצּוֹת	14th day of the first month in the 6th year of the reign of King Darius.	The children of Israel who had returned from exile and all who had separated themselves from the unclean practice of the nations of the land in order to seek the God of Israel.	• The descendants of the exile kept the *Pesach* on the 14th day of the first month because the priest and the Levites had purified themselves. Every one of them was pure. • And they slaughtered the *Pesach* for all the descendants of the exile, for their fellow priests and for them. • The children of Israel who had return from exile, ate of it with all the people who separated themselves from the unclean practices of the nations of the land in order to seek Adonai, God of Israel. • They kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days in joy because Adonai made them joyful and had turned the heart of the Assyrian king towards them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the House of God, the God of Israel.

[43] Bokser, pp. 18-19.

Identity formation is a key aspect of Ezra-Nehemiah. In this particular section of Ezra, the stage of identity formation is focused on the Temple. The returnees are the ones who specifically build the Temple. This account of Temple building is different from other accounts in the Tanach. Eskenazi explains that "in Ezra-Nehemiah, the whole community is engaged in the building. This contrasts sharply with 1 Kgs 6:1-8:66 and 2 Chr 3:1-7:11, where clearly the king builds the temple, helped by paid underlings. This contrasts also with Haggai and Zechariah who emphasize the role of leaders in the construction of the temple."[44] In the same way that the kings initiate the building of the Temple, the kings are also the ones who command the celebration of Passover (2 Kings 23:21, 2 Chr 30:1, 2 Chr 35:16).[45] In Ezra-Nehemiah, Passover is the celebration of the people. Any one leader does not command it. The community initiates the celebration. In addition, the celebration of the House of God and Pesach go hand and hand. As seen previously—Temple dedication followed by a calling to celebrate Pesach is repeated often in the Tanach: The Second Pesach (Num. 9), Josiah's Pesach (2 Kgs 23 & 2 Chr. 35), Hezekiah's Pesach (2 Chr. 30), and Ezra's Pesach (Ezra 6).

This celebration once again brings up the question of who are the participants. A *Yehudi*, Jew[46], is no longer defined by an ethnic or historical boundary. A Jew is now anyone who is already and anyone who separates oneself or chooses to be a *Yehudi*. Taking on the Torah is what makes you a *Yehudi*, not your genealogy. Passover is not just about one's genealogy or history; it is also about identity formation.

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[44] Eskenazi, p. 52

[45] 2 Kings 23:21- "The king (Josiah) commanded all the people, 'Offer the Passover sacrifice to Adonai your God as prescribed in this scroll of the covenant.'" 2 Chr 30:1- "Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah; he also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh to come to the House of Adonai in Jerusalem to keep the Passover for Adonai, God of Israel." 2 Chr 35:16- "The entire service of Adonai was arranged well that day, to keep the Passover and to make the burnt offerings on the altar of Adonai, according to the command of King Josiah."

[46] The term Jew, as we know it today, comes to fruition in Ezra-Nehemiah.

PESACH IN THE POST-BIBLICAL PERIOD

Torah commands us to observe certain practices on Passover. But Torah law in general and the Pesach practices in particular, are brought into question after the destruction of the Temple. Without a centralized sacrificial system available there was a void in religious practice. Thus between the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the codification of the Mishnah in 200 C.E. there is a period of transition. Dealing with the loss of sacrifices, the Jewish community filled its religious void through reinterpreting and supplementing the biblical ordinances. The Mishnah became the next step in the evolution of religious statute. Through it the rabbis ordained new practices, while at the same time preserving rules specifically relevant for the Temple's sacrificial practices.

As is the case with all religious observances, the Passover practices needed to evolve. The biblical ordinances for the Passover evening rituals revolved around the *Pesach* offering. With this offering no longer an option, the rabbis reinterpreted the biblical practices and created new rituals based on the perspective of their time period. Two major sources—the practices and perspective of early Rabbinic Judaism and the influence of Greco-Roman culture—influenced the new structure and content of the Passover celebration.

Baruch M. Bokser, in The Origins of the Seder, explains that there are four rabbinic practices that influence and shape the new Pesach rituals. First of all, intellectual discussions become a central activity in rabbinic Judaism. The rabbis are thus concerned about whether or not someone has intelligence. In the same regard, parents' obligation to pass on knowledge to their children is now emphasized. The Torah comments on this responsibility, but Rabbinic Judaism stresses the importance, especially in regards to Passover. Expounding the Bible is a second feature common to Rabbinic Judaism. Now that Temple practices are no longer applicable, the study of scripture became the new basis for religious expression. Before this period, Biblical sources were

simply retold. Now there was a combination of retelling past events and expounding classical texts. The third perspective which is directly related to the telling of the Exodus narrative is the concept of extending the meaning of redemption. No longer is redemption a one time event associated only with the Exodus from Egypt. In Rabbinic Judaism not only is there a sense of an on-going redemption, but redemption also gets interpreted in diverse ways. Finally, Rabbinic Judaism establishes the practice of fixed blessings. Whereas the Temple had once assured the presence of the Divine in religious practices, blessings now declare Divine presence. The system of blessings adds meaning to the ritual by preparing participants for specific religious acts and interpreting the emotional encounter.[47] Larry Hoffman also explains that the rabbis' engagement was not primarily in the synagogues, but rather in Rabbinic Chavurot. These gatherings were a combination of study and mealtime rites. Thus table spirituality was a central feature of this new Judaism.[48] As seen in the chart below, each of these practices and perspectives influenced the evolving Passover celebration.

During this time, Jews belonged to the larger Greco-Roman society and were often influenced by their cultural habits and literary forms. In particular, their meal customs were especially influential in the changing and expanding of the Passover experience. In the Greco-Roman society festival meals usually took place late in the day, around three or four o'clock in the afternoon. Couches with large cushions were arranged around three sides of a table and men reclined to eat—often lying parallel to the table, propping themselves up on their left elbow, while leaving their right hand free for eating and drinking. Reclining was seen as a sign of elite dining and social superiority. Furthermore, the guests were waited on by servants. Traditionally there were three parts to the meal—hors d'oeuvres, the main course, and dessert. The host usually introduced the different dishes giving information about their ingredients, the mode of preparation and

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[47] Bokser, pp. 67-75
[48] Bradshaw and Hoffman: vol. 5, pp.10-12.

anything unusual about it. There was an assortment of entrees usually consisting of two meats. Dessert, simple compared to the rest of the dishes, was a breaking point in the meal.[49]

The festive banquet consisted of two main parts—the meal and the drinking party. Otherwise known as a symposium, the second part of the meal was more than men having a few drinks. In addition to the normative three cups of wine, there were prayers to the Greek gods and hymns were sung. This was also the time when conversation was fully enjoyed by the guests. The topics were usually based on occurrences during the meal such as the seating of people, food, wine, etc. Often the food was used to spark a conversation about specific topics. Yet there were also discussions about history, current events, and philosophy.[50]

The changes to the Passover celebration and specifically to the Paschal meal are influenced by both internal and external factors. As Joseph Tabory explains, "on the one hand, meal customs were adopted and adapted from the society and culture in which the Passover was celebrated. On the other hand, the Rabbis conducted a continuous, critical study of rabbinic texts in an attempt to understand how the Seder had been conducted when the Temple still existed."[51] Mishnah, Tractate Pesachim presents the rabbis' complex reforms of the Torah commandments for Passover. The tractate relies on the Torah commandments and is influenced by the surrounding culture. The ten chapters of the tractate contain three main topics: (1) the laws of *hametz* (leaven) and *matzah* (unleavened bread), especially the laws of the prohibitions of *hametz* on Passover; (2) the laws of the *Pesach* sacrifice, and (3) the laws of the Seder night.[52] The first part of the tractate (1:1-4:5) refers specifically to preparation for Passover and the middle section (5:1-9:11) to the *Pesach* offering. The final section, chapter 10, refers to the first night celebration—the Passover Seder. This final chapter

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[49] Leyerle in Bradshaw and Hoffman, pp. 29-61
[50] ibid.
[51] Tabory in Bradshaw and Hoffman, p. 62
[52] Pinchas Kehati, *The Mishnah vol. 3*, p. 1

most specifically relates to the second part of this thesis, therefore this section of Mishnah Pesachim will be the only one explored.

Chapter 10 seems to rely not only on scripture, but also on some other source that could resemble the Haggadah. As seen below, chapter 10 is divided into nine *mishnaot*. The left side of the chart presents the content of the *mishnaot* and the right columns compare the Mishnah statements to the ordained practices in the Bible, Greco-Roman practices, early rabbinic practices, and the contents of the Haggadah.

MISHNAH PESACHIM, CHAPTER 10[53]		**Biblical Practices**	**Greco-Roman Practices**	**Early Rabbinic Judaism**	**Haggadah Comparison**[54]
1	• On Passover eve, from just before the Minhah offering, one may not eat until it becomes dark. • And even the poorest Israelite may not eat unless he reclines[55] • And they should provide him with no fewer than four cups of wine • And even if [he is the poorest of the poor who takes] from public charity [he must do whatever it takes to have four cups of wine].	Exo. 12:8 Deut. 16:6	Reclining at the meal Using waiters to bring food/drink Using wine		
2	The details of the Seder: (Mishnah 2-8) • When they have mixed the **first cup of wine** [to recite Kiddush over it] o The House of Shammai say, "He says a blessing over the day, and afterward he says a blessing over the wine. o The House of Hillel say, "He says a blessing over the wine, and afterward he says a blessing over the day.		Waiters Using Wine	Using fixed blessings	1. Kaddesh (1st Cup of Wine)

[53] Translation adapted from Kehati and Neusner.
[54] The numbering relates to the chart, "The Order of the Seder," on p. 111
[55] See Chapter 4 on ritual.

	MISHNAH PESACHIM, CHAPTER 10[53]	Biblical Practices	Greco-Roman Practices	Early Rabbinic Judaism	Haggadah Comparison[54]
3	• [When] they bring [vegetables][56] before him, he dips the lettuce (*hazeret*) before he comes to the breaking of the bread [and the main meal] • They brought him *matzah*, lettuce[57], *Haroset*[58] and two cooked dishes [one a meat dish to remember the *Pesach* offering and the customary egg dish that represents the *haggigah* sacrifice that was offered along side the *Pesach* at the Temple][59], even though *Haroset* is not a religious obligation. • Rabbi Eliezer bar Zadok says, "It is an obligation [as a remembrance of the mortar with which the Israelites worked in Egypt]." • And in the time of the Temple they would bring before him the carcass of the *Pesach* offering.	Exo. 12:8	Hors-d'oeuvres Dipping the food Waiters		3. Karpas 8. *Matzah* 9. Maror 10. Korech 11. Shulchan Orech
4	• They mix for him a **second cup of wine** • And here the child asks his/her father [questions] • But if the child does not have the intelligence to do so, the father teaches him/her [to ask, by pointing out:][60] o "Why is this night different from all other nights? For on all other nights we eat leavened and unleavened bread, this night only unleavened bread. o For on all other nights we eat all types of vegetables, but on this night, only bitter herbs. o For on all other nights we eat meat which is roasted, stewed or boiled. But on this night [the meat] is roasted. o For on all other nights we dip our food once, but on this night twice[61]." • And according to the intelligence of the child the father instructs him/her. • He begins with degradation and concludes with praise, and expounds from "My father was a wandering Aramean" until he completes the entire section.	Exo. 12:25-27, 13:8, 14-16	Using Wine Using food and questions to spark intellectual discussion	Importance of intellectual exchange Expounding the Bible	2nd Cup of Wine 5. Maggid 5b. Four Questions 5g. Four Children 5k. Deut. 26:5-8 5l. Midrash 5m. Ten Plagues 5o. Dayyenu

[56] It was not customary to have vegetables before breaking the bread and saying a blessing over it. Thus on the Eve of Passover it was customary to bring out vegetables in order to provoke the children to ask questions. (Kehati, p. 162)

[57] The Mishnah uses *hazeret* (lettuce) instead of *maror* because it is a more available bitter herb at the time of the Mishnah. (Kehati, p. 163)

[58] *Haroset* is a mixture of apples, nuts, figs, other fruit and wine. It was customary to dip the bitter herb into the *haroset*.

[59] It was a custom to have two cooked dishes to symbolize the two sacrifices mentioned above. Reference to this custom is found in a Baraita in the Gemara of T. Pesachim 10:9.

[60] The following questions are slightly different than the one in the Haggadah. The question that asks about the meat is not included in the Haggadah. After the destruction of the Temple, the sacrifice was no longer offered and therefore no sacrificial meal. The question about why we lean on this night is not included.

[61] Typically vegetables were eaten only as appetizers. However, on the first night of Passover, they are eaten twice—as appetizers after the first cup of wine and they are dipped with the *haroset*. (Mishnah 3)

MISHNAH PESACHIM, CHAPTER 10[53]		Biblical Practices	Greco-Roman Practices	Early Rabbinic Judaism	Haggadah Comparison[54]
5	• Rabban Gamliel used to say, "Whoever has not referred to (explained the reason for) these three matters on Passover has not fulfilled his obligation [of narrating the story], and these three are: *Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*. o *Pesach*—because the Omnipresent passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt. o *Matzah*—because our ancestors were redeemed in Egypt o Maror—because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt."	Exo.13:8		Expounding the Bible	5p. Rabban Gamliel: Explanation of *Pesach*, *Matzah* & *Maror*
	• In every generation a person is obligated to see her/himself as if s/he actually came out of Egypt since it says "And you shall tell your child on that day saying, 'It is because of that which Adonai did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.'" (Ex. 13:8)				5q. B'chol Dor V'Dor
	• Therefore, we are obligated to give thanks, praise, glorify, honor, exalt, extol, bless, elevate and acclaim God who performed all these miracles for our fathers and for us. God brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festival, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption, so that we should say before God, Halleluyah[62].	2 Chron. 30: 1-27 Ezra 6:19-22	Singing and Praise of Deity	Extending the meaning of Redemption	5r. Hallel Part I
6	• Until where does he recite [the Hallel before the meal]? o The House of Shammai says, "To 'A joyful mother of children.'" (Ps. 113:9) [Only one chapter of Psalms] o The House of Hillel says, "To 'A flint into a spring of water.'" (Ps. 114:8) [This chapter includes the Exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, which were not included in the first chapter.]		Praising the Deity	Using fixed blessings Extending Hallel from the Temple to the synagogue to the home	5r. Hallel Part I
	• And he concludes with [a blessing of] redemption. [There is a disagreement about the text of this blessing:][63] o Rabbi Tarfon says, "Who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt," and he would not say a concluding [blessing]. o Rabbi Akiba says, "So may Adonai, our God and the God of our ancestors bring us in peace to future appointed times and festivals, rejoicing in the rebuilding of Your city and joyful in Your Temple worship, where may we eat of the sacrificial offerings and *Pesach* offerings…' until 'Blessed are You, Adonai, the Redeemer of Israel.'"			Extending the meaning of Redemption	

[62] "So let us say before God, Halleluyah" introduces the idea of saying Hallel. As mentioned in Mishnah 4, one must start with degradation and end with praise. The degradation is Deuteronomy 26, "My father is a wandering Aramean," and the praise is Hallel as shown in Mishnah 5.

[63] The Halacha is in accordance with Akiva.

MISHNAH PESACHIM, CHAPTER 10[53]		Biblical Practices	Greco-Roman Practices	Early Rabbinic Judaism	Haggadah Comparison[54]
7	• They mix for him the **third cup of wine** • He recites the blessing [Birkat Hamazon] over his food [and then drinks the third cup]. • **The fourth [cup of wine]**, he completes the Hallel and he says over it the blessing of song. • Between these several cups of wine (between the first two cups and the last two cups), if he wants to drink, he may drink wine. • But between the third and fourth cup of wine, he may not drink [wine because he may become too drunk to finish the Seder].		Using Wine Waiters Using Wine	Using fixed blessings	3rd Cup of Wine 13. Barech 14. Hallel 4th Cup of Wine
8	• One may not conclude the Passover-meal [with] *afikoman* (with sweets and other delicacies eaten as dessert because one is not to eat anything after the *Pesach* offering in order for the taste of it to remain with them.)[64] • If some of the people present fall asleep [during the meal]—they may [continue to] eat [when they wake up]. But if all of them [fall asleep] may not eat again [because their attention was diverted from the *Pesach*]. • Rabbi Yose says, "if they merely dozed—they may eat, if they fell into a deep sleep—they may not eat [again].[65]		Dessert (prohibited in the Seder)		12. Tzafun
9	• The [meat] *Pesach* offering after midnight [at which point it is no longer allowed to be eaten—since it is no longer night,] imparts uncleanness to the hands. • That which is made pigul and notar (meat of an offering which has remained after the time allotted for it eating) imparts uncleanness to the hands. • If a person has said the blessing for the *Pesach* offering, he is exempted [from reciting a blessing over any other] offering which he may eat.[66] o Rabbi Yishmael says, "If a person has said a blessing over [another] offering which he ate, he is not exempted from a blessing over the *Pesach* offering." o Rabbi Akiva says, "This one does not exempt that one, and that one does not exempt this one."[67]	Exo. 12:8		Using fixed blessings	

[64] The *matzah* at the end of the meal is called the afikomen. It is part of the sacrificial meal, as mentioned above. Eating the *matzah* at the conclusion of the meal creates a distinct conclusion and allows the taste of *matzah* to remain in a person's mouth because eating *matzah* is an obligation. (Kehati, p. 172)

[65] The Halacha is in accordance with Yose.

[66] As mentioned before, the Pesach offering is accompanied by the *haggigah* offering. They are questioning which of the blessings they are obligated to recite.

[67] The Halacha is in accordance with Akiva.

Mishnah Pesachim, chapter 10, expands upon the commandments presented in the Torah. The first noticeable difference is the use of wine. Nowhere in the Torah was wine commanded as part of the Passover celebration. Now there are four cups of wine that shape and direct the order of the Passover meal. This development will be further explained in the Commentary to the Wine, p. 113.

The key word in the rabbinic statue is לדרוש, "to expound upon," in Mishnah 4. This verb and the content surrounding it, clarifies the obligation in Exodus 13:8, "And you shall explain to your child on that day." The majority of Mishnah Pesachim 10 is a guidebook for parents on how they are to explain the story of the Exodus from Egypt. As stated earlier in the chapter, the commandment to tell the story cannot be fulfilled by reciting the story. One is obligated to expand it with discussions, questions, exegesis, and more. The Mishnah provides both an order and directions for completing this task.

THE ORDER OF THE MISHNAH SEDER

Food → Questions → Answers (moving from *G'nut*, to *Shevach* to *Geu'lah*) → **Praise** (Hallel)

The evening begins with food[68] (Mishnah 3): vegetables, *matzah*, bitter herbs, *Haroset*, and two main dishes. The menu is similar, with slight variations, to the meal at the first Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12:8). *Haroset* is an addition, thus causing the debate over whether or not it is an obligation. The food on the Seder table provokes the participants, especially the children, to ask questions (Mishnah 4). The meal items are either different from the food typically found on the dinner table or the manner in which they are eaten varies from the typical procedures. These

[68] The description of the order and themes of the Mishnah Seder is based on notes from Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman's Haggadah Class, Fall 2004, HUC-JIR-NY.

variations cause the participants to ask "why is this night different from all other nights?" If the children do not ask questions it is up to the parent to provoke the children's interest by asking a set of questions provided in the Mishnah. (Based on Exo. 13:8)

The questions lead to answers. The Mishnah states that the answer must be given in a manner that meets the individual needs of each participant. Each person sitting at the Seder table must be able to understand the answer—the story of the Exodus—no matter his or her intellectual capability (Mishnah 4). The rabbis also provide instructions for the content of the story that was not provided in the Torah. Mishnah 4 instructs the leader to start with the same story that is told when bringing the first fruits, Deuteronomy 26:5-8, "My father was a wandering Aramean…," but it also provides further instructions. It specifically states that one begins with *g'nut*, "degradation" and ends with *sheyach*, "praise," however it does not explain what is the *g'nut* and *sheyach*. This ambivalence creates the future debate between Rav and Shmuel that is found in Pesachim 116a and the Haggadah. (See the Commentary to Rav and Shmuel, p. 128) Furthermore, Mishnah 6 emphasizes that the conclusion of the festivities must reflect the theme of *ge'ulah*, "redemption." Thus the three main themes of the Mishnah Seder are:

THEMES OF THE MISHNAH SEDER

G'nut/ Degradation *Sheyach*/Praise *Ge'ulah*/ Redemption

Not only does the food provoke the children to ask questions, the food also helps to explain the story. At the beginning of the Passover rituals in the Torah, the specific food was present at the meal because it was part of the sacrificial meal. As the rituals developed, symbols were attached to the food, as seen in Deuteronomy 16:3, "the bread of affliction." The Mishnah goes one step further by adding the instructions of Rabban Gamliel. The three foods that were required to be on the

Passover table in Egypt—*Pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror* (Exo. 12:8)—also must be on the Mishnah's Seder table, but now there is an additional obligation. Each food is symbolic of a different aspect of the Exodus story. By pointing out the meaning of each food, the story is further explained.

From the Biblical descriptions to the Mishnaic statutes, we are provided instructions for fulfilling our obligation to remember the Exodus from Egypt. As noted in this chapter, the methods used to fulfill our obligation have developed over time. The Passover Haggadah, the next step in this evolving celebration, is essentially an instruction manual for the Passover Seder. Based on directions presented in Mishnah Pesachim Tractate 10, the Haggadah provides guidelines for the rituals and procedures for the Passover Seder. The Commentary on the Haggadah will elaborate on how the Haggadah integrates the Biblical Commandments and the Mishnah statutes into its rituals and structure.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE SACRED NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS EXPERIENCE

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

IN EVERY GENERATION a person is obligated to see her/himself as if s/he actually came out of Egypt. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5)

Is it possible for each person in every generation to see her/himself as if s/he came out of Egypt? It is easy for the generation who was there. And it may even come naturally to their children. Even the third generation, the grandchildren of those who were freed from slavery in Egypt, may feel as though they themselves crossed the sea, baked *matza* in the sun and followed in the footsteps of Moses and Miriam. But what about the fourth generation? Or the Jews born in Spain or the shtetls of Eastern Europe centuries later? What about our grandparents passing through Ellis Island? Or us, the generation 2,000 years removed from the days of Moses and Pharaoh? And what about the generations yet to be born? Will they see themselves as if they came out of Egypt?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Torah states that it is an obligation to make the celebration of Passover a day of remembrance in every generation (Exodus 12:14). Remembering is central to the celebration. The Mishnah goes a step further. Not only are we to remember the Exodus from Egypt in each generation, but we are also obligated to feel every year as if we made the journey out the Egypt (Pesachim 10:5). So how is it possible for people in every generation to see themselves as coming out of Egypt? The answer lies in *how* the Exodus from Egypt is told and passed from one generation to the next. Historical events can be viewed and retold in multiple ways. On the one hand it can be told as History—presenting facts and figures. On the other hand it can be presented as Heritage—telling a story. Both are important means for understanding and connecting to the past. Yet their purpose is different. David Lowenthal in his article *Fabricating Heritage* explains that "history tells all who will listen what has happened and how things came to be

as they are." It presents facts and seeks the truth. History is an objective view of a people that can be studied by academics of different generations. Heritage is based on memory. It is how a person or people view their past from their point of view. As Lowenthal explains, it "passes on exclusive myths of origin and endurance, endowing us alone with prestige and purpose... [It] exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets."[1] Heritage is not concerned with facts; its primary purpose is connecting people to each other and a faith. The stories passed on through heritage are true, not because of empirical evidence, but because its narrative instills action for those who are bound to it.

The Jewish people has always been linked to its past. In Deuteronomy 4:32 it states,

> For ask now of the days past, which were before you, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; and *ask* from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of?

The Israelites who had experienced the Exodus and revelation at Sinai had passed away and a new generation is hearing about these events. They, themselves, did not participate in them or have any personal connection to them. Yet they are told to ask about them. These events are to serve as a guide for them.

From the birth of our national identity, we are told to engage with our past, to inquire about events that happened before our time. The lessons from our past are to inform our present experience. Remembering is so central to Jewish tradition that the verb *zakhor*, "to remember," appears in its various conjugations no less than 169 times in the Tanach.[2] Remembering is one of the core lessons of the Hebrew Bible. But what are we, as Jews, supposed to remember? And by what means are we supposed to remember it? Do we tell our past as history or do we present it as heritage?

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[1] Lowenthal
[2] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 5

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi explains that "historiography, an actual recording of historical events, is by no means the principal medium through which the collective memory of the Jewish people has been addressed or aroused."[3] The history presented in Jewish traditions- in the Torah, Talmud and prayer books- is not history as defined by Lowenthal. There is little concern for facts, evidence or even accuracy. Indeed, the Bible's interest in remembrance has little to do with understanding the details of the past. Yerushalmi further explains that "Israel is told only that it must be a kingdom of priests and a holy people; nowhere is it suggested that it become a nation of historians. Memory is, by its nature, selective, and the demand that Israel remember is no exception."[4] Remembering in the Tanach is equated to Heritage. It is based on the Israelites' personal memory and is constructed in order to instill specific values and encourage particular actions. As heritage, the Bible clearly omits facts and stories. For example, what happened to Isaac from the time he left his father at the altar at Moriah and the moment he met Rebecca three years later? Manasseh of Judah was a powerful king who ruled for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. Yet, we simply hear that "he did what was evil in the sight of Adonai" (II Kings 21:2) and only the details of his evil are passed on. Retelling the past is essential, but only certain parts of it are presented as significant and worthy of recollection. So what gets passed on to the next generation and what is left in the past? Yerushalmi points out that Israel's selection of memory "is unique unto itself. It is above all God's acts of intervention in history, and man's response to them, be they positive or negative, that must be recalled."[5] The events and stories that are chosen for retelling are specifically a means for strengthening one's faith and identity. They are not a matter of intellection; they are selected to instill certain values, to transform behavior, and to bond the individual to a community.

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[3] ibid, p. 5
[4] ibid, p. 10
[5] ibid.

The events selected to be passed on through Jewish traditions and rituals can be defined as sacred narrative[6]. It is the story of our people, from our perspective. Its sacredness is its ability to strengthen Jewish faith and communal identity in each and every generation. Michael Goldberg explains that sacred narratives

> offer us both a model for understanding the world and a guide for acting in it. By providing us with a paradigm for making sense of our existence, ...[sacred narratives] furnish us with a basis for answering some of the most fundamental questions that we human beings can have: Who we are? What is our world like? And given who we are and what our world is like, what then is the best way for us to respond to such a world as this? The answers to those questions often constitute our most deep-seated convictions about our identity, responsibility, and destiny over the course of our existence. Hence, ...[sacred narrative] not only *inform* us, but more crucially, they *form* us.[7]

Sacred narrative has been the path through which Jews have continued to recount our past in each generation. The events described in our narratives happen only once: the Red Sea was crossed once and Israel stood at Sinai only once. Yet, our tradition teaches us that the power of events transcend their moment in time. Our experiences do not remain in the past. The lessons learned and the emotions felt, get passed on to future generations. In Deuteronomy 29:13-14 we read, "I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but both with those who are standing here with us this day before Adonai our God, and also with those who are not with us here this day." The covenant has endured through all generations. Subsequent generations were not witnesses to this moment, yet they are commanded to have an equal commitment to the covenant.

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[6] There are many terms used to describe the stories passed on through heritage. Larry Hoffman in *Beyond the Text*, uses the term "sacred myth," and Michael Goldberg in *Jews and Christians: Getting Our Stories Straight* uses "master narrative." We have chosen the term "sacred narrative." Hoffman explains that he means "in no way to denigrate a view of history when...[he calls] it a myth. [He wishes] only to indicate that every historical perspective is selective in what it chooses to emphasize or to omit." (Beyond the Text, 123) The term "myth" is often defined as an invented story, a fiction, or a false collected belief. The stories passed down are crafted to tell a specific version of the story, but they are "true" to the people that are bound to them. We have chosen narrative instead of myth because narrative is defined as a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether it is true or fictitious. "Narrative" better defines the type of stories passed down through Jewish tradition because they are both true and fabricated. Furthermore, we chose the term "sacred" narrative rather than "master" narrative because the stories passed on through Jewish tradition specifically reflect the relationship between God and the Jewish people.

[7] Goldberg, p. 13

They cannot return to that moment on Sinai, but through telling this sacred narrative they can feel personally connected to the truth of that moment and make a commitment to follow the instructions given on that day. Sacred narrative also makes it possible for every generation to see themselves as if they came out of Egypt. The third generation after the Exodus, the Jews who lived in Spain and the ones who passed through Ellis Island did not cross the Red Sea. Yet through receiving this sacred narrative from the generation before, each generation is able to feel the power of that moment as though they were the ones to come out of Egypt.

There are many sacred narratives within Judaism. But the Exodus from Egypt can be defined as the *master* sacred narrative of Jewish tradition. This is best articulated by Rabbi Irving Greenberg in *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*:

> The Exodus is the core event of Jewish history and religion. The central moment of Jewish religious history is *yetziat mitzrayim*, Exodus from Egypt. In this event, a group of Hebrew slaves were liberated. The initiative for freedom had to come from God, for the slaves were so subjugated that they accepted even the fate of genocide. Moses, called by God, came to Pharaoh with a request that the slaves be given a temporary release to go and worship in the desert. Then, step by step, the power of Pharaoh was broken; step by step, the temporary release escalated into a demand for freedom. Thus, the Torah makes its point that the entry of God into history is also a revelation of human dignity and right to freedom and foreshadows the end of absolute human power with all its abuses.
>
> The Exodus inaugurated the biblical era of the Jewish people's history. In Judaism's teaching, the Exodus is not a one-time event but a norm by which all of life should be judged and guided. The Exodus is an "orienting event"—an event that sets in motion and guides the Jewish way (and, ultimately, humanity's way) toward the Promised Land—an earth set free and perfected. And as they walk through local cultures and historical epochs, people can gauge whether they have lost the way to freedom by charting their behavior along the path against the Exodus norms.[8]

This master narrative is preserved, passed on and embodied within the Jewish people through Torah, liturgy, rituals and holiday celebrations. Throughout the Torah we are reminded that we were slaves to Pharoah in Egypt and strangers in the land of Egypt. Our suffering in Egypt

[8] Greenberg, p. 25

becomes a defining characteristic of our identity. No less than 36 times in the Torah is the Israelite community told to be kind to the stranger, to care for his/her needs and to love the stranger because the Israelites were strangers in the land of Egypt. During Kiddush on Friday nights and in reciting the Ge'ulah during Shachrit and Ma'ariv everyday, we recall the Exodus from Egypt. But nowhere is the Exodus brought more to life and incorporated more into people's personal identities than in the celebration of Passover. The Passover Seder, incorporates the Torah's commandments for teaching (Exodus 13:8) and reenacting (Exodus 12:24) this defining moment in our history. Yerushalmi describes the power of this celebration:

> "In the course of a meal around the family table, ritual, liturgy, and even culinary elements are orchestrated to transmit a vital past from one generation to the next. The entire Seder is a symbolic enactment of an historical scenario... Both the language and the gesture are geared to spur, not so much a leap of memory as a fusion of past and present. Memory here is no longer recollection, which still preserves a sense of distance, but reactualization."[9]

Through the narrative and rituals of the Seder, participants are able to regard themselves as through they emerged from Egypt. The Exodus is how and when we became a people and the celebration of Passover renews our peoplehood year after year. Liturgy—both the recited prayers and the rituals associated with them—is the inculcation of our sacred narratives and the Haggadah is our master sacred narrative. The Haggadah, literally meaning "telling," tells the story of the Exodus. Yet following the commandments laid out in the previous chapter, the Haggadah does more than simply tell the story of the Exodus. Through its retelling, the Haggadah moves the hearts of the Jews participating in its rituals. It strengthens their identity, bonds them to the Jewish people and calls them to action. The Exodus is not simply the Exodus of the Israelites from Pharaoh. Pharaoh becomes the oppressors in later generations, and Egypt is every exile.[10]

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[9] Yerushalmi, p. 44
[10] Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History*, p. 15

All Jews are to see themselves in this sacred narrative. But the time of the Israelites in ancient Egypt is quit different from the Rabbinic Period, the Middle Ages, or modern day society. The Israelite's story revolves around the Exodus. But for the generations who lived later, their memory expands to include other defining moments in Jewish history—receiving the Torah at Sinai, the destruction of the Temple, living in the Diaspora, the Spanish Inquisition, the Enlightenment, immigration to the United States, the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel, and the rise of feminism. Each generation's story encompasses additional events. Furthermore, each generation has a different perception of its current world as well as a different understanding of how to view the past. Lawrence Hoffman explains that the sacred narrative is not and cannot be static. It is not based on fact, thus it continually evolves to meet the changing narratives of future generations. Unless the sacred narrative changes, subsequent generations will not be able to see themselves in it and thus will not feel connected to its message. Thus sacred narrative remains a practice of heritage, not a retelling of history.

The Torah commands parents to tell their children about the Exodus from Egypt on the first night of Passover (Exodus 13:8). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Passover is one of two times in a year that a Jew is to tell the story of Exodus. The other time is *Havvaat Bikkurim*, bringing the first fruits. When commanding the recitation of the Exodus on Passover, the Torah does not state the specific content of the story. Thus the people telling the story are free to explain the story in any way they choose. In fact, the commandment uses the verb וְהִגַּדְתָּ- "you should tell or explain," implying more than simple recitation. It calls for elaboration and thus suggests that the narrative must change and evolve to meet the perspectives and interests of each generation.

So how does the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt evolve over time? There are four major changes that occur to create distinct yet related narratives: biblical, rabbinic, medieval and post-enlightenment narratives. The changes take place as a result of each generation's varying

understanding of the past and its need to include the culture and concerns of their particular period. Carole Balin explains,

> The Haggadah... is more than a mere chronicle of events that occurred once and for all in the Jewish people's mythic past. It is as well the ongoing diary of succeeding generations of Jews, reflecting their experiences, observations, and hopes as they relate to the Jewish festival celebrating redemption. When Jews recite the Haggadah, they are performing an act not only of remembrance but also of personal identification in the here and now. Each participant is adjured to breathe new life into the Haggadah, and Jews have done so by imbuing its pages with ideas and concerns of their age. Thus each printed Haggadah serves as a barometer of sorts—registering fluctuations and gauging the mood of a particular Jewish community in its unique time and place in history.[11]

The modifications in each period build upon the narrative of the past generation. For the most part, nothing from the previous generation is removed from the future narrative, until the modern period. Rather subsequent generations add to the narrative using methods common to their generation. The following section[12], traces the evolution of the Exodus narrative, specifically in regards to the celebration of Passover. Each narrative description presents, in no particular order, (1) the text of the narrative, (2) the specific interests and concerns of the time period, (3) how that generation perceives and understands the past, and (4) a description of the time period's textual method used to express the narrative.

The Biblical Narrative

The original narrative is found in the text of the Torah and relates to the agricultural society of that time period. During the Biblical period, the Israelites lived in an agricultural society. Their day-to-day life was centered on the land's fruitfulness or the lack thereof. They believed that the fertility of the land was based on their obedience to God's laws. When the Israelites fulfilled their part of the

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[11] Balin in Bradshaw and Hoffman, vol. 5, p. 189

[12] The following section is largely based on the work of Lawrence Hoffman in his book, Beyond the Text, specifically chapters 5 and 6 on "The Sacred Myth." However, additional sources and interpretation are added to the content of this section.

covenant, God would provide rain allowing the fruits to grow. A plentiful harvest thus served as a reminder of God fulfilling God's part of the covenant. Their understanding of history was chronological. One event directly led to the next. Thus, if the Israelites fulfilled God's commandments, God would bring the rains, and the fruit of the land would be abundant. The original narrative is part of the ritual for bringing the first fruits and was constructed to fit the reality of the Israelites. It was chronological and only included events associated with agriculture:

THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT
The First Fruit Narrative — Deuteronomy 26:5-9

אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי

My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and dwelt there; but there he became a great, strong and numerous nation. [6] The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. [7] We cried to Adonai, the God of our fathers, and Adonai heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. [8] Adonai freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. [9] God brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

As mentioned before, the Torah commands the story of the Exodus from Egypt to be recited on two yearly occasions: Passover and the bringing of the first fruits. The content of the story is not given for the Passover recitation. However, in the description of the ritual of the first fruits a specific text is assigned:

> When you enter the land that Adonai your God is giving you as a heritage, and you possess it and settle in it, [2] you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land that Adonai your God is giving you, put it in a basket and go to the place where Adonai your God will choose to establish God's name. [3] You shall go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, "I acknowledge this day before Adonai your God that I have entered the land that Adonai swore to our fathers to assign us." [4] The priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down in front of the altar of Adonai your God. [5] You shall then recite as follows before Adonai your God: "***My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and dwelt there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. [6] The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. [7] We cried to Adonai, the***

> ***God of our fathers, and Adonai heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. [8] Adonai freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. [9] God brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. [10] Wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, O Adonai, have given me.***" [emphasis added] You shall leave it before Adonai your God and bow low before Adonai your God. [11] And you shall enjoy, together with the Levite and the stranger in your midst, all the bounty that Adonai your God has bestowed upon you and your household.[13]

When the people offered the first fruits they recited the sacred narrative, "My father was a wandering Aramean" (Deut. 26:5-11, in italics above) as part of the ritual. As Hoffman points out "from the last sentence of the declaration, we can see that it was precisely this account of their history that moved the pilgrims to go on the pilgrimage in the first place…The pilgrim accepts the tale, and *therefore* presents the produce to God's representative, the Temple priest."[14] The narrative stirs action for the people reciting it. "My father was a wandering Aramaen" is the sacred narrative for farmers. It celebrates God's role in the Exodus from Egypt and bringing the people to the land. Yet, this original sacred narrative has nothing to do with the holiday of Passover.

The Rabbinic Narrative

After the destruction of the second Temple, the first and second centuries of the Common Era were filled with devastation. Emotionally, the Jewish community was distraught over the unsuccessful conflicts with Rome. Physically, they suffered from famine and the tasks of postwar reconstruction. Spiritually, the cult practices of the Temple were no longer applicable. The community had to reconsider and reformulate their practices for connecting with God.

In the Biblical period, history was chronological. One event led to the next. Hoffman explains that "by contrast, the rabbinic conception of history avoids recourse to temporal accident.

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[13] JPS translation with gender inclusive and other slight modifications
[14] Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, p. 80

For the rabbis, God had established a grand plan in which history as we moderns know it is incidental. They see historical time not by years,...but by eons."[15] According to the rabbis there are three eons: (1) *Yorel*/Time-Past which corresponds to when the Temple was operating; (2) *Zeman Hazeh*/Time-Present (or Time-Now) which began with the fall of the Temple and its agricultural and cultic practices; and (3) *Olam Haba*/Time-to-Come which would be the end of Time-Present when the best of Time-Past would renew itself. With this new conception of time, there was a new way of expressing the sacred narrative. For the rabbis

> The macrocosmic message of Time-Past, Time-Now, and Time-to-Come is reduced to the specificity of the worshippers' own personal lives: if they sin, they incur suffering; if they repent, they are saved. That is to say, the sins of Time-Past resulted in the destruction of the Temple, and thus, the onset of Time-Now, and the relationship between sin and punishment that that event revealed, become paradigmatic for each and every historical episode thereafter. But keeping the commandments guarantees that some day, Time-Now will end, and the grandeur of Time-Past will be reinstated as Time-to-Come.[16]

History for the rabbis was repetitive; it was a spiral. As they told history, they were not trying to build an historical time line. Rather they were constructing a sacred narrative in which Jewish history is a cycle whose message can be summarized by the phrase "*matchil bigenut umesayem besheracli*"- "From Degradation to Praise." (Mishnah Pesachim 10:4) This phrase becomes the core of the Hagaddah's message. History is marked by the repetition of sin, punishment, atonement, hope and salvation as well as God's ability to destroy one enemy after the next. The rabbis' understanding of history also allowed for events occurring centuries apart to be envisioned together. The clearest example is the discussions taking place in the Talmud by rabbis who were alive at different times. Historical events were not significant in and of themselves. They transcended themselves to provide a grander message for history as a whole.

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[15] ibid, p. 82
[16] ibid, p. 85

The Torah states that the story of the Exodus must be explained to children on Passover, but does not provide the content. The rabbis were aware of the sacred narrative of "My father was a wandering Aramean" from the instructions for bringing the first fruits. Originally this story (Deuteronomy 26:5-10) had no association with Passover. The rabbis make it part of the Passover Seder, and ultimately the core of the Haggadah, as a means for fulfilling the commandment to tell the Exodus story. This rabbinic statute is stated in Mishnah Pesachim 10:4, "He begins with degradation and concludes with praise, and expounds from 'My father was a wandering Aramean' until he completes the entire section." They could have used the narrative of the wandering Aramean, repeating it verbatim. But it does not relate to the rabbis' conception of history nor their social and religious realities. Thus they state that one needs to expound this narrative. Not constrained by historical fact, the rabbis used Midrash to extend the sacred narrative to encompass their needs. The process of interpretation known as Midrash, was popular during the rabbinic period. Barry Holtz explains that

> we can see the central issue behind the emergence of Midrash as the need to deal with the presence of cultural or religious tension and discontinuity. Where there are questions that demand answers, and where there are new cultural and intellectual pressures that must be addressed, Midrash comes into play as a way of resolving crisis and reaffirming continuity with the traditions of the past... Midrash [also] comes to fill in the gaps, to tell us the details that the Bible teasingly leaves out... Moreover, the rabbis when examining the ancient texts of the Bible found it necessary at times to reread texts in the light of their own contemporary values and beliefs.[17]

The rabbis start with the biblical account (Deut. 26:5-11). The original text is simple, providing little detail as to who is involved and what occurs. The rabbis expand the story by adding interpretation throughout the account that is not constrained by the text. They freely arrive at their conclusion and add information that goes beyond what the text has to say. Through the midrashic interpretation they are able to incorporate the social, cultural and political realities of their times.

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[17] Barry Holtz, pp. 179, 180, 181-182.

They could not change the Bible's words, but their added interpretation removes the verses from their original context and allows them to connect to broader Jewish history. The original midrash comes from a midrashic collection called Sifrei, section Ki Tavo, Piska 301.

THE RABBINIC NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT
Deuteronomy 26:5-8 + Midrash

Midrash: וּלְמַד צֵא- *Go forth and learn what Laban the Aramean sought to do to Jacob our father: Pharaoh decreed death only for the males, while Laban sought to uproot us all.*

Deut. 26:5: My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and dwelt there; but there he became a great, strong and numerous nation.

Midrash on "He went down to Egypt": *Impelled by the word of God's promise to Abraham.*

Midrash on "And dwelt there": *This emphasizes that our ancestors Jacob never planned to sink roots there, but only to stay for a while, as it is said: "And Joseph's brothers said to Pharoah, 'Only to sojourn in the land have we come, for there is no food for our flocks in the Land of Canaan.'"* (Genesis 47:4)

Midrash on "Meager in numbers": *As it is said, "As a band of seventy persons our ancestors went down to Mitzrayim, and now Adonai your God has made your numbers as great as the stars in heaven!"* (Deuteronomy 10:22)

Midrash on "There he became a nation": *This indicates that even in Mitzrayim, Israel was distinguished as a nation.*

Midrash on "Great and mighty": *As it is said: "And the children of Israel were fruitful and spread abroad, mightily increasing to a great degree, so that the land was filled with them."* (Exodus 1:7)

Midrash on "And numerous": *As it is said (Ezekiel 16:7,6): "I have given you myriads, like shoots from the field, and you became numerous and great, you came to be beautiful, adorned; your breast grew firm, your hair luxuriant, yet you were still naked and bare. And I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood; I said to you, 'Through your blood you shall live; through your blood you shall live.'"*

The Rabbinic Narrative continues with Deut. 26:6 followed by midrash similar to the midrash for Deut 26:5. The same is true for Deut. 26: 7 and 8.

Normal print reflects material found in the Biblical Narrative.
Italic print reflects material added in the Rabbinic Narrative.
Midrash translations adapted from On Wings of Freedom by Rabbi Richard N. Levy, pp. 40-42.

In looking specifically at the scriptural text, Deuteronomy 26:5 and its rabbinic midrash on Laban (see above), the rabbis repetitive nature of history, "from degradation to praise," allows the Aramean to become the enemy. Hoffman explains that "Laban is certainly no hero in the bare biblical account, but he is hardly worse than the mythic arch-foe, Pharaoh. However, the rabbis obviously wished to portray him that way here, so they invoke the interpretive capacity of midrashic exegesis to apply the circumstances of their own day to their understanding of the sacred myth."[18] Not only is Pharaoh a villain in this narrative, but Laban is one as well. In midrashic tradition, Laban is seen as Israel's archenemy, who attempted to destroy Jacob and his descendants and provoked others to bring on the extermination of Israel.[19] Furthermore, the consonants for Aramean, "*Arami*" are the same for Roman, "*Romi*."[20] Thus the Rabbis could use this linguistic comparison to expand the narrative to the Roman Empire who had tried to wipe out the Jews. And just as Pharaoh, Laban and Rome had failed, so would the future enemies as long as the Jews remained faithful to God. The original Biblical narrative could explain the famine that occurred after the Roman war, but not the destruction of the Temple. Thus the midrash to the narrative "can be viewed as part of a larger rabbinic effort to generate a myth that could give meaning to the Temple's demise, as well as to the spiritual and physical emptiness that accompanied it."[21]

After the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis developed a new ritual—the Seder—for marking the anniversary of the Exodus. They were no longer a community deeply connected to the land and there was no longer a cultic obligation to offer up produce and animals on an altar. Thus the telling of the sacred narrative becomes central to the new rituals of Passover. This narrative presents a spiral of sin-punishment-atonement-redemption that explains all events in Time-Now. It begins with the destruction of the Temple and ends with the coming of the messiah. The

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[18] ibid, p. 97
[19] Ginzberg, p. 292
[20] Zion and Dishon, p. 81
[21] Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, p. 98

participants at the seder are asked to hope, to pray, and to work for the day when they will return to the land and Time-Now will give way to Time-to-Come.[22]

The Medieval Narrative

After the second century the sacred myth expanded once again. Additional midrash was added to further develop the details of the Exodus story. One prime example is the addition of the plagues. The original midrash expounded Deuteronomy 26:8, "Adonai freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents" to refer to the ten plagues. Sometime before the ninth century it became customary to list the ten plagues. In addition, a talmudic debate between the third century Amoraim, Rav and Shmuel, about the meaning of "from degradation of praise" was also inserted. (See The Commentary, p. 128 and 138 for further explanation of these additions.) But one of the major changes was to the end of the sacred narrative. In looking at the First Fruit Narrative, Deuteronomy 26:5-9, one event is clearly missing from the story—standing at Sinai and receiving the Torah. For the rabbis, the events at Sinai were at the core of their religious practices and were thus the pinnacle of their sacred narrative. Adding the poem Dayyenu to the Maggid, the "telling section" of the Haggadah, centralized Sinai and the Torah in the Haggadah's sacred narrative. Dayyenu conveys the message that the liberation from Egypt was not completed until Israel received the Torah at Sinai and settled in the Promised Land.[23]

Dayyenu is ultimately an album of the Medieval Sacred Narrative. It uses the textual method of that time period known as a *piyut*, a poem written for recitation on holidays and special occasions. *Piyutim* are an extension of the service, thus "it is invariably public and collective in spirit, rather than revelatory of private inward moments... Because *piyut* is an oral, declaimed poetry, it

[22] ibid, pp. 101-102
[23] ibid, pp. 102-106

puts an emphasis on elaborate sonal patterns and the virtuoso manipulation of poetic forms."[24] The rhythm of Dayyenu adds energy and spirit to the recitation of the sacred narrative on Passover.

THE MEDIEVAL NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT
Deuteronomy 26:5-9 (Biblical) + Midrash (Rabbinic Addition) + Dayyenu (Middle Ages Addition)

I. Deuteronomy 26:5-9: My father was a wandering Aramean…

II. Midrash of Deuteronomy 26:5-9 (see above)

III. The Ten Plagues and Midrash on the Plagues (see Part II)

IV. *Dayyenu*

Continue

[24] Holtz, p. 423

Dayyenu

God has bestowed many favors on us.

1. Had God brought us out of Egypt,
   And not punished the Egyptians, Dayyenu.
2. Had God punished the Egyptians,
   And not castigated their gods, Dayyenu.
3. Had God castigated their gods,
   And not put to death their firstborn, Dayyenu.
4. Had God put to death their firstborn,
   And not given us of their wealth, Dayyenu.
5. Had God given us of their wealth,
   And not split the Red Sea for us, Dayyenu.
6. Had God split the Red Sea for us,
   And not led us through it dryshod, Dayyenu.
7. Had God led us through it dryshod,
   And not engulfed our foes in it, Dayyenu.
8. Had God engulfed our foes in it,
   And not sustained us in the wasteland Dayyenu.
9. Had God sustained us in the wasteland,
   And not fed us with the manna, Dayyenu.
10. Had God fed us with manna,
    And not given us Shabbat, Dayyenu.
11. Had God given us Shabbat,
    And not brought us to Mount Sinai, Dayyenu.
12. Had God brought us to Mount Sinai,
    And not given us Torah, Dayyenu.
13. Had God given us Torah,
    And not brought us to the Land of Israel, Dayyenu.
14. Had God brought us to the Land of Israel,
    And not build the Temple for us, Dayyenu.

How much more so, then, should we be grateful to God for the manifold favors that God conferred upon us: God brought us out of Egypt, and punished the Egyptians; God smote their gods, and slew their firstborn; God gave us their wealth, and split the Red Sea for us; God led us through it dryshod, and engulfed our foes in it; God sustained us in the desert for forty years, and fed us with the manna; God gave us the Sabbath, and brought us to Mount Sinai; God gave us Torah, and brought us to the Land of Israel; God built the Temple for us, to atone for all our sins.

Rabbi Hoffman points out that Dayyenu[25] begins with material that is similar to the First Fruits narrative, Deuteronomy 26:5-9. The content of lines 1-4 would be familiar to the pilgrims

[25] Translation from *The Birnbaum Haggadah*, p. 89, with gender inclusive modifications.

bringing the first fruits. This description of the Exodus of Egypt as well as line 13, which made a connection to the land, are similar to the themes of the pilgrims' sacred narrative. Lines 5-12 would be familiar to the pilgrims because it comes from the Torah, but were excluded from the First Fruit's narrative. The rabbis, on the other hand, saw these events as significant to their understanding of their history. Lines 5-7 presents the Red Sea experience which the rabbis saw as paradigmatic of God's salvation as well as sustaining the pilgrims in the desert (Lines 8-9). The rabbis viewed keeping the Sabbath as particularly essential because they believed it would bring the messiah. Lines 11-12, bringing Israel to Mount Sinai and giving them the Torah are the main departure from the content of the First Fruit narrative, "My father was a wandering Aramean." These events were central to the rabbis' conception of history. However, Hoffman suggests that the events from 70 CE onward were not essential to their understanding of the past, and thus were not mentioned. Their history revolved around the Temple, thus their narrative ends with the building of the Temple (Line 14). They were in limbo waiting and praying for salvation to come when the Temple would be restored and they would return to Jerusalem in the Time-to-Come.[26]

The Post-Enlightenment Narrative[27]

The Enlightenment brought a change in the Jewish community's relationship to the societies that surrounded them as well as their perception and understanding of history. During the Rabbinic Period and Middle Ages, the narrative ended with the destruction of the Temple. As mentioned before, Time-Now was often understood as a waiting zone until the time of the messiah. Their life and their story revolved around the destruction of the Temple and their hope for its restoration. The rabbis did not value events of Time-Now, therefore theses events were excluded from their

[26] Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, pp. 106-108

[27] The Post-Enlightenment period saw the rise of many separate narratives: the reformers narrative, as well as the Zionist and secular socialist narrative. Since we are focusing on the Passover experience for North American Jews, we will only define the reformers narrative which directly relates to this population.

narrative. This outlook changed with the Enlightenment. First of all, enlightened Jews in the nineteenth century had a radical change in their understanding of history. Influenced by secular science, they had a commitment to scientific objectivity. They were concerned with the facts of history and presenting an objective picture of the past. Yet at the same time, they were committed to their religious values and traditions. History for Jews in the modern period was an integration of their dual consciousness: scientific fact and religious traditions.[28] With this new perspective, no events in Time-Now could be ignored. They needed to be integrated into the narrative.

Secondly, the Jewish community's integration and acceptance into the European communities changed their opinion of the diaspora. Modern Jews valued their diaspora experience and thus wanted to promote the diaspora in a positive, rather than a negative light. As a result, they sought to integrate this new understanding of the diaspora into their narrative. Hoffman explains,

> they needed an acceptable rationale for the creation of the diaspora in the first place. No longer could the Temple be seen as the pinnacle of Jewish religiosity, its destruction viewed as punishment for sin, its absence during Time-Now painfully bewailed. Obviously the Temple had fallen, but that fall had to have some consequence beyond supplying a paradigmatic demonstration of the eternal Jewish sin-and-punishment cycle, and a root metaphor of cultic restoration in Time-to-Come.[29]

Furthermore, David Einhorn and Isaac M. Wise, pioneers of Reform Judaism, explained that the positive nature of the diaspora was that Jews were free to spread God's universal message to the world. For the reformers, the prophets were the heart of Jewish religiosity. They emphasized the ethical behavior applicable to the people of the enlightened period. As time went on the Reform narrative included the idea of social justice and painting the picture of the prophets as biblical social activists. The new narrative therefore went from the Patriarchs, to Egypt, to Sinai, to Promised Land, and to the Temple (all of these were in the Rabbinic and Medieval narratives) and also the

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[28] Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, pp. 130-132
[29] ibid, p. 116

prophets.[30] Additionally, the Enlightenment gave rise to liturgical change. Holtz explains that "before the Enlightenment, the idea of tampering with actual received words of the Siddur…[as well as other liturgies such as the Haggadah] was unthinkable. To add or reinterpret—yes, but not to alter."[31] The Reform Movement initiated liturgical change and began removing concepts that were objectionable to their modern ideas, such as nostalgia for the Temple. Now immersed in secular society, they were also concerned with the people who surrounded them. Concepts that did not promote ethical universalism were also removed from the narrative. The changes to the narrative are seen in the revisions of Dayyenu in the 1923 Reform Haggadah.[32] The numbering relates to the original Dayyenu of the Middle Ages, thus showing how specific events were removed from the Reform narrative (punishing the Egyptians, castigating their gods, death of their firstborn, giving us their wealth and engulfed our foes). The poem ends with the additions of the prophets (Lines 15-16).

THE POST ENLIGHTENMENT (REFORM) NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT
1923 Reform Haggadah

A Modified Dayyenu
God has bestowed many favors on us.

How manifold are the favors which God has conferred on us!

1. Had God brought us out of Egypt,	
And not divided the sea for us,	Dayyenu.
6. Had God divided the sea,	
And not permitted us to cross on dry land,	Dayyenu
7. Had God permitted us to cross the sea on dry land,	
And not sustained us for forty years in the desert,	Dayyenu.
9. Had God sustained us for forty years in the desert,	
And not fed us with manna,	Dayyenu.
10. Had God fed us with manna,	
And not ordained the Sabbath,	Dayyenu.

Continue

[30] ibid, pp. 123-124
[31] Holtz, p. 425
[32] Modified to be gender inclusive.

continued

11. Had God ordained the Sabbath,
And not brought us to Mount Sinai, Dayyenu.
12. Had God brought us to Mount Sinai,
And not given us the Torah, Dayyenu.
13. Had God given us the Torah,
And not led us into the Land of Israel, Dayyenu.
14. Had God led us into the Land of Israel,
And not build for us the Temple, Dayyenu.
15. Had God built for us the Temple,
And not sent us prophets of truth, Dayyenu.
16. Had God sent us prophets of Truth,
And not made us a holy people, Dayyenu.

How much more then are we to be grateful unto the Adonai for the manifold favors which God has bestowed upon us! God brought us out of Egypt, divided the Red Sea for us, permitted us to cross on dry land, sustained us for forty years in the desert, fed us with manna, ordained the Sabbath, brought us to Mount Sinai, gave us the Torah, led us into the Land of Israel, built for us the Temple, sent unto us prophets of truth, and made us a holy people to perfect the world under the kingdom of the Almighty, in truth and righteousness.

The Holocaust also had a dramatic impact on the generations of the modern period. Many Orthodox Jews integrated the horrors of the Holocaust into the traditional rabbinic narrative of sin and punishment. The Holocaust is explained as Divine punishment for the generation of Jews who did not follow God's commandments. But for many modern Jews this explanation and narrative did not reflect their dual understanding of the world: objective history and religious traditions. Once again the Mishnah's statement—*matchil bigenut umesayem beshevach*, from degradation to praise—defines the narrative. In this context, history is seen in the cycle as suffering from degradation and being delivered to dignity. Thus, the Mishnah's statement was translated in the Reform Haggadah as "from degradation to dignity." This phenomenon is first experienced with the Egyptian slavery to freedom account and is repeated throughout history. Jewish history in the modern sacred narrative "is portrayed as alternating cycles of degradation at the hands of tyrants followed by miraculous

recovery of dignity, the latest such example being the Holocaust, and, in its wake, the birth of the modern State of Israel."[33]

With the ease of creating and printing new Hagaddot with the invention of the word processor in the 1960s, this narrative "from degradation to dignity" continues to be used to relate to the personal narratives of Jews in the 20th and 21st centuries such as women, Soviet Jewry, and Ethiopian Jews; and well as encouraging the support of current causes such as the crisis in Darfur, the homeless in our communities, women trafficking, gays and lesbians and other people who live under oppressive regimes. Arthur Waskow's *The Freedom Seder*, published in 1969 is one of the first haggadot to specifically insert modern day causes into the Exodus narrative. Once again a modified Dayyenu is inserted into the Haggadah to incorporate modern issues. Rather than using the traditional term *dayyenu*, "it would have been sufficient," this new poem uses the framework of Dayyenu, but uses a different term *lo dayyenu*, "it would not be sufficient." This addition to the narrative suggests that the story has not ended. God performed many great acts to bring us out of slavery. Now it is time for us to act in God's image and help others come out of their modern day slavery. *The Freedom Seder* inserts the new poem, Lo Dayyenu, before the traditional Dayyenu.

[33] Hoffman, p. 139

THE POST ENLIGHTENMENT (SOCIAL & POLITICAL JUSTICE) NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

The Freedom Seder

Lo Dayyenu

(An additional poem inserted before the traditional Dayyenu)

For if we were to end a single genocide but not to stop the other wars that are killing men and women as we sit here, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to end those bloody wars but not disarm the nations of the weapons that could destroy all Mankind, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to disarm the nations but not to end the pollution and poisoning of our planet, it would not be sufficient;

If were to end the poisoning of our planet but not prevent some people from wallowing in luxury while others starved, it would be sufficient;

If we were to make sure that no one starved but not to end police brutality in many countries, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to end outright police brutality but not to free the daring poets from their jails, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to free the poets from their jails but to cramp the minds of people so that they could not understand the poets, it would not be sufficient;

If we liberated all men and women to understand the free creative poets but forbade them to explore their own inner ecstasies, it would not be sufficient;

If we allowed men and women to explore their inner ecstasies but would not allow them to love one another and share in the human fraternity, it would not be sufficient.

How much then are we in duty bound to struggle, work, share, give, think, plan, feel, organize, sit-in, speak out , dream, hope and be on behalf of Mankind! For we must end the genocide [insert any that is current—such as "Vietnam," "Biafra," "Black America," "Russia," "Poland," etc.—depending on the situation.], stop the bloody wars that are killing men and women as we sit here, disarm the nations of the deadly weapons that threaten to destroy us all, end the poisoning of our planet, make sure that no one starves, stop police brutality in many countries, free the poets from their jails, educate us all to understand their poetry, liberate us all to explore our inner ecstasies, and encourage and aid us to love one another and share in the human fraternity. All these!

The telling of the Exodus from Egypt on Passover is meant to be a multi-vocal experience. On the one hand it is a recounting of an ancient story that tells about the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom. On the other hand, the Seder is an opportunity for each generation to tell their own story as the Mishnah states, "In each generation, each individual should feel as through he or she had actually emerged from Egypt." As the Exodus narrative has been passed on from one generation to the next, it has evolved to include the story of the past while continually incorporating the needs and concerns of later generations.

In discussing the evolution of the Exodus narrative, we have specifically looked at the story presented in the Maggid section of the Haggadah. Even though the Maggid is the central discursive element of the Seder, it is not the only manner in which the narrative is told. Throughout the Seder, the narrative is presented through rituals, symbols and actions. The Commentary to the Haggadah will expand our understanding of narrative as we study the various parts of the Seder.

CHAPTER THREE:
FORMATION OF PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL IDENTITY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE PASSOVER EXPERIENCE

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

In every generation **A PERSON** is obligated to see **HER/HIMSELF** as if s/he actually came out of Egypt.
(Mishnah Pesachim 10:5)

Who is this person who is obligated to relive the Exodus from Egypt each year? Our typical assumption in a Jewish setting reveals that this person is a Jew, an ancestor of the freed slaves found in the Passover story. One must ask, however, if the Seder experience meant to fulfill this requirement is performed each and every year, thereby including every possible generation, then what changes from year to year about the people who sit down to retell this sacred narrative? What baggage, if this is a journey, does each person bring in with them? And perhaps implied by the rabbinic ordinance itself, is the person who leaves the Seder at the end of the evening (or early morning) the same person who entered?

This chapter will explore the issues inherent in questions like these. First, we will answer why it is these questions need be asked. Second, we will attempt to clarify and even define the language that we use to talk about individuals and their identity. Last, we will consider the role of ritual, like the Passover Seder, in influencing, developing and constructing identity.

From Narrative to Identity

It is fitting that this chapter should follow the lengthy discussion of sacred narrative just finished, as narrative plays a large role in identity development. When individuals tell their story, whether in prosaic anecdotes or iambic pentameter, those persons are constructing their identities. This does not mean that we are all unbiased reporters conveying the objective truths about our lives. Rather the very act of story-telling is an attempt to make sense of who and what we are. In expressing a

personal narrative individuals simultaneously hide and reveal aspects of themselves; choosing what to share and how it is reflected upon, influence the way people see themselves and the way they frame future narratives about themselves. Individual narratives, we must not forget, are always part of a larger collective narrative. In the case of the Passover Seder—and we might say Jewish life in its entirety—a person's narrative is interwoven with the sacred narrative of the Jewish people. But one's own narrative remains the dominant narrative; a person's constructed identity is the only thing that can help make meaning of the sacred narrative to which that person is told that they belong. This is where narrative and identity meet.

> What provides an outside frame and context for the meaning of the story of the individual is not history as it may have really happened, or history as it is recorded in the most authoritative books, or history as it is revealed in the interpretative modes most in current vogue, **but rather history as it happens to be transmitted to and understood by the individual** [emphasis added]. We can see from this perspective another outrageous fact: As the narrative form and content of history can be revised or renegotiated by those in a position to control the telling of history, so can the meaning and content of an individual's life be radically reconstrued by such changes.[1]

This is what psychologist Karl E. Scheibe, in his book Self Studies, refers to as the construction of memory and history. This is what we call sacred narrative. This is how we Jews make sense of history. In the case of the Haggadah this fact could not be made more clear. The stories chosen to fill its pages are for the sole purpose of transformation and connection.[2]

This is, in part, why there has been such a prolific explosion of contemporary Haggadot over the last fifty years. It is not that the sacred narrative of the Exodus from Egypt is changing historically, but our memory of Egypt, slavery, redemption and freedom are ever-changing and therefore how we relate to the narrative of that experience must also change. Each new Haggadah brings the individual or group (though assuming a group consensus of identity is risky

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[1] Scheibe, p. 147
[2] See Chapter 2, p. 48

psychologically speaking) that created it that much closer to "the" story. As Jews, we need to see ourselves as part of that sacred master narrative.

We will say more about this wading through various memories and narratives later and how they foster the construction of identity. For now let us suffice to say that identity is influenced by narrative and is constructed in similar ways. Identity is always a plurality but presented as a singular entity just as any narrative is actually a plurality of narratives presented as a singular story.

Why the Question About Identity

In part this project came to be because of the conjunction of two facts of Jewish life: first, that such a strongly worded value has been placed on the Seder experience; and second, the fact that Passover is the most celebrated Jewish holiday in the post-modern West. Something must be said about the fact that the rabbinic fantasy of the ideal Jew has, in part, come true. The retelling and reliving of the Exodus, which the commentary that follows the next chapter will explore in great detail, is an annual reality for most Jews in the United States who, for a short time still, account for the majority of world Jewry.[3]

In their deeply significant study of "moderately affiliated" Jews in America, The Jew Within, Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen came to a number of conclusions about the Jewish identities of today's Jews.

> The Jews we met, like many others in America today, seem to hold a view of self 'as a multi-faceted and dynamic entity—active, forceful, and capable of change.' Social identities (e.g. Jew and American), role identities (parent and professional), and individual attributes (caring, just) are integrated or combined without integration, in shifting combinations.[4]

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[3] The Jew Within reports: "The ritual calendar among moderately affiliated Jews typically contains four elements, listed and described here in decreasing order of importance: (1) a Passover Seder, at times accompanied by other aspects of the holiday, such as eating matzo [sic.] or going to synagogue;..." Cohen, Steven M. and Arnold M. Eisen, p.82

[4] Cohen, Steven M. and Arnold M. Eisen, p.195

Not unlike previous studies of American Jews or any other minority culture, the Jewish community reflects internally the trends of the external society in which it finds itself. This finding cannot be overstated, as its truth has been corroborated by extensive qualitative and quantitative studies. The post-modern nature of identity has and will continue to affect individual Jews as well as Jewish communities. As we discussed above, the telling of our sacred narrative cannot help but be affected by the changing nature of the identities of those retelling and reliving it. And how these identities are integrated one with another—as they do not blend together to form a singular identity—is still a mystery.

> How an individual's various conceptions of self are integrated so that most people achieve a sense of oneness or continuity remains to be understood. But what has become increasingly clear is that although terms such as identity and self-concept suggest a single, monolithic entity, phenomena like identity and self should be viewed as plural and diverse even within the individual.... [I]t is no longer feasible to refer to the self-concept.... Each individual has a vast repertoire of self-conceptions....[5]

While this might alarm many in the Jewish community, especially those who perennially ponder how the Jewish people will survive this generation's weaknesses and pitfalls, there are many in the Cohen and Eisen camp who believe this is not a symptom of an internal threat but a description of the state of the union, as it were. This is the contemporary reality of Jewish identity and we will find ways, as we always have, to adapt Jewish life and Jewish ritual, both private and public, to our present circumstance. Still others, perhaps a minority camp, embrace this definition of identity arguing that this new reality is exciting and creative.

Whether or not this is, in fact, a "new" reality or simply a new description of our reality remains to be seen. With progress in the fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology, modes and models for describing human behavior and the human condition are always evolving. Not surprisingly the findings shared in The Jew Within reflect contemporary research in these fields.

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[5] Oyserman, Daphna and Hazel Rose Markus, pp. 190-191

The Jewish, New Republic columnist and author Leon Wieseltier wrote a short 74 page book called Against Identity (which will be examined closely in the coming pages) and in this work he examines what has changed, what has stayed the same and what this "new" identity means.

> A life that does not add up is not a life of irony. Quite the contrary. Its accomplishment is to contain within itself many things that do not go together, all of them unironically. Irony used to have an aspect of courage, in a time when inconsistency was an occasion for pain. But no longer. This is a time when inconsistency is an occasion for pleasure. (The name of that pleasure is post-modernism.)[6]

Wieseltier suggests here that the multiplicity of identities—that at one time was seen as unfocused—is now not only normative but celebrated. The reality of life today is that our loyalties and affiliations, our pleasures and our politics may each overlap and conflict in minor or significant ways, but they do not cancel each other out. "Within an individual's collection of conceptions of the self, some are tentative, fleeting, and peripheral, others are highly elaborated and function as enduring, meaning-making or interpretive structures that help individuals lend coherence to their own life experiences."[7]

Therefore identity must be dissected and prodded. If we are to have a contemporary discussion about the Passover Seder and the sacred narrative it brings to life, then we must acknowledge that this generation is not the same as the one that preceded it. In every generation individuals must bring themselves to the story into which they are born and discover how that inheritance is part of who they are.

Let us be clear, a generation is not designated as such because they have the *same* experiences or hold the same positions on certain issues. They are not even unified, necessarily, in their differences with previous generations and those that come after them. But there are *shared* experiences, world events, economic and social conditions that lend themselves to similar responses

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[6] Wieseltier, #34
[7] Oyserman, Daphna and Hazel Rose Markus, p. 191

or, at least, camps of responses to these events. Therefore no generation, as such, is homogeneous. It is simply more probable that they will share more similarities than other generations.

The Self

A small but rich field of study on identity has emerged and evolved alongside, but not limited to, the growing field of psychology. Scheibe's book Self Studies walks the reader quickly through a survey of thought on this subject, beginning with psychologist William James and concluding with sociologist Erving Goffman, with a brief foray into Sigmund Freud and Harry Stack Sullivan. Each thinker has confronted the question of the substance of self in vastly different ways with a few telling similarities between them.

Scheibe describes psychologist William James as the first in the line of development of the field of study that is the Self and Identity. James' theories understand human beings as having many selves, which he refers to as social selves. These social selves are impacted and are particular to the groups in which persons find themselves.[8] In the chapter entitled "The Consciousness of the Self" of James' book Principles of Psychology, he further elaborates on the connection between the consciousness of being and the self. "Thoughts and feelings are not passive occurrences, but active processes—processes directed by the individual to perceive and remember events selectively, in accord with what is meaningful and useful."[9] That is to say that these thoughts and feelings are not disembodied but owned by the "I," by the self. For James, where there are multiple selves, they exist and share the experiences of life in an unbroken, unifying chain. Therefore the unity of being is more the continuity of being.

James Mark Baldwin, Scheib's next thinker, discusses the development of the identity. Continuing where William James left off, Baldwin argues that we are always "I" and the "alter," or

[8] Scheibe, p. 27
[9] ibid., pp. 27-28

"other." Throughout our development we are viewing ourselves as others see us. This is the point of connection between psychology's classic empirical self (the self that can be observed) and the social self of William James. For Baldwin, we are each two selves: one habitual, the other accommodating. The habitual self "is a product of imitative assimilation—the self that is established and resistant to change,"[10] presumably based on both biology and personal history. The accommodating self "is an active agent of change, constantly seeking modifications in response to new experiences."[11] Life, then, is a dialectic between these two selves, united in a single person. But these two selves only mirror the social reality of the world, the separation between the self and the "alter."

Two thinkers who vary significantly in their understanding of the role of the outside world and the self are Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. Cooley holds that the social world is simply a construct of the self and is not separate from the self. "Persons are not separable and mutually exclusive...."[12] he wrote. To further elaborate, Scheibe shares the following passage from Cooley's book Human Nature and the Social Order.

> ...[S]ociety and individual do not denote separable phenomena, but are simply collective and distributive aspects of the same thing, the relation between them being like that between other expressions, one of which denotes a group as a whole and the other the members of the group, such as the army and the soldiers, the class and the student, and so on.[13]

Mead takes this idea a step further and says that a person can experience her/himself as the "other", implying that there is a true "alter/other." In fact a person is not born with a self, but acquires one through interaction with the social world. This, Mead conjectures, is what makes us most different from lower animals. We can separate the person and the self and look in on the self. He further explains that this simply a fact of human existence. "I" exists only in the fleeting present moment

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[10] ibid. p. 34
[11] ibid.
[12] ibid.
[13] ibid., p. 35

and "me" is all other moments. Therefore, "I" can never turn around fast enough to look at oneself, only at what has already transpired. "I" can only look in on "me."[14]

Antithetical to Mead's views on the self are those of Sigmund Freud. For Freud, and this contrasts this classical thinker with all of the theorists presented so far, the relationship between the self and society is one of pure antagonism. Scheibe poses the two thinkers against each other.

> For Freud, the individual is primary; for Mead, the socius [the social self] is primary. For Freud, the relation between the individual and the society is one of enmity; for Mead, it is one of mutual dependence.... For Freud the consequence of identification with the culture is self-renunciation; for Mead, the achievement of the perspective of the generalized other is coincident with the highest level of self-development and integration. Freud's psychology is of mental pathology...[t]he opposite is true for Mead.[15]

Harry Stack Sullivan started off as a psychoanalyst who subscribed to a Freudian notion of pathology. But later, after working with schizophrenic patients for many years, he came to develop his own brand of psychoanalysis called interpersonal psychiatry that better treated his patients. Central to his theory, which is similar to that of some of the other thinkers mentioned here, are interpersonal relationships as opposed to intrapsychic processes. Mental disorders within his patients were understood to be caused by social conditions, and therefore treatment required attention to the total social surroundings.[16] Sullivan, like Mead and others, understands the self to be social in nature and "a complex derivative of many others."[17] As Sheibe summarizes, "The relations established between the person and others enable the self to achieve some definition. Because others with whom the self relates are many and diverse, the self will have many and diverse facets...."[18]

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[14] ibid., pp. 37-39
[15] ibid., p 41
[16] ibid., p. 42
[17] ibid.
[18] ibid.

The final thinker whom Scheibe addresses in his summary is Erving Goffman, a sociologist. Goffman is best known for his meticulous cataloguing of human interaction and for the clinical distance he was able to maintain from his subjects, almost to the extent that he was of a different species than the human beings he was studying. His contribution to the study of the self was the attention to which he gave the empirical self. Every person, he offered, created for her/himself a cuticle, a shell, through which they came into contact with the world. This makes self both a social being and an enigmatic one, as if every person presented her/himself in disguise assuming a role which was not as real as the social context in which the role would play itself out. This is, perhaps, a radical way of viewing the self—a character in the greater social drama of life—but it raises all kinds of questions about the role of individuals in society, about morality, about etiquette and about identity.

None of these thinkers, from Freud to Mead to Goffman, believes that a definition of the self can be described in a fixed or generalized way as it is always different, based on the conditions and contexts in which the self is located.[19] This, of course, makes a discourse on identity quite challenging. It is for this very reason, if we are to address the *adam* of the Passover Seder, that we clarify what it is that we mean when we speak about Jewish identity.

The Language of Identity

Continuing from the previous summary, in order to discuss a post-modern Jewish identity in any significant way, we will need to establish the rules of the language we use to describe it. Especially as this language refers to the personalities of the entire Seder experience. It is worth noting, before our foray into language, that Jewish identity is essentially an invention of modernity. Prior to the French Revolution there was no Jewish community with whom one needed to identify. Rather, a

[19] ibid., p. 44

person was simply born into the Jewish community and that was his place in the world. To have to establish, reinforce and define ties to one's Jewishness as is done today was simply unnecessary. Yet the last handful of generations have phrased and rephrased the question, "How do you identify as a Jew?" While the observance of the Paschal sacrifice is as old as the Jewish people itself, the question of Jewish identity is still a fairly young one.[20]

In his succinct but provocative work, Against Identity, Wieseltier asks and prods at the very question upon us: what is identity and how do we talk about it? That is to say, what is it we mean when we refer to a person's identity? Is that the sum total of what they are? And a question that is particularly fitting for the Seder environment: does naming our identity match us with something that we are or point towards something that we wish to be? While Wieseltier never offers a concrete answer to any of these questions, he does offer a number of poignant descriptions about a human being's struggle to define himself. From these descriptions we might glean some lessons about the language we use in discussing contemporary Jews and participants in the Passover story.

First, Identity is itself a term which, as we have already discussed, implies a singularity. Identity sounds like a neat little puzzle, all of its pieces fitting together so well that the seams between the pieces are barely visible. While at one time that might have been the case (or at least, that was the social norm), it is no longer so. Therefore, we need to construct another image of identity which is more fitting for today. Identity is no longer a single entity but a collective noun; identity is the container for *identities*. A singular identity is limited and confining. A true identity, a collective identity, includes what is and what will be, what one is in relation to oneself and in relation

[20] "The Passover ritual as performed today is part of a continual process of ritual evolution begun thousands of years ago, and, in fact predating the historical event used to justify it. The Bible speaks of the patriarch Abraham's observing the Paschal sacrifice well before the Israelites went into Egypt.... Actions that existed prior to the event in social history became the means through which new ideas crucial to the definition of the community could be expressed (Cernea p. 2)."

to the world.[21] Therefore a pluralist identity is simultaneously collapsible and expandable. Identity is the act of breathing, constant and necessary but varying slightly at all times under different circumstances, responding differently to varied experiences and changing environments.

There is strength in numbers. Wieseltier argues that America should not strive to be a multicultural country full of individuals, but a country full of multicultural individuals.[22] Therefore each person's identity, as a container of multiple identities, will challenge and pursue itself. As he puts it, "The multicultural individual is a figure of moral friction. In such an individual the mocker, and the hater, and the killer, may hit a bump."[23] When all of these identities are present in a single individual they must necessarily come into conflict with and criticize one another. Therefore, no opinion goes unchecked. The function of self-criticism is to allow all of our contradictory internal selves to push to thoughtful action. No part of ourselves goes unchallenged. Within the Passover Seder, this is best modeled by The Four Children, which will be discussed a little further on.

Second, there is no such thing as private identity; there is only public identity.[24] The word identity, as it is classically understood, is exclusionary and insular[25] because just as it defines what one is it defines what one is not. But the Seder experience is a public experience. There is no singular narrative in the Haggadah, one which envisions the growth of an individual. The Seder invokes primarily the language of "We" rather than "I." This is Wieseltier's version of the combination of the empirical self, that which can be described and "identified," and the social self, the self that learns of itself through the interaction with others.

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[21] Wieseltier, #1-5
[22] Wieseltier, #38
[23] ibid., #41
[24] ibid., #13
[25] ibid., #6

Last, "every inheritance is an accident.... [But]...there is no shame in being accidental."[26] In other words, a Jew is born a Jew by accident. This does not negate the special-ness of being a Jew. It means that a person could be born as anything or anyone and merely happens to be born a Jew.

This notion, perhaps, flies in the face of our tradition that has created myths and devised apologetics to account for the steadiness of the Jewish population despite pogroms and communal devastations over centuries and countless generations. To imply that such an inheritance is pure serendipity is, to some, a slap in the face. But for Wieseltier, who embodies the post-modernist viewpoint of the vast majority of American Jews, the focus is on the latter half of that statement. There is no shame in being a Jew by accident and even, therefore, no shame in choosing to explore and embrace this identity and incorporate it into others.

This last point about identity comes from a post-modern American living in a time when tribalism has been reclaimed and particularity is less negatively stigmatized than ever before. For many who attend Passover Seders each year, their Jewishness is a fact of circumstance, not a blessing or a privilege. They come to recline at the ritual table in order to explore this happenstance inheritance. The Jew Within confirms that for many, not only is there no shame in their inherited Jewishness, but a desire to reclaim it. While the interest or desire to investigate Judaism is rooted in a Jewish childhood—with varying degrees of intensity—it is their search for meaning within the tradition that keeps them identifying as Jews. For many, it is not something that can be lost. It is a given, an absolute.[27]

Being part of and identifying with something older than yourself means that a part of your social self is wrapped up in memory and history. Sheibe address this subject in the following way: "Human episodic memory is a means by which selves are related to history and to the particularity

[26] ibid., #21
[27] Cohen and Eisen, p. 185

of circumstance. This process is creative, original, constructive and not always subject to the constraints of realism."[28] We might add that within the frame of sacred narrative, a person's individual memory, and therefore narrative as well, is subject neither to the constraints of realism nor the confines of linear time. This is especially true if we embrace the view that time is cyclical in nature and in human existence. Individual memory, Scheibe continues, is part of a collective of memories, a supra-individual memory that we colloquially call history.[29] We might say that individual memory and inheritance are the same thing.

To summarize the three guidelines for our usage of the word identity: 1) Identity is actually a container of identities. 2) These identities are both chosen and inherited. Some are reactionary and some are unavoidable realities. 3) All identities, however, can exist in one person without canceling one another out. While certain selves may, at different times, surface as more prominent than others, both the individual and society benefit from a person's multiple identities.

The Development of our Identities

We cannot have a conversation about identity development and the language of such development without at least mentioning the contributions of Erik Erikson. If we can summarize the system devised and revised (constantly) by Erikson, we might think of it in the following way. The human being, throughout one's life, is exposed to and works through a series of identity crises. Each crisis (used as much to imply a collection of crises as it is a singular crisis) creates an opportunity for that person's growth. When a person has successfully—and this term is subjective for each individual—overcome a crisis, one enters into a new phase of life.

While many human development theorists have criticized Erikson's system, they are all indebted to the groundbreaking work that he developed. One of the critiques of his work that is

[28] Scheibe, p. 146
[29] ibid.

worth mentioning here, especially as it relates to the previous thinkers' theories of development of the self, is that Erikson's system is classically linear and therefore does not account for multiple crises to be experienced at once, or for a certain set of crises to reemerge later in life under regressive circumstances.

Yachatz: Towards a Wholeness of Being

Without getting into too much detail here, as the commentary[30] will cover this quite thoroughly, the *matzah* of our Passover Seder has a dual identity. Our *matzah* is the model of transformation and wholeness. It embodies both the burden and affliction of slavery as well as the uplifting and sustaining powers of freedom. On this night, when the Seder's participants work so hard to integrate the sacred narrative of the Exodus from Egypt into their own constructed identity, they are both guided and sustained by this bread of dual identities.

If this unleavened bread is supposed to exemplify wholeness and integration, then why is it that we break the middle piece, of three *matzot*, before we ever eat from them? The answer to this query is, in itself, a model of integration. The middle piece is split in half. The first half represents slavery and the second half symbolizes freedom. The former is eaten with the top, whole piece of *matzah* when that point of the Seder arrives. The second piece, likened to freedom, is the last thing eaten during the entire night.

Integration of our various identities and loyalties is no easy task. The purpose of this night is to assimilate and develop a very particular identity—one's Jewish identity—through a paced and conscientious series of stories, questions, discussions and foods. The particularity of this event and the identification it requires should not overshadow the larger message. Finding balance by juggling our many different selves is no easy task, but it can be accomplished with care and intention.

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[30] See Commentary on *Matzah* p. 120

The Maggid: Rav and Shmuel

Within the Haggadah, a debate is preserved that ultimately asks what is the starting place of our story. What is the origin of our enslavement? Or, perhaps more accurately, which of our earliest conditions—the worship of foreign and false gods or the slavery of our people—constitutes our most downtrodden moment and, therefore, the starting place of our story? The tradition teaches that our story is to begin in degradation and end in praise. The contemporary poetic rendering of this is equally descriptive; we "begin in degradation and end in dignity."[31]

The two sides of this debate are represented by Rav and Shmuel. Shmuel claims the Israelites lowest moment was in servitude to the Egyptians while Rav holds that the spiritual bondage of worshipping other gods was the most woebegone circumstance. The Haggadah never chooses a side in this argument, though one might falsely conclude that the chronology of the presentation favors Shmuel. The presence of both opinions speaks to the necessity for more than one narrative. To present only one would assume that a community of Jews assembled for a Passover Seder, and every table of Jews commemorating this event, would find meaning and identify with the chosen story.

Our study of identity teaches us, unequivocally, that a varied presentation allows for greater likelihood of genuine encounter with the story. As we learned earlier in this chapter, "Within an individual's collection of conceptions of the self, some are tentative, fleeting, and peripheral, others are highly elaborated and function as enduring, meaning-making or interpretive structures that help individuals lend coherence to their own life experiences."[32] A singular narrative—and this speaks for the diversity of methods of presentation within the Haggadah as well—would greatly limit the accessibility of the story of the Exodus. To present only one case, either that of Rav or Shmuel,

[31] See Hoffman, p. 132
[32] Oyserman, Daphna and Hazel Rose Markus, p. 191

would assume that all people assimilate experience the same way and that make meaning out of that experience in the same way. This is basely incorrect.

The presence of both narratives reminds us that there will be moments when part of the narrative will speak more profoundly than others, both to individuals and to communities. Still, at other times, the two will complement each other and teach something entirely new that offering only one narrative could not. Offering multiple ways of telling this story and our own stories leaves open the possibility of greater meaning.

The Maggid: History and Inheritance Are Not Enough

One of the narratives within the Maggid begins with a statement that combines both identity and history. That statement, "*Arami oved Avi*...," "My father was a wandering Aramean...," may sound like a description of the status of the ancestors of the participants. It may, at first glance, have no connection to the observer or the uneducated participant. But for the rabbis who established the tradition of the Haggadah and for the well-initiated participant, this statement, like the story that follows it, is a placemarker of identity for the Seder experience.

We Israelites come from humble origins. As we said above, our story "begins in degradation and ends with praise." This is a statement about the history that we have inherited and is a critical component of the collective memory of the participants. But this essential statement is not sufficient for the ultimate inherited identity of the Seder's participants. As we have already stated many times, identity is constructed. Inheritance is not enough. The totality of the narrative must show why identifying as part of this people is compelling and, ultimately, spiritually meaningful and personally rewarding.

"Rabbi Yose said: Make yourself fit for the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance."[33] That is to say that the Torah is our legacy, but the knowledge we derive from it and the Truths that it reveals are not inherited; these we must work to earn. With each new generation that joins the Jewish people, the circumstances under which that generation lives raise new questions about this great heritage.

"A tradition that is transmitted more or less as it is received will not live long."[34] This concern must have been understood by the rabbis as our sacred narrative has evolved and continues to do so as our people gets farther and farther from the events that we commemorate. Each generation, as was explained extensively in the previous chapter, finds its own voice to identify with the story. Or, as Scheibe puts it, "Perhaps the spirit of an age selects for special prominence the voice which happens to respond most directly to the particular needs of that age."[35]

While the unique qualities of each age require that part of the story receive greater emphasis or that a new experience be brought into the canon, the sacred narrative of a people has within it essential qualities and stories that are its legacy from one generation to the next. "My father was a wandering Aramean" is, for the Jewish tradition, a foundational statement of identity. And if our identities are constructed from all of our social contexts and inherited memories, then this statement is the jumping off point for all that follows it in the narrative. All of the challenging moments in this story and all of the opportunities for celebration somehow point back to this moment. Our origins are humble and unsettling.

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[33] Wieseltier, #64
[34] ibid., #62
[35] Scheibe, p. 50

The Maggid: The Four Children—A Collection of Identities

Perhaps to emphasize our flexibility and strength of self, or perhaps to prove that a person's identity can lead to very different places at different times, the Haggadah introduces us to the idea that different participants need to hear, or *will* hear, the story told differently.

The most common understanding of the Four Children presented in the Passover Haggadah is that each child represents a different personality—the wicked, the wise, the simple and the one-who-does-not-know-how-to-ask. These four personality types are often assigned values as well, in part because of the way they are presented—the wise being the most valued and the one-who-does-not-know-how-to-ask valued the least. While there are exegetical readings that suggest these four are not so far removed from each other and others still that rank them in the opposite order, most continue to view these Four Children as distinct personalities.

In recent years in particular, with the increasing volume of Haggadot, artists have begun to explore the Four Children in ways that present these personalities increasingly on the same plane. In some instances, the Four Children are presented so similarly that they appear indistinct from each other. This presents us with a model closer to the language that we can understand in our post-modern context: that each child represents one of the identities of an individual. This returns us to a question asked earlier. Are we ever the same person entering our Seder that we were in the previous year? The correct answer is both yes and no.

We bring to the table all of what we were the previous year, but we are never the same constructed self as the year before, we are never entering the same Seder, in the same context as the year previous. We are always the same and never the same simultaneously. This has major implications for the sacred narrative itself, as our Seders are meant to be dynamic, transformative experiences that are responsive to the individuals present. A person enters the Seder as one self and emerges on the other side as another self.

Conclusion

As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously put it, "Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow."[36] From year to year the participants in our Seder, and even the inheritance purported to be passed down, changes and evolves. For this reason, we must examine not only the narrative from year to year, but also plumb the possibilities of ritual to transform an ever changing narrative and ever-self-constructing selves into a meaningful and transformative cohesive whole. We might imagine the Seder as one great ritualized experiment of identity exploration.

> As Leon Wieseltier puts it,
>
> > It is a special delight to find oneself alone with one's own tradition. There are forgotten corners to which one escapes without escaping; ideas or texts or images that are rarely visited by the others; tranquil peripheries where the contradiction between privacy and participation, between solitude and solidarity, disappears. A secret room under the same roof.[37]

We might add, seated at the same table.

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[36] Heraclitus, Arius Didymus, Fr. 39.2 = 22B12
[37] Wieseltier, #29

CHAPTER FOUR:
RITUAL PROCESS AND THE METHODOLOGY OF THE PASSOVER HAGGADAH

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

In every generation a person is obligated **TO SEE** her/himself **AS IF S/HE ACTUALLY CAME OUT OF EGYPT**.
(Mishnah Pesachim 10:5)

What could it mean for a person to identify with an experience that took place thousands of years ago as if it actually had happened to them? How can the simple telling of a story, sprinkled with drops of wine and crumbs from the "bread of affliction," all while lounging at the dinner table, cause a person to feel as if they had left the slavery of Egypt for the wide expanse of freedom? The answer, in short, is the transformative power of ritual and the world that it creates within it.

The term itself might refer to an order of gestures or incantations that permit another action to take place. Or perhaps one might see it as limited to rites of passage from one phase of life to another. Ritual is all of these things but also so much more. Only after a discussion of the commandment to "tell your children" about the Exodus from Egypt, an exploration of the development and telling of that narrative and a close look at the phylogeny of those identities present at the Seder, can we come to understand the complex world of ritual.

In this chapter we will consider how ritual functions and what purposes it serves. Throughout this discussion, illustrations of the concepts elucidated will be taken from the Passover Haggadah in order to demonstrate the richness of both ritual in general and our Seder experience in particular.

What is Ritual?

Ritual could be loosely defined as any series of acts, events, gestures or rites that follow a pre-determined and prescribed sequence. These may be related to a religious or spiritual system but may also be associated with familial, communal or tribal relationships. Ritual takes on meanings beyond

itself. Ritual provides comfort or signals a change in status. It reinforces sacred truths and conveys responsibilities. Ritual emboldens relationships and destroys them. It creates and reinforces boundaries and distinctions. The ritualization of action is a natural, perhaps even innate, attempt to make meaning. For these reasons, we can learn a great deal about ritual as it relates to the formation of identity.

Getting from Identity Formation to Ritual Process

Identity does not develop in a single way at a particular or prescribed time. Rather, over time, when exposed to the world around us, we react to and evolve from the experiences that shape our lives. Essential to our development, however, is the commonplace of ritualization and routinization.

Ritual is a necessary step in the evolution and development of children and plays a role in the way adults make meaning. The repetition of particular actions or gestures brings a sense of security to children. As they grow up and gain awareness of their surroundings, ritual provides a sense of order in a world that is increasingly complex and hard to grasp. Greater structure in a child's life allows for the incorporation and integration of the outside world. This is, Erik Erikson conjectures, where the reliance on formalized behaviors, even ceremonies, becomes ingrained.

> Our term ritualization, luckily, is less pretentious, and in a human context is used only for a certain kind of informal and yet prescribed interplay between persons who repeat it at meaningful intervals and in recurring contexts. While such interplay may not mean much more (at least to the participants) then "this is the way *we* do things," it has, we claim, adaptive value for all participants and for their group living. For it furthers and guides, from the beginning of existence, that stage-wise instinctual investment in the social process that must do for human adaptation what the instinctive fit into a section of nature will do for an animal species.[1]

While Erikson uses the word ritualization slightly differently than we do in religious contexts, the lesson of *adapative value* for individuals as well as for a group is no less valuable.

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[1] Erikson, p. 43

He describes these experiences as some of the most basic of interactions as well as the most numinous, because they both help individuals transcend their separateness and confirm their distinctiveness.[2] That is to say, the boundaries between persons and the world in which they find themselves are simultaneously distinct and indivisible, without losing their purpose.

Ritual Confronts Changing Identities

Despite the fact that our multiple and shifting identities rely on ritual, the two may seem at times to clash one with the other. How can a prescribed series of actions speak to one generation with the same voice as the next? If the identities present are shifting and the history that is being shared remains the same, then how can a single ritual accomplish the same objective in the same way? The answer is a complex one.

> Two existential problems are present today that rarely troubled the Jew who molded the early Seder: the definition of "Jew" and hence of "community," and disbelief in the historical tale being celebrated at the Seder.... Where social institutions were strong and learning of the sacred-social Law was enforced, "Jewishness" was not an "ethnic definition" or a philosophical system, but rather an identification with a collectivity and a fundamental orientation to the universe that remained unchallenged by alternative systems of knowledge.[3]

This passage articulates an important reality about the confrontation of identities that happens to a person at the Passover Seder today and how that confrontation differs dramatically from the experience that a Jew would have had at a Seder only a few centuries ago. This raises two issues of profound importance for us to consider when talking about Jewish ritual, that of the shifting and evolving identities of the individuals who are inheritors and proprietors of a tradition and the skepticism of each subsequent generation. Let us first address the nature of the individual and the community present at today's Seders. Then we will deal with the potential lack of belief in the

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[2] Erikson, p. 45
[3] Cernea, p. 4

historicity of the sacred narrative contained within the Haggadah and its effect on the ritual that is the Passover Seder.

Regarding the complex issue of identity, both of the individual and of the community,[4] we must be reminded that we cannot simply tell the story of the Israelites' miraculous passage from the narrow places of Egypt. Going through the Haggadah as if it were a children's book will not accomplish what it was designed to accomplish. The story is important, but it is the intricately detailed ritual that accompanies the carefully crafted Haggadah in its entirety that has been passed down from generation to generation. It is this ritual that is meant to speak to the entire person. Perhaps our participants would be best served by the reminder that, were this simply about the story, we could simply read highlights from the book of Exodus.

The magnitude of the miracle of Israel's deliverance has and will continue to allow opportunities to speak to the timeless particularities of our Jewish identities—those characteristics that unite Jews of all places and times and the particularities of today's Jews under historically unique circumstances. To take this a step further, there are messages within the Pesach Haggadah that convey universal truths. Having withstood the passage of time, these lessons are worth repeating each year. And yet, there are meta-lessons present in our great narrative, *mashalim*, metaphors not yet discovered or brought to light. That the base recitation of our Passover Haggadah does not make its particular and universal truths known to a differently-educated, contemporary Jewish community should not come as a surprise to us. The question at present should then be how can we convey these lessons and the possibility for untapped reserves of meaning to each generation?

[4] It is worth noting, again, that it would be inaccurate to characterize all communities in the same way or to assume the homogeny of a given generation. This could not be further from the truth. Given, however, the shared experiences and events within a community or a generation, there are likely to be enough similarities to speak of them as a cohesive group for the sake of discussion, with the explicit understanding that this group, with all of its perceived sameness, embodies a great deal of diversity and heterogeneity as well.

The second issue, that of disbelief in the historicity of this narrative, means less that we have a poorly educated community of Jews and more that the narrative has been presented in such a way as to emphasize its factuality over its truthfulness. Truth and fact are not always the same thing. Few have trouble seeing the truths expressed in fairy tales, novels or memoirs. Yet when it comes to the narrative of the Jewish people, individuals are distracted by the lack of factual evidence. History is simply the wrong framework for this night.

We should encourage questions about the Exodus and God's redemptive promises, the strange customs and extraordinary behaviors we exhibit at this sacred table. This is the purpose of our night together, to raise difficult questions about our experiences and to feel ownership of this sacred narrative. It is not to present facts, but to present opportunities for engagement with the story of the Jewish people. The Seder night is one during which we are free to reflect on our own lives and the world in which we live by refracting our experiences through the lens of ritual narrative.[5] Passover is about memory and the incorporation of that memory into the identities of everyone present.

> For whatever memories were unleashed by the commemorative rituals and liturgies were surely not a matter of intellection, but of evocation and identification. There are sufficient clues to indicate that what was suddenly drawn up from the past was not a series of facts to be contemplated at a distance, but a series of situations into which one could somehow be existentially drawn. This can perhaps be perceived most clearly in that quintessential exercise in Jewish group memory which is the Passover Seder.[6]

"Memory here is no longer recollection, which still preserves a sense of distance, but reactualization."[7] Memory addresses shifting identities by making the ritual a shared experience. The ritual becomes the common thread "from generation to generation." This means that when identities change, within a person and within a generation, the ritual remains a constant shared

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[5] See Commentary, p. 130
[6] Yerushalmi, p. 44
[7] ibid.

experience. It becomes one of the many myriad experiences that contribute to that person's or that generation's identity. Again, the issue at hand is not one of history but of sustained value and meaning.

If the Seder night is a foray into the creation of identity and the sharing of collective memory, then surely there is a great deal of technique employed to make it both effective and affective. Using many of the components that define ritual, the Passover Seder performs a host of sophisticated accomplishments including: the framing of history as memory; creating opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual transformation; and incorporating a balanced world-view of good and bad. Does the ritual of the Passover Seder remain the same throughout every generation? The *essence* of the ritual never changes, regardless of whatever small changes occur.

Ritual as the (Re)Framing of History

The Haggadah is clear in its mission: The story of the Exodus from Egypt and God's great saving power must be told while the commanded foods of Passover—the eating of unleavened bread (matzah), the paschal sacrifice and the bitter herb—are eaten. This is the basic purpose of our Passover Haggadah and of the night of the Passover Seder. As generation after generation gets further and further from the historical experience that is commemorated on this night, an increasing level of symbolism and custom has been incorporated into this evening ritual, all the while staying focused on its ultimate purpose. As the ritual has evolved, so too the narrative it seeks to convey has needed to adapt. It has changed, not only because of the communities in which it has been observed, but also because of the changing understanding of what is essential to the story and what is important about the early customs commanded to accompany it.

The first major shift came with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. This tragedy caused a rift throughout Jewish life that, in some ways, has still left the Jewish community reeling.

The memory of the Exodus had to take on new significance if it were to continue being the central narrative of our people.

> …[O]ffering the paschal lamb at the Temple…was no longer possible. The alternative of offering it outside the Temple, though possible in fact, was deemed illegal in theory. In its place, however, Jews could observe the commandment to talk about the Exodus and to ritualize its occurrence through symbolic verbal presentation. Thus there arose our Passover seder, with its complex order of events, including, eventually, an entire book of readings, the Haggadah, to direct the retelling.[8]

The ritual as we know it, then, emerged over time as a reaction both to the contexts in which the story was being told and to the necessity to frame our experience in such a way as to bring deeper meaning to an eternally relevant event.

The history of the Jewish people has continuously been filtered through the rituals of our tradition. Our past has been reappropriated and reframed to incorporate broader understandings of the stories that previously inhabited the ritual realm of our people. Therefore slavery has come to be understood as more than just the oppressive labor that embittered the lives of our Israelite ancestors. Israel's time in Egypt has come to symbolize enduring oppression under various kingdoms and regimes, the slavery of the mind, the abdication of rights and the seemingly unending aggression visited upon the Jewish people. The lessons of the past have been combined and elevated to highlight the enduring truths they teach.

In learning about how ritual functions, we first observe that ritual can incorporate disparate events and create a single narrative of coherence. This creates a sense of unity within the ritual itself but it also points towards a meta-theme of the tradition in which it finds itself. Part of being a Jew is identifying with both being a slave and being a free person, simultaneously, sometimes paradoxically.

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[8] Hoffman, p. 82

This aspect of ritual does not attempt to cast the entire tradition as monolithic, rather it values and models the cohesion of narrative that makes for healthy living, privately or communally. The fact that the narrative is told through so many lenses—*midrashim*, questions and the usage of ritual foods—means that the initiated participant understands this not as objective history but constructed memory. This framing is an essential technique for the effectiveness of ritual and prepares a lush background for the transformative power found within it.

Ritual as Transformation

Theologian Tom Driver argues that ritual is, in fact, an act of transformational magic. In the West, we have a tendency to frown on such anti-intellectual notions. The term "magic" might even be considered pejorative in some circles, implying a kind of fakeness or displacement from reality. "Magic" might cast ritual as some sort of illusion made possible by diverting one's attention. This could not be further from reality, despite the "numinous" quality of ritual described by Erikson.[9] Ritual is defined as having magical qualities in that it can transform an individual, a group and, even, a community of people through symbolic, prescribed (and often rehearsed) acts. While Driver illustrates his reasoning describing various rites of passage, which may or may not be fitting comparisons for our case under study, the language that he uses should be quite instructive for us.

Ritual accomplishes three simultaneous ends by the same means, reaching across, as Larry Hoffman might put it,[10] eons. A ritual portrays a particular tradition's: 1) received *sense of order*, 2) attempts to *make order* out of that which is out of order and then 3) *reorders* the world incorporating that which is out of order into the perceived order of the world.[11] In other words, ritual attempts to correct that which is outside of the narrative in order to create a comprehensive, inclusive and coherent picture of the world. Ritual attempts to bring balance to an unbalanced

[9] Erikson, p. 45
[10] See Hoffman, pp. 82-83
[11] Driver, p. 171

system, the image of which belongs to that ritual's tradition. Like the child in Erikson's system, a person seeks out stability in a changing, unsteady state by performing a rehearsed and familiar act that imposes order on a context in disarray or upheaval.

The performance of this ritual is what makes transformation of our world possible, as Driver sees it. "We have already noticed that ritual employed as a means for the transformation of society is a kind of "social magic."... Ritual is the work of beings who are characterized by their capacity to perform and hence to fabricate a social world that is not simply given to them but is compounded of desires and actions that are subject to moral evaluation.[12]"

Sh'foch Chamatcha – The Transformation of the Oppressed

We have already shown how ritual attempts to 1) reframe history into a singular (though not single) narrative and 2) transform the disordered present to fit the perceived and constructed order of the world. A perfect example of these principles in action is a moment found in our Passover Seder.

After the meal, as the participants get closer and closer to their redemption they decide to demonstrate an act of spiritual and ritual bravado. Given the Jewish people's history of oppression and victimization, on this night history is reframed into the context that is Passover. On this night, the group begins in degradation and ends in redemptive dignity[13] and freedom to praise. Living as receptacles of aggression does not exist on this night. To illustrate this self-contained, ritually-induced truth, the Seder participants open the door to welcome the prophet Elijah. In many contemporary Haggadot Elijah is explicitly mentioned and is welcomed in song. Classically though, this was not done. Instead, a bolder gesture was made. With the door to one's home wide open, the following was recited:[14]

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[12] Driver, pp. 185-186
[13] See Hoffman, p. 132
[14] trans. Levy, p. 96

SHFOCH CHAMATCHA

Psalms 79:6-7, 69:25; Lamenations 3:66

Pour out Your fury on those peoples that do not know You,
And over realms which do not even call You by Your proper Name;
For such nations have eaten Jacob alive,
Wiping out the places where we peaceably lived,
Pour out Your wrath upon them, let Your burning anger overtake them,
Pursue them with anger, wipe them out from under the heavens of God.

This gesture is incorporated to correct the social order, to challenge it and to incite change. It assumes a *sense of order* that keeps the people Israel in a perpetual state of oppression and that that oppression will be vanquished by the coming of the Messianic Age, or Time-to-Come. This is, of course, in light of the holiday being celebrated out of order with the way things should have been; the Jewish people should have been forever redeemed from their sorrows and hardship. Israel should never have known hardship again according to the miracles performed in the narrative told on this night. Therefore, as the Seder's end nears, the final moments of praise and uplift building, we open the doors of our homes wide to the world outside and bravely declare that God's judgment (and worse) shall fall upon those nations that oppress God's people.

We could describe this part of the Seder as an act of magic. In boldly citing these verses of revenge, the community assembled emboldens itself and elevates itself to a state of courage and strength. The repetition of the Seder ritual in general and this section in particular means to reinforce the message "in every generation"—no generation shall see the Jewish people fully destroyed. This night has the potential to transform the Israelites from physical and spiritual slavery to freedom in every generation.

This is true for those who participate, but what about those people who simply watch this whole thing unfold?

Roles Within Ritual

Ritual, primarily, transforms the lives of those who participate in it. Yet, we know that a person may oscillate between active participant and seated-outsider throughout it. For this reason, ritual includes a level of effectiveness for the outsider looking in as well. The anthropologist Catherine Bell, in explaining the ritual theories of Clifford Geertz, teaches that there is a role for observers of ritual as well.

This is accomplished, in part, by the intermingling of belief and action within ritual. "Here the simplest ritual activities are seen to "fuse a people's conceptions of order and their dispositions (moods and motivations) for action. For Geertz, this opposition of conceptions and dispositions, or the world as imagined and the world as lived, constitutes cultural life per se."[15] This fusing of our understandings of the way the world ought to be and the way that it is are where meaning is found for the participants of whatever ritual seeks to harmonize these two things.

Geertz pushes us further. Ritual is not intended only for the participants. Nearly all rituals, no matter how personal, attract and are intended for an audience. These observers are therefore part of the ritual as well. They, too, may find meaning in their passive participation in the ritual.

Many Seders have a designated leader, which could relegate most of those present as mere observers. But even the most withdrawn observers of the Passover Seder become participants when they respond to a blessing with Amen or remove drops of wine from their cups for each of the Ten Plagues. The meal alone is a moment when all present becomes participants. It has become common in many Jewish homes for the leader to circulate around the table or for a central leader to randomly assign various sections to others present. Even in the most traditional settings, it is common for the youngest in the assembled group to recite the Four Questions—shifting that child

[15] Bell, p. 26

from observer to participant. Within the Seder ritual, the line between outsider and insider is faint and impermanent.

The implications for such wide-ranging participation and meaning making are great for the Passover Seder. There is, in nearly every Seder, a moment for every person to be the one who officiates and the one who receives, as an active player and an outside observer. Given what we have already learned about the plurality of a person's identity, a ritual such as the one practiced at the Pesach table, is a unique way to try and reach all of its constituents in any way possible in whichever role that person inhabits. Surely all persons have important roles to play within the Seder, as they are part of the community that develops there within this shared experience.

Liminality and Communitas

The anthropologist Victor Turner is perhaps best known in the worlds of the various social sciences for the identification and description of two essential qualities of ritual life. These are the concepts of liminality and of communitas.

Liminality is the state of being "neither here nor there...betwixt and between.[16]" "Thus liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.[17]" Liminality is the place between places. Despite its seeming placelessness, it is, indeed, an intentional path.

In ritual terms liminality acts as the time and space between statuses. Within a rite of passage, for example, a person begins one way and then enters into the ritual, only to emerge on the other side different than when he or she entered. In becoming a Jew by conversion, a woman enters the mikvah as a non-Jew and immerses herself in the water. When she is under the water, as if she

[16] Turner, p. 95
[17] ibid.

were within a womb,[18] she is neither non-Jew nor Jew. But when she surfaces again, reborn, she is able to recite the blessing for ritual immersion, having now crossed into a new state of being. Having now surfaced as a Jew she is obligated to make the blessing over her ritual immersion.

Liminality is, to further emphasize, the meeting place between low and high, between one role and a transformed role on the other side. It is a venture from the structured secular world in which we live into an unstructured world where all are equal, where class and status are stripped away. All those present submit to the ritual itself and to those who are orchestrating that ritual.[19]

It is in this unstructured social space that what Turner calls "communitas" is experienced. Communitas is,

> [The second model for human interconnectedness]..., which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.[20]

He uses the term communitas instead of the more pedestrian "community" to differentiate between a common space of social living and the shared experience of social living. Therefore the Seder's participants are members of or in communitas. They are united in a common, egalitarian experience in terms of their ritual role, not necessarily in reality—not all social convictions can be abandoned. Whether family or strangers are brought together at the Seder table, they are united in communitas between time and place.

The Passover Seder is, by these criteria, self-defined as a rite of passage. This is strange for us, as we tend to think of life cycle events, such as *b'nai mitzvah*, as rites of passage. But Turner describes the change that is facilitated by liminality as a movement from the lower plain to a higher one. "Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high

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[18] It is worth noting here that this analogy, that of the mikvah as a womb, is fitting because of the Jewish view of life in utero as also constituting a state of neither here nor there. An unborn child is not yet regarded as a life. Therefore, the state between immersing and resurfacing, where status is erased, is like being in utero.
[19] Turner, pp. 95-96
[20] ibid., p. 96

must experience what it is like to be low.[21]" This is, precisely, the frame of the entire Passover Seder. When the rabbis set out to create the narrative that would fill the Haggadah, they drafted it according to the phrase "*matchil higenut umesayem beshevach*" - "From Degradation to Dignity."[22]

The rabbis understood that the Seder experience, were it to be effective in communicating the story of Israel's freedom from Egyptian servitude, would need to move people through the narrative to a loftier place. And, without a term like communitas guiding them, they understood the need to create a unifying space that was liminal and moving all at the same time. But this time and space of living in between is not without structure. While communitas is spontaneous, it "is made evident or accessible, so to speak, only through its juxtaposition to, or hybridization with, aspects of social structure. ...[C]ommunitas can be grasped only in some relation to structure.[23]

The Passover Seder takes place at the table upon which conventional meals are eaten and common dinner conversation occur. They involve family members and friends. Sometimes extended family and friends are invited in as well. It is precisely because traditional elements from common contexts are suffused together in a non-traditional way that communitas is possible. It is regular and irregular, it is structure and anti-structure.

The Four Children & The Four Questions: Status and the Statusless

As we have said already, ritual in general and the Seder in particular are moments between structured worlds, between various statuses. Therefore, when people are within the ritual itself, they are statusless. In fact, their stature is stripped off of them.[24] When we seat ourselves at the table on the first night of Pesach, we are no longer primarily mothers and fathers, sons and daughters but the ancestors of slaves. We are the past of degrading servitude and the hope for redemption. Tonight,

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[21] Turner, p. 97
[22] See Hoffman, p. 132
[23] Turner, p. 127
[24] ibid., p. 108

those assembled treat each other as royal equals. All present are kings and queens, princes and princesses. Now that all things are equal, no social structure can create a barrier between individuals. Even the role of the leader, who paces and pushes the evening forward is no greater than others at the table. Transformation is not threatened.

But we are human and status might sneak its conventional head into our liminal space. Those of a more traditional inferior status are introduced here, that of children, to keep all who are present centered around what unifies them. The Four Children are characters within the story and not actual children present at the Seder.

Victor Turner speaks of communitas and the potential for change in non-liminal spaces within structured society. He points towards several social theorists who have studied the roles of "court jesters" and other marginalized characters. These characters are, at face value, considered less-than, inferior and beneath the status quo. It is precisely because of this debased status that the criticisms they offer can be heard—because they pose no real threat to their superiors. A court jester may offer political or economic commentary on the king's rulings because there is no risk in listening to him.[25] He will never rise to power or turn the king's subjects against him.

It is for this reason that the Four Children have captured the attention of so many within the Seder. It is not enough to have Four Children—as children are always marginalized in adult conversation, even seated on the periphery of the room—but to assign what are some of the hardest questions to them is telling. The Four Children ask questions that no adult can safely ask at the Seder table. These questions, it should be noted, are questions about how we may relate to the story of the Exodus. They are inquiries into and about the self. These questions are as difficult to ask as they are to answer. It is for this reason that they are placed upon the personas of Four Children.

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[25] ibid., pp. 109-110

And it is worth noting that the first to respond within the Haggadah is not the voice of the carefully penned narrator, but that of the rabbinic authority Shmuel.

It is worth noting as well that the tradition around the Four Questions is to have the youngest participant read or chant them. This highlights both the stripped status of all present—that such a prominent part of the Haggadah be led by a child—and the marginalization of the personality that asks the hard questions about what is that is being done. These voices are safe to query us towards our own introspection and spur us on towards something greater. And who better to answer this non-threatening member of our makeshift community than the authoritative Rav and Shmuel.

Authenticity and Balance within Ritual

Our last note must relate some of the invaluable teachings of anthropologist Mary Douglas, whose vision understands that a single ritual exists within a larger system of beliefs and that that ritual must, for the sake of authenticity, incorporate that which is most vile to the tradition it represents. She teaches, "...a garden is not a tapestry; if all the weeds are removed, the soil is impoverished. Somehow the gardener must preserve fertility by returning what he has taken out."[26]

Within Douglas' system, the despised, undesired, ruinous aspects of life are incorporated into those ritualized and holy moments for the sake of totality and not isolation. She is referring, especially in her own research, to things that are literally dirty substances and states: dirt, feces, blood, disease and death. We need not look far to see how this applies within the Jewish tradition.[27] The biblical tradition has a great fear of the impurity of these substances. The priestly system

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[26] Douglas, p. 162

[27] Douglas does a more than adequate job discussing how this concept plays itself out in the biblical tradition in the book from which this essay is pulled, Purity and Danger. In it, she explains the stigma against blood and its incorporation into purification and sacrificial rites.

unapologetically creates boundaries from these catalysts and carriers of impurity and rituals to both impart and preserve ritual purity. But to look in on a single purification ritual performed by the Levitical priests will not properly convey the entire priestly system of purity and impurity.

> All live religions are many things. The formal ritual of public occasions teaches one set of doctrine. There is no reason to suppose that its message is necessarily consistent with those taught in private rituals, or that all public rituals are consistent with one another, nor all private rituals. There is no guarantee that the ritual is homogeneous and, if it is not, only the subjective intuition of the observer can say whether the total effect is optimistic or pessimistic.[28]

Rituals exist within systems of rituals. These rituals are not all the same. They do not serve the same purpose. One does not accomplish the same objective within one ritual as within a completely different one. For example, the shaking of the *lulav* and *etrog* while making circles under the boughs of the *sukkah* has no similarity to prostrating oneself before the open ark during the *Aleinu HaGadol* of Yom Kippur. But there isn't supposed to be a direct connection. The two are not supposed to mirror each other or compliment each other. Therefore, when we participate in or observe a ritual, we should not make generalizations about the entire system in which it is found, because it cannot possibly convey all that that religious tradition intends to impart through its many varied practices.

No ritual can ever convey or represent all of the values within the tradition from which it comes. But a prominent one can come close, by incorporating that which is coveted and that which is despised into one coherent whole.

The Seder and The Nasty Bits

Using Douglas' model of understanding ritual—that healthy, effective rituals in balanced religions, incorporate the "dirt" with the more choice bits—we might gain a great deal of insight into the role that our Seder plays, not only within the celebration of Pesach, but also the entirety of the Jewish

[28] Douglas, p. 163

tradition. There is, Douglas argues, paradox and ambiguity in all of human existence. A religion that deals honestly with that reality and brings harmony to the contradictions in our lives will do so, not only through its liturgies and laws (if it has them), but also through its rituals.

When removing what is outside the realm of clean, pure and holy within a religious tradition, the opposing forces are singled out and removed. "First they are recognizably out of place, a threat to good order,[29] and so are regarded as objectionable and vigorously brushed away."[30] When we think about Passover we often think first of the foods we cannot have. The *chametz*, the leavening, that has been consciously and meticulously removed from our homes takes on the stigma of "dirty." The status of leavened products changes so drastically during this week that there are traditions specific to Pesach that seek to redefine our daily bread as some sort of evil substance. It is known as being equated with the *yetzer ha-rah*, the evil inclination, idleness and sloth, envy, lust and glory.[31] The ceremony which precedes the celebration of Pesach where one removes from one's house all *chametz* includes not only a search and removal, but also the statement, "All *chametz* in my possession whether I have seen it or not and whether I have removed it or not shall be nullified and be ownerless as the dust of the earth."[32] The *chametz* that *is* found is burned.

Ritual performs a trick and redefines what normally sustains us during the week as no longer fitting; it is unclean and has no place within our celebration.. But a system cannot exist entirely pure, it cannot be so sterile as to be impervious to change and transformation.[33] For this reason flour and water are reintroduced in a form that is fit for this holiday celebration and this ritual. The boundary between *chametz* and matzah is a thin window of time, designated primarily by a sort of ritualistic pseudo-science. Despite this seemingly arbitrary slightness, this boundary is *guarded* closely.

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[29] Again, the sense of order in the world has an important role in understanding the position of ritual. See Tom F. Driver, pp. 185-186.
[30] Douglas, p. 160
[31] Greenberg and Roth, pp. 262-264 (Avraham Yaakov Finkel)
[32] Trans. from Zion, p. 14
[33] Douglas, p. 160

To add credibility to the great deal of attention received by baking *matzah*, the rabbis highlight the difference between the spelling of the words *matzah* and *chametz*. The letter *hey* and the letter *chet* are the only two letters that differ between these two words and the distinction between these two is, itself, slight. It might even seem insignificant. But the difference between a *hey* and *chet* is great enough to change the meanings of words and language, and therefore reality. Just as the gap between a piece of unleavened bread that qualifies as *matzah* and one that is deemed *chametz* is guarded closely, so too is what is permitted and forbidden in this temporary but powerful system of Pesach "purity."

The Seder ritual in its entirety is about movement from slavery to freedom to ultimate redemption. Therefore, this liminalized substance of sustenance is assigned these values. Matzah is the bread of affliction as much as it is the bread of freedom. This meager poor man's bread, this statusless cracker, is within our ritual assigned a transformative, magical role. Just as the role of slavery is no proud moment but is retold as the seed for a fruitful relationship with God ultimately leading to covenant and redemption, so too is the hasty and nearly tasteless bread put into the spotlight.

This is the incorporation of the pure and the impure, the hasty and the meticulous, the lowly and the exalted. Matzah becomes the reminder that the boundary between slavery and freedom is a tenuous one and we must protect ourselves from its destruction with vigilance and carry its strength into the world. It is the sobering reminder that with all of our power as human beings, we are but simple creations. These are messages reinforced time and again throughout the Jewish tradition.

Towards a Whole View of Ritual

A person is, at any given time, multiple things to multiple people juggling myriad interests and desires. But from day to day, moment to moment, all of that can be simultaneously appreciated,

celebrated, elevated and transformed through the power of ritual. Ritual does not claim, in its in-between space, in its unstructured social order, to erase all that a person is. It embraces the ambiguities of life, it parades the paradoxes of human existence and seeks how to make it more, to move us from the "lows" to the "highs." And this movement from one place to another is transformative. It is magical. It affects both those participating and those observing.

It is for this reason that the Passover Seder, with all of what is going on within it, is so compelling. It is at once ritual and story, liturgy and history, narrative and mirror. It is a moment in time when all rules are off, when history collides with the past and the future. We draw new, clean boundaries that incorporate a variation of our old, rejected ways (if only for a week's time). We disguise ourselves as freed slaves lounging at a table set for royalty, but we never forget that we are part slave and part prince or princess. We recite and we eat; we dip and we drink. We look inward and look out at those around us. We bring our world into the Seder with us and we take our newly transformed selves back into the unchanged world that we left for the Passover table.

The Passover Seder is the quintessential ritual of the Jewish people because it is timeless and time-bound, it is earthly and ethereal, it is simple and it is sophisticated. And between all of these extremes are numerous opportunities for personal, communal and, even, universal growth and transformation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARY

כָּל הַמַּרְבֶּה

"The more one expands and embellishes the story, the more commendable."[1]

The following is a non-linear commentary which means that it follows the Haggadah more according to themes than to its own internal chronology. This does not mean that it is entirely out of the order that one is accustomed to seeing, nor is it only thematic. For example, the reader will find that the first commentary, entitled "The Wine," begins with Kadesh which is the first section of the Seder. This commentary, however, includes every reference to wine found within the Haggadah, so that all the cups of wine are discussed in relationship to one another.

By constructing the commentary in this manner we are able to extrapolate themes and motifs that might otherwise be lost to the reader. In this way, our commentary diverges from most Haggadot. The reader should note that we have chosen not to comment on every section of the Haggadah, though we have covered the majority of it. Hopefully, we will inspire the person who uses this commentary to fill in the blanks.

Due to the complexity of the commentary, we have provided a guide which begins on the following page. This chart lists the traditional order of the Seder in the central wide column. In the first, non-shaded column on the right, the reader will find the appropriate page reference for our commentary.

Also, our commentary does not provide the content—blessings, *midrashim*, instructions, etc.—of the Haggadah to which our commentary responds. We suggest that the reader use this commentary alongside a Haggadah. To make this easier for the reader, we have included in the shaded columns to the right, the page numbers of three different Haggadot.

We have chosen to refer to The Open Door, the newest Haggadah from the Reform Movement; On Wings of Freedom, the official Haggadah of Hillel International; and A Different Night, an educational Haggadah published by the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. We feel that these three

[1] From the Haggadah, Translation from Zion, Noam and David Dishon, p. 48

Haggadot harmonize the balance between tradition and modernity. In addition we feel that they would be practical Haggadot to use in an educational setting as well as at the Seder table.

THE ORDER OF THE SEDER

Wine			*Commentary*	*The Open Door*	*On Wings of Freedom*	*A Different Night*
1st Cup	1	קַדֵּשׁ **Kaddesh:** Sanctifying the Day	p. 113	p. 16	p. 11	p. 22
	2	וּרְחַץ **Urchatz:** Washing the Hands	---	p. 23	p. 16	p. 28
	3	כַּרְפַּס **Karpas:** The Greens We Dip	p. 118	p. 24	p. 16	p. 30
	4	יַחַץ **Yachatz:** Breaking the Matzah	p. 120	p. 26	p. 18	p. 32
2nd Cup	5	מַגִּיד **Maggid**: The Telling	---	p. 27	p. 21	p. 34
		a *Ha Lachma Anya*: This is the Bread of Affliction	p. 120	p. 27	p. 23	p. 36
		b. The Four Questions	p. 125	p. 30	p. 25	p. 40
		c. Shmuel's Pesach Story: *Avadim Hayinu* "From Slavery to Physical Liberation"	p. 128	p. 32	p. 28	p. 44
		d. The Rabbis of *B'nai B'rak*: The Longest Seder	p. 132	p. 34	p. 28	p. 46
		e. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria: Recalling the Exodus	p. 132	p. 35	p. 29	p. 46
		f. *Baruch HaMakom*: Four Praises of God	---	p. 37	p. 30	p. 56
		g. The Four Children	p. 132	p. 38	p. 30	p. 56
		h. Rav's Pesach Story: " From Serving Idols to Spiritual Liberation"	p. 128		p. 34	p. 72
		i. *Shomer Hartachato*: God's Promise	p. 136	p. 43	p. 36	p. 76
		j. *I'hee She'amda*: Standing Up for Us	p. 136	p. 44	p. 37	p. 76
		k. *Arami Oved Avi*: My Father was a Wandering Aramean (Deut. 26:5-8)	p. 138	p. 46	p. 39	p. 78
		l. Rabbinic Midrash on Deut. 26:5-8	p. 138	p. 46	p. 40	p. 80
		m. The Ten Plagues	p. 138	p. 53	p. 51	p. 98
		n. Midrash on the Plagues	p. 138		p. 52	p. 102

Wine			*Commentary*	*The Open Door*	*On Wings of Freedom*	*A Different Night*
		o. *Dayeinu*: "It would have been enough"	p. 138	p. 58	p. 53	p. 104
		p. Rabban Gamliel: The Explanation of *Pesach*, *Matzah* & *Maror*	p. 146	p. 63	p. 57	p. 110
		q. *B'chol Dor V'Dor*: "In Every Generation"	---	p. 66	p. 60	p. 114
		r. Introduction to *Hallel*	---	p. 68	p. 61	p. 116
		s. *Hallel* Part I—Psalms 113 & 114	---	p. 68	p. 62	p. 118
	6 רָחְצָה	**Rachatza**: Washing before Eating	---	p. 73	p. 66	p. 124
	7 מוֹצִיא	**Motzi**	p. 120	p. 74	p. 67	p. 124
	8 מַצָּה	**Matzah**	p. 120 p. 146	p. 74	p. 68	p. 124
	9 מָרוֹר	**Maror**	p. 146	p. 75	p. 68	p. 126
	10 כּוֹרֵךְ	**Korech**: Hillel Sandwich	---	p. 76	p. 71	p. 128
	11 שֻׁלְחָן עוֹרֵךְ	**Shulchan Orech**	p. 150	p. 77	p. 72	p. 129
	12 צָפוּן	**Tzafun**: Finding the Afikomen	p. 120	p. 78	p. 74	p. 130
3rd Cup	13 בָּרֵךְ	**Barech**: *Birkat HaMazon*	---	p. 79	p. 75	p. 132
		Elijah's Cup	p. 113 p. 152	p. 85	p. 95	p. 138
		Sh'foch Chamatcha: Pour Out Your Wrath	p. 152	p. 86	p. 96	p. 140
4th Cup	14 הַלֵּל	**Hallel** Part II— Psalms 115-118, 136	---	p. 92	p. 100	p. 144
		Counting the *Omer*	---	p. 103	p. 123	p. 150
	15 נִרְצָה	**Nirtzah**: The Conclusion	---	p. 112	p. 121	p. 165
		a. Concluding Poem	---	p. 112	p. 121	p. 165
		b. Next Year in Jerusalem!	---	p. 112	p. 122	p. 165
		Songs	---	p. 104	p. 126	p. 152

THE CUPS OF WINE

BIBLICAL

In Exodus, Chapter 6, God reassures Moses that God has heard the outcry of the Israelites in slavery and recalls the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Similar to the moment at the burning bush, God promises to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. The details of this promise are spelled out in verses 6-8:

> *THEREFORE, SAY TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: I AM ADONAI; I WILL BRING YOU OUT FROM BENEATH THE BURDENS OF EGYPT, I WILL RESCUE YOU FROM SERVITUDE TO THEM, I WILL REDEEM YOU WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM, WITH GREAT (ACTS OF) JUDGMENT; I WILL TAKE YOU FOR ME AS A PEOPLE AND I WILL BE FOR YOU AS A GOD; AND YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM ADONAI YOUR GOD, WHO BRINGS YOU OUT FROM BENEATH THE BURDENS OF EGYPT. I WILL BRING YOU INTO THE LAND (OVER) WHICH I LIFTED MY HAND (IN AN OATH) TO GIVE TO ABRAHAM, TO ISAAC, AND TO JACOB. I WILL GIVE IT TO YOU AS A POSSESSION.*[1]

The action words—bring, rescue, redeem, take and bring/give—signify the various promises that God makes to the Israelites before the Exodus. These promises enter into the Seder through the five cups of wine (JT Pesachim 10:1). Each cup is symbolic of one of the promises:

1st Cup (Kadesh)	***I WILL BRING YOU OUT*** *FROM BENEATH THE BURDENS OF EGYPT*
2nd Cup	***I WILL RESCUE YOU*** *FROM SERVITUDE TO THEM*
3rd Cup	***I WILL REDEEM YOU*** *WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM, WITH GREAT (ACTS OF) JUDGMENT*
4th Cup	***I WILL TAKE YOU*** *FOR ME AS A PEOPLE AND I WILL BE FOR YOU AS A GOD*
Elijah's Cup	***I WILL BRING YOU INTO THE LAND*** *(OVER) WHICH I LIFTED MY HAND (IN AN OATH) TO GIVE TO ABRAHAM, TO ISAAC, AND TO JACOB. I WILL GIVE IT TO YOU AS A POSSESSION.*

Exodus Rabbah (6:4) goes a step further. It explains that the four expressions of redemption—I will bring you out, I will rescue you, I will redeem you and I will take you—match the four evil decrees Pharaoh made against the Israelites:

Decree #1 *A NEW KING AROSE OVER EGYPT WHO DID NOT KNOW JOSEPH. AND HE SAID TO HIS PEOPLE, "LOOK, THE ISRAELITE PEOPLE ARE MUCH TOO NUMEROUS FOR US. LET US DEAL SHREWDLY WITH THEM, SO THAT THEY MAY NOT INCREASE; OTHERWISE IN THE EVENT OF WAR THEY MAY JOIN OUR ENEMIES IN FIGHTING AGAINST US AND RISE FROM THE GROUND." (Exodus 1:8-10)*

Decree #2 *THE KING OF EGYPT SPOKE TO THE HEBREW MIDWIVES, ONE OF WHOM WAS NAMED SHIPHRAH AND THE OTHER PUAH, SAYING, "WHEN YOU DELIVER THE HEBREW WOMEN, LOOK AT THE BIRTHSTOOL: IF IT IS A BOY, KILL HIM; IF IT IS A GIRL, LET HER LIVE." (Exodus 1:15-16)*

Decree #3 *THEN PHARAOH CHARGED ALL HIS PEOPLE, SAYING, "EVERY BOY THAT IS BORN YOU SHALL THROW INTO THE NILE, BUT LET EVERY GIRL LIVE." (Exodus 1:22)*

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[1] Based on Everett Fox's translation.

Decree #4 *THAT SAME DAY PHARAOH CHARGED THE TASKMASTERS AND FOREMEN OF THE PEOPLE, SAYING, "YOU SHALL NO LONGER PROVIDE THE PEOPLE WITH STRAW FOR MAKING BRICKS AS HERETOFORE; LET THEM GO AND GATHER STRAW FOR THEMSELVES. BUT IMPOSE UPON THEM THE SAME QUOTA OF BRICKS AS THEY HAVE BEEN MAKING HERETOFORE; DO NOT REDUCE IT, ... LET HEAVIER WORK BE LAID UPON THE MEN." (Exodus 5:6-9)*

The four cups of wine that we drink on Passover eve indicate an overturning of Pharaoh's decrees in addition to being symbols of the four expressions of redemption. In the same *midrash*, it also states that drinking the four cups of wine fulfills the verse, "*I WILL LIFT UP THE CUP OF REDEMPTION, AND CALL UPON THE NAME OF ADONAI.*" *(Psalm 116:13)*

NARRATIVE

The cups of wine narrate the stages of redemption both in the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt and in the general promise of redemption. As the Biblical Commentary explains, each cup of wine relates to the promises God makes to the Israelites in Exodus 6:6-8. As the cups of wine are filled and drunk throughout the Seder, the stages of redemption are both told and celebrated. The Etz Hayim Torah Commentary gives an explanation of this narrative of redemption:

> "**I will free you** from physical enslavement; **I will deliver you** from the psychological mind-set of being a slave, which might persist even after you have been physically liberated; **I will redeem you** so that you will think of yourselves as a free people; and **I will take you** into a special relationship with Me, for that is the ultimate goal of your liberation. Finally, **I will bring you into the land which I swore to give Abraham**. Only when the Israelites have their own land can they become the special people they are summoned to be. Only there will they have the duty and the opportunity to translate the ideals of the Torah into the realities of daily life and fashion the model society from which all nations will be able to learn. The promise of a land of their own is the Torah's ultimate promise; the threat of being cast out of that land is its ultimate punishment. It is not enough to remove the burden of slavery; they must also have the proper circumstances that will permit them to flourish as God's people."[2]

The narrative begins with liberation from physical enslavement in Egypt and is to end with living in the Promised Land. However, when the order of the Seder was ordained around 200 C.E. the Jews were living in exile. The fifth promise had not yet been fulfilled. Four cups of wine placed throughout the Seder commemorated the four fulfilled promises. A separate cup for Elijah was set aside as a symbol of the one unfulfilled promise. It was taught that Elijah the Prophet was the bearer of good news and one day he would bring the messianic age and fulfill this final promise. The redemption narrative told through the cups of wine does not end in the past. Rather the story of the Exodus gives way to the hopes for a messianic future. Since the days of the original liberation from Egypt, Jews and others in the world have continued to live in conditions of oppression. As the Seder narrative comes to an end, we say a prayer for Elijah hoping that one day he will come with news of redemption and comfort, completing God's promises of redemption and concluding the Exodus narrative.

[2] Etz Hayim Torah Commentary, p. 352

"LET ALL WHO ARE HUNGRY COME AND EAT,
LET ALL WHO ARE IN NEED, COME AND SHARE THE PESACH MEAL."[3]

The Passover Seder is an inclusive experience. The Aramaic expression above, lifted from the *HaLachma Anya* passage, represents not only the sentiment that all who care to participate in tonight's ritual are invited to join but also a more symbolic expression. This invitation is expressed in the language spoken in the street and not the language of the synagogue. The usage of the vernacular here demonstrates a sincere interest to include those who may be less naturally inclined to participate.

From where does the instruction to use wine, which is absent from the biblical Passover celebration, derive?

Mishnah Pesachim 10:1—the chapter of the Mishnah that details much of the Seder that came to be—adds wine to the prescribed ritual foods required for the celebration of this holiday. While wine is common to Jewish celebrations it can be an expensive item. Therefore, the rabbis ordain:

> *ON THE EVE OF PASSOVER FROM JUST BEFORE THE AFTERNOON'S DAILY WHOLE OFFERING, A PERSON SHOULD NOT EAT, UNTIL IT GETS DARK.*
> *AND EVEN THE POOREST ISRAELITE SHOULD NOT EAT UNTIL HE RECLINES AT HIS TABLE.*
> *AND THEY SHOULD PROVIDE HIM WITH NO FEWER THAN FOUR CUPS OF WINE,*
> *AND EVEN IF [THE FUNDS] COME FROM PUBLIC CHARITY.*

It is a communal responsibility to ensure the inclusion of all at a Passover Seder. Therefore if there is not enough wine at one's table, the community shall foot the expense of providing *at least* four cups of wine of him/her.

> The Talmud teaches that even the poorest Jew is obligated to be provided with four cups of wine. Passover teaches that for a Seder to be properly observed, all segments of our community must be included in our celebration. The language of the Haggadah is in the first person plural—WE. Our celebration is only complete when we celebrate together.[4]

Theorists of identity claim that there are varying degrees of the outside world incorporated into a person's identity by the social self. Most agree, therefore, that we are innately social beings.[5] The Seder experience as a whole reinforces this notion, by bringing people together and facilitating their interaction. This night is inclusive for the sake of ensuring that one message is clear: A Jew is part of something larger than just himself or herself.

But why wine?

First, the Seder is the place where all are treated as royalty. Each person present is to have their cup filled by another person. They are to enjoy this wine while reclining, the Mishnah emphasizes. Here, the dignity of all is supported by the deletion of the status of all. Tonight, everyone is royalty. Tonight, "[t]he habits of a higher stratum of society which could afford to be served upon at dinner are here shared by everybody."[6] This is an open and accepting environment that grants the benefit of the doubt to all.

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[3] The Passover Haggadah (trans. from Zion, A Different Night, p. 36)
[4] Greenberg and Roth, In Every Generation, p. 299 (The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism)
[5] See Chapter 3, p. 11
[6] Stein, p. 28

Wine perhaps serves the purpose of easing the spirits and awakening the inner-lives of individuals who, with their inhibitions lessened (or even erased) are more willing to be transported to a different time and place. As the Psalmist says, "wine that cheers the hearts of men."[7] In this heightened and potentially enlightened state a person is brought into dialogue with their history, with those assembled and therefore, with themselves.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:
All wine that is drunk at the Seder is imbibed while reclining[8] to the left.

1ST CUP – Beginning of the Seder
The traditional Kiddush for a Festival is recited.
This wine is poured, blessed and drunk. If it is the custom of the leader, the *kittel* is put on after the wine has been drunk.

2ND CUP – Poured at the beginning of the Maggid just before the Four Questions , but drunk at the end of the Maggid, just before Rachtza, Maror and Korech. A special blessing about our Deliverance and celebrating Pesach in the Temple is said while holding the *kiddush* cup raised, "*borei p'ri hagafen*" is recited and the wine is drunk.

Indeed, it makes sense that the wine that stands for deliverance is not enjoyed until the group has been delivered. Therefore, the second cup of wine, the Cup of Deliverance, sits beside the participant until the entire narrative of that deliverance has been told. Only then is this cup enjoyed.[9]

This cup is lifted and set down at various times throughout the Seder, whenever the promise of deliverance or an opportunity for praise arises.

3RD CUP – Poured at the beginning of *Birkat HaMazon* (Barech) and drunk at the end. Wine can be poured at any event during *Birkat HaMazon*, but on this occasion it is required. A standard "*borei p'ri hagafen*" is recited.

> *From the 2nd paragraph of the Birkat HaMazon –*
> *"...FOR BRINGING US OUT OF THE NARROW LAND OF MITZRAYIM [EGYPT], RANSOMING US FROM THE HOUSE OF SLAVES..."*

(5TH CUP – Elijah's Cup – No blessing is said and no participant drinks from this cup as its presence is symbolic of the fifth promise of God's redemption of Israel—to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land. There is some debate as to whether a fifth cup should be drunk, now that the State of Israel exists but it is generally not done. The wine within this cup is either filled before the Seder begins or is filled by its participants when the Seder arrives at Sh'foch Chamatcha.)

4TH CUP – This cup can be poured immediately after the third cup (in order not to put the narrative of the Exodus verses out of order, insuring the fourth promise comes before the fifth promise—Elijah's Cup) but is also often filled just before Hallel. – A standard "*borei p'ri hagafen*" is recited.

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[7] Psalm 104:15, trans. NJPS
[8] Reclining during the Passover Seder and meal is common as it was a sign of "elite dining and social superiority" in the Greco-Roman world. See Chapter 1, p. 34
[9] Levy, pp. 64

This cup ends the sequence of promises and the end of the frame of promises that structures our Seder, "from Degradation to Praise."

Wine is common to all Jewish holidays and is, consistently, the first of all food and drink enjoyed first in a ceremony or at a holiday meal. During this meal, wine serves many purposes. It lightens the spirits of those assembled, so that they might enter into a dialogue with their history and others present more easily, their inhibitions washed away by one glass after another.

Wine, as the social enabler of the present, symbolizes the promise of the future. Each cup of wine is matched with a different promise made by God, which is an everlasting and timeless promise. The wine glass is raised, not only in conjunction with the four promises made by God (Exo. 6:6-8), but whenever the opportunity for the future is brought to light.

The only exception to this rule is the subtraction of drops of wine onto one's plate when reciting the ten plagues the befell Egypt.[10] Abravanel teaches that we do this to subtract from our joy, as we should not rejoice in the hardships of our fellow human beings, despite their role as oppressors of our people. As it says in the book of Proverbs (24:17), "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice."[11]

Why is wine a fitting symbol for this ritual to express promise and freedom?

Wine cannot be enjoyed as soon as the grapes are harvested, but has a delay in its enjoyment. It requires months or years to ferment before it can be drunk and enjoyed. Therefore, the very creation of wine is the creation of promise—the promise that patience will yield a more lively, spicier existence. Wine is, in part, a symbol of delayed gratification. In that delay, though, there is a promise of something greater. Wine embodies the expression, "good things come to those who wait."

This night we exist in a strange place in time, (re)experiencing the past, crafting the present and imagining the future promised to us. We are in a state of in-between. But this is not traditional liminal space, that magical state of being between states, between slavery on one end and freedom on the other. In our Seder we have ritual foods acting upon us. The *matzah* keeps us laden with the burdens of slavery and anchored to the earth in our present condition of freedom while the wine urges us onward and upward, to another earthly realm of being free, to a loftier place in the future, towards a state of ultimate redemption. If *matzah* is the food of the oppressed, then wine is the drink of the free.

[10] See Commentary on "The Narrative," p. ?
[11] Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 19

KARPAS

BIBLICAL

Nowhere in the Bible, either in the commandments or descriptions of the Passover celebrations, is there any mention of the use of Karpas, spring vegetables. However, the symbolic interpretation of the Karpas, discussed in the Ritual Commentary, can be traced to the Bible. Deuteronomy 16:1 states, "*OBSERVE THE MONTH OF AVIV AND OFFER A PESACH OFFERING TO ADONAI YOUR GOD, FOR IT WAS IN THE MONTH OF AVIV, AT NIGHT, THAT ADONAI YOUR GOD FREED YOU FROM EGYPT.*" The Torah clearly states that the Exodus and the celebration of Passover occur in Aviv, the Spring. As a result, the agriculture and symbolism of the Spring is continually incorporated into Pesach experience. Additionally, *karpas* is occasionally associated with the hyssop (a green plant) that was dipped in the blood of the paschal lamb and put on the doorposts of the houses (Exodus 12:22).[12]

NARRATIVE

It is a custom to dip twice at the Seder—*karpas* in salt-water and *maror* in *charoset*. The four questions ask, "on all other nights, we do not dip even once; why on this night do we dip twice?" Noam Zion and David Dishon explain in their Haggadah, A Different Night,

> The dipping of greens is reminiscent of the historic dipping that led Israel into exile in Egypt and the dipping that facilitated their redemption. The descent to Egyptian slavery began when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and dipped his **coat of many colors** into a slaughtered goat's blood in order to mislead their father Israel about his beloved son's true fate. [Gen. 37:31] The ascent from exile- moral and physical- began when every family gathered together with their neighbors to share a lamb on Seder night and to dip in its blood a hyssop plant and to dab it on the **doorposts and the lintel** as a protection against the tenth plague.[13]

The dipping carries forth the narrative in the Seder and even extends it. The Exodus story does not begin by recalling the poverty and persecution of our ancestors in Egypt. Through the ritual of dipping, the narrative goes one step back to include the wrongful acts of Joseph's brothers which led the Israelites into slavery. This ritual preceding the Maggid recalls our entrance into slavery and the dipping after the Maggid represents our liberation from Egyptian servitude.

IDENTITY

Karpas is the symbol for spring and for new birth within the Seder. So important is this holiday's coinciding with spring that the tradition refers to Pesach as *Chag HaAviv*, the Spring Festival. To ensure that the Jewish lunar calendar would always place the month of *Nisan* in the spring, the rabbis worked out a complex cycle of leap years that add a second month of *Adar*. *Nisan* is the symbol of new beginnings. Pesach is the holiday that celebrates a new beginning for the people Israel, the (re)birth of the Jewish nation.

So, too, we should approach this time of year and this night in particular, as an opportunity for new beginnings. Pesach is a time for reevaluation of our lives, a time to clean out all of the excesses from our lives. We clean out the *chametz* so that we may sow the seeds of growth for the coming year. The greens that we enjoy at the Seder symbolize planting and planning for the year to come. They demonstrate our willingness to do or be something new this year.

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[12] Cernea, p. 15

[13] Noam Zion and David Dishon, *A Different Night*, p. 31

One might say, aren't the High Holy Days designed to give us the opportunity to review our past and make hopeful strides towards a brighter future? Yes, they are. But there is no limit to the number of times that we are allowed to review our lives to make changes and no limit to the number of chances we get to try and improve the state of our lives. The Torah dates the month of Nisan as the first month of the year and not the seventh.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

Typically, we think of *karpas* as being only Spring greens –parsley, green onions, and, even, celery. But in many Jewish communities, the Spring harvest evokes the first potatoes and cucumbers of the season. All are acceptable options for the *karpas*.

The *karpas* is dipped into salt water (or vinegar[14]) to remember the sweat and tears shed by the Hebrews while enslaved.

When the third of the Four Questions asks, "Why on this night do we dip twice?" the dipping of the *karpas* into salt water is the first of the two dippings to which the question refers. The second dipping is the *maror* being dipped into the *charoset*.

The blessing over the *karpas* is the standard "*borei p'ri ha'adamah*," "fruit of the earth.

Some recline while eating the *karpas*, some do not.

Like other elements of the contemporary Passover Seder, the notion of eating the *karpas* is an addition made by the rabbis and is absent from the early, biblical version of the Seder. Why was this piece added?

Much of the Seder incorporates borrowed or re-appropriated table rituals of the Greek and Roman symposia. At these meals a light green, such as parsley, would be served as an appetizer and palate cleanser for the meal yet to come.

This is not sloppy work done by the rabbis. They were quite conscious of the Hellenistic model they were using. Perhaps for this reason they would later understand the narrative "My father was a wandering Aramean..." instead as "My father was [nearly] erased [by the hands of the] Romans...."[15] This way, they could secretly hate the very object of their imitation all while reclaiming one of their traditions.

If the rabbis were trying to imagine what absolute freedom and luxury were like, they needed to look no further than their Greek and Roman neighbors who understood discursive and extravagant meals that bordered on excess. And there is, perhaps, an even greater expression of freedom to claim that which is coveted by one's neighbor as one's own and undermine them with the same luxurious stroke. To mimic the symposia of their oppressors as an act of freedom is a brilliant subversion of the original model and great act of irony on behalf of the events of the Exodus that inspired this elaborate ritual.

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[14] Strassfeld, p. 6

[15] See Zion & Dishon, p. 81

MATZAH

BIBLICAL

The focus of the Pesach celebration is *matzah*. Unlike the *pesach* offering which is commanded specifically for the first night, eating *matzah* is the only ritual commanded for the entire celebration. Exodus 12:18 states, "*IN THE FIRST MONTH, FROM THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH AT EVENING, YOU SHALL EAT UNLEAVENED BREAD UNTIL THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH AT EVENING.*" Even the biblical name of the celebration is the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6).

The bible suggests multiple meanings for *matzah*:

- **Remembering and Actualizing the Exodus Experience**
  AND MOSES SAID TO THE PEOPLE, "REMEMBER THIS DAY, ON WHICH YOU WENT FREE FROM EGYPT, ... NO LEAVENED BREAD SHALL BE EATEN." (Exodus 13:3)[16]

- **The Bread of Liberation and Freedom**
  "SO THE PEOPLE TOOK THEIR DOUGH BEFORE IT WAS LEAVENED, THEIR KNEADING BOWLS WRAPPED IN THEIR CLOAKS UPON THEIR SHOULDERS." (Exodus 12:34)

  "AND THEY BAKED UNLEAVENED CAKES OF DOUGH THAT THEY HAD TAKEN OUT OF EGYPT, FOR IT WAS NOT LEAVENED, SINCE THEY HAD BEEN DRIVEN OUT OF EGYPT AND COULD NOT DELAY; NOR HAD THEY PREPARED ANY PROVISIONS FOR THEMSELVES." (Exodus 12:39)

- **The Bread of Affliction and Slavery**
  "...YOU SHALL EAT UNLEAVENED BREAD, BREAD OF AFFLICTION—FOR YOU DEPARTED FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT HURRIEDLY—SO THAT YOU MAY REMEMBER THE DAY OF YOUR DEPARTURE FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT AS LONG AS YOU LIVE." (Deuteronomy 16:3)

Even though eating *matzah* is mentioned throughout the biblical descriptions and commandments for Passover, the Hebrew Bible never commands the use of three *matzot* nor does it suggest breaking (*yachatz*) and hiding (*tzafun*) the *matzah*. However, the Tanach does refer to the tradition of wrapping the *matzah* in Exodus 12:34, "SO THE PEOPLE TOOK THEIR DOUGH BEFORE IT WAS LEAVENED, THEIR KNEADING BOWLS WRAPPED IN THEIR CLOAKS UPON THEIR SHOULDERS." This verse is connected to the tradition of wrapping the *afikomen*, the larger broken piece of *matzah*.

Refer to Chapter 1, p. 9 for additional information about the Biblical origins of *matzah*.

NARRATIVE

Matzah is central to the Exodus narrative. It is the symbol used to tell the story. Through the Seder, the *matzah* literally transforms its meaning to reflect the Exodus narrative. At the beginning of the Maggid, the storytelling section of the Seder, the *matzah* is held up and the leader states, "הָא לַחְמָא עַנְיָא- This is the bread of poverty, this is the bread of affliction." It begins as a reminder of slavery and the harsh conditions in Egypt. At the end of the Maggid, the leader once again makes reference to the *matzah*. This time, Rabbi Richard N. Levy explains, it is a symbol of freedom and redemption. The leader holds up the top and bottom *matzah*, the unbroken *matzahs* which represent freedom and recites Motzi.[17] The symbolism of the *matzah* literally tells the narrative which begins with degradation and ends with freedom.

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[16] Refer to Chapter 1, p. 13 for an explanation of this verse.
[17] Levy, pp. 67-68

Furthermore, at the beginning of the Seder, in the section called Yachatz, the leader breaks the middle *matzah* and hides the larger piece. This larger piece, known as the *afikoman*, will later be searched for in the section called Tzafun. Tzafun (צָפוּן), meaning "the hidden one," is from the root z-f-n. In the Seder "the hidden one" is the piece of *matzah*. However, Rabbi Nathan Laufer explains it can also direct us to Moses' hidden role in the Exodus narrative:

> *A CERTAIN MAN OF THE HOUSE OF LEVI WENT AND MARRIED A LEVITE WOMAN. THE WOMAN CONCEIVED AND BORE A SON; AND WHEN SHE SAW HOW BEAUTIFUL HE WAS, SHE HID HIM (וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ) FOR THREE MONTHS. WHEN SHE COULD HIDE HIM (הַצְּפִינוֹ) NO LONGER, SHE GOT A WICKER BASKET FOR HIM AND COATED IT WITH RED CLAY AND PITCH. SHE PUT THE CHILD INTO IT AND PLACED IT AMONG THE REEDS BY THE BANK OF THE NILE. AND HIS SISTER STATIONED HERSELF AT A DISTANCE, TO LEARN WHAT WOULD BEFALL HIM. (EXODUS 2:1-4)*

Twice in this passage, the root z-f-n is used to express the child's hiddenness. These two words are the only occasions in which the Torah uses this root to describe hiding. As noted above, this same root illustrates the hidden middle piece of *matzah* in the Haggadah. Furthermore, the three pieces of *matzah* traditionally represent the three divisions of the Israelite people who experienced the Exodus: the Priests (top *matzah*), Levites (middle *matzah*) and Israelites (bottom *matzah*). As described in the above passage, Moses was the son of a Levi and Levite woman, making him a Levite; thus the middle *matzah* can be a symbol for Moses. Just as Moses was wrapped and hidden away at the beginning of his life, Moses is hidden throughout the Seder narrative. In the biblical telling of the Exodus, Moses is central to the story—he is appointed by God as the leader of the Israelites, he approaches Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelites from slavery, he instructs the Israelites on the produces for their departure, and so forth. Yet, traditionally he is not mentioned once in the Haggadah narrative. Rabbi Laufer explains

> The reason for Moses' hiddenness in the Haggadah is that the Haggadah is absolutely intent on telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt as a tale of the unmitigated love relationship between God and the Jewish people. The authors of the Haggadah did not want to hinge that relationship based on the presence—or absence—of a human leader, not even one as great as Moses. No one could come between God and His People.[18]

God's role as the redeemer of the Jewish people is the focus of the Haggadah narrative. Moses is thus hidden from the narrative to emphasize this point.[19]

IDENTITY

Matzah, perhaps more than any other part of the Seder, models what it is to find harmony in opposites. *Matzah* is both slavery and freedom, it is familiar and alienating, it is light and it is heavy, it is rough and it is fragile. It is fitting, then, that on this night of transformation we are guided and nourished by the bread which embodies that very paradox.

As the *matzah* carries us through this journey through time and experience, we are reminded of what it means to bring these internal conflicts into balance with one another. We need, especially, to be reminded that this can be accomplished even at times of transition and change, like the Exodus itself.

> The *matzah* reminds us to reconnect with our Essence in the face of momentous changes, not to credit ourselves overly much or to focus on temporary exhilaration that is not yet

[18] Nathan Laufer, *Leading the Passover Journey*, pp. 37-38.
[19] Adapted from Nathan Laufer, *Leading the Passover Journey*, pp. 35-40.

> grounded. The emphasis placed on the painstaking search for and removal of *chametz* is designed to bring the need for return to Essence into the foreground.[20]

Just as the *matzah* is the symbol of sturdiness and support during our trek through the wilderness of the unknown, so too is a reminder of our fragility and our brokenness. Kerry Olitzky points out that the first encounter with *matzah* is breaking it and hiding, later to be reunited, completed, and put back together. This is like the spirit of our people. We began as slaves and ended as free people.[21]

> Through the means of the observance of Passover and the seder, we took the very symbol that identified us as slaves and transformed it into a symbol of our freedom. Once we were able to fully understand its power, to wrest our fortitude from it, we were able to wield it to our benefit. We took our weakness and translated it into strength. We took hold of the *matzah*. What was once used in an effort to break us was made into something that could heal. And it continued to heal the generations that made their way through the desert. Our freedom now has profound meaning for us, because we remember that we were once slaves and that we, like our ancestors, have embarked on a desert journey.[22]

This is a central notion to Jewish identity, that we embody a complex combination of being a slave and being a free person. Therefore, we, now as free people, are called to remember our condition as slaves and work to fight against the enslavement and oppression of others. Because of our experience, we are in a position to see the world differently. Just as we can see the same *matzah* in two different ways, so too can we see a person's condition and imagine it differently.

Finally, we must realize that no matter how whole or broken we may find ourselves, we are always part of a larger community. We are part of the people Israel, a family that has stayed together throughout time and to whom we can cleave throughout our moments of brokenness and wholeness.

On this night we gather together to ask questions. In searching for the answers to these questions we bring our whole selves, full of tensions and contradictions, and eat the *lechem oni*, the "bread of answering."

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

Upon the Passover table (sometimes as part of the Seder plate itself, though not always), there are three *matzot*.

Position	Purpose	Role in Israel
Top	Motzi	Cohen
Middle	Yachatz/Tzafun	Levi
Bottom	Korech	Israel

There are four prominent moments for the *matzah* during the Seder. They are:

YACHATZ – The first time we see the *matzah* it is the middle *matzah*, that which corresponds to the Levites. It is removed and broken in half. The larger half is wrapped in a cloth and later hidden for Tzafun (as the *Afikoman*). The smaller of the two broken pieces is returned between the top and bottom *matzah* and is eaten along with the top *matzah*, so that slavery and freedom are fused together for *motzi*.

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[20] Ziff, p. 68

[21] Olitzky, p. 23

[22] Olitzky, p. 24

No blessing is recited and nothing is eaten.

It should not surprise us that the middle *matzah*, the *matzah* of Levi, is the one which is used most symbolically to tie together the beginning of the Seder—slavery—and to end the Seder—in freedom, as Moses was from the tribe of Levi. Though Moses himself is hidden from our story, there are hints of his presence.

Another reason for our having three *matzot* is justified by the following reason.

> In the Talmud (Berachot 39b) Rav Papa says that the *matzah* fulfills the command to eat *lechem oni*, poor people's crumbs (Deuteronomy 16:3), while Rav Abba says it fulfills the command for *lechem mishnah*, the extra loaf commemorating the double portion of manna for Shabbat and festivals. The three *matzot* are a compromise which fulfills both interpretations, ensuring that despite the broken piece, we always have two whole *matzot*.[23]

HALACHMA ANYA—The *matzot* are uncovered and pointed at by the leader. It is identified as the "the bread of [our] affliction," a poor man's bread. Some make a point of lifting the Seder plate here to display the symbolic foods as well.

No blessing is recited and nothing is eaten.

This sets up the *matzah* to be the symbolic centerpiece of our grand ritual narrative. *Matzah* is introduced as the symbol of slavery, but not eaten. Then when we have finished the narrative and punishment has been delivered, we taste that same bread in freedom.

MOTZI & MATZAH—
Though the *matzah* has played an important role tonight, taking us through the telling of the story itself, it is only eaten at this point, after the Maggid has finished.

> In reciting the special blessing for the *matzah*, we recognize the dual symbolism embodied in it. *Matzah* is reminiscent of both slavery and redemption. Therefore, when we recite the blessing, "*Hamotzi*," we hold the two, whole *matzot*, symbolizing the wholeness of freedom. When we recite the second blessing we put down the bottom, whole *matzah*, leaving the broken, middle *matzah* with the top, whole one, symbolizing the broken nature of slavery. After the blessing is said, each member of the Seder should receive a piece of the top *matzah* and a piece of the middle, broken *matzah*, to be eaten together, while reclining to the left side.[24]

Rabbi Richard Levy adds that as we bite into the two pieces of *matzah* we transform slavery into freedom.[25]

The traditional blessing over bread, *HaMotzi*, and a special blessing, *Al Achilat Matzah*, are both recited before eating the *matzah*.

This *matzah* has been transformed, from the *lechem oni* of HaLachma Anya to the Bread of Freedom. Here, we cannot help but notice that the traditional blessing said for bread refers to God as the "One-Who-

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[23] Levy, p. 20
[24] Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 29
[25] Levy, p. 68

Brings-Out" bread from the Earth. On this night, God is also the "One-Who-Brings-Out" Israel from slavery into freedom.

TZAFUN – The evening is brought to a close (nearly) with the completion of the meal. The last morsel of solid food that is eaten is a *kazayit* worth of the Tzafun, the Hidden Piece, also known as the *Afikoman.* It is eaten while leaning to the left and must be eaten before midnight. This is followed by the Barech section, or *Birkat HaMazon.*

In great contrast to the wine that we spoke of earlier, which is a symbol of the promise of what is yet to come—as wine's merits cannot be enjoyed immediately—*matzah* is the symbol of past and present. The past of our slavery and the present of our retelling. But it transforms to become both slavery and freedom. And, therefore, it is the food that gives us sustenance on our journey and carries us through our entire narrative as we reenact the Exodus from Egypt.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

BIBLICAL

When Moses relays the instructions for celebrating Passover in the future (Exodus 12:21-28), he specifically states that one's child will ask the question, "What is this rite to you?" and the parent will then answer, "It is the *Pesach* offering to Adonai because God passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when God harmed Egypt, but saved our houses." The biblical text suggests a hypothetical child asking questions about the Passover rituals and provides answers to these questions. It presents the forum in which a child should ask a question and a parent should supply an answer. From the beginning, questioning was part of the Passover celebration. Yet the nature of the questions evolved over time. Mishnah Pesachim 10:4 explains,

> "And here [after the second cup of wine] the son asks his father [questions]. But if the child does not have the intelligence to do so, the father teaches him/her [to ask, by pointing out:]: "Why is this night different from all other nights? For on all other nights we eat leavened and unleavened bread, this night only unleavened bread. For on all other nights we eat all types of vegetables, but on this night, only bitter herbs. For on all other nights we eat meat which is roasted, stewed or boiled. But on this night [the meat] is roasted. For on all other nights we dip our food once, but on this night twice."

According to the Mishnah, the child is given an opportunity to ask anything about the Seder experience. Only if the child does not have the ability to ask questions, does the parent provide the questions. In the Mishnah, the questions relate to *matzah*, *maror*, *korban pesach*, and the custom of dipping food. After the destruction of the second Temple, the question regarding the *korban pesach* was no longer applicable and therefore deleted. It was replaced with a question that refers to reclining at the Seder. The ritual of a child asking questions about the Passover rituals begins in the Bible and has continued as part of the celebration.

NARRATIVE

The Seder (the ritualized meal) and the Haggadah (the liturgical text) are intertwined, but distinct from one another. Lawrence Hoffman explains that the Seder developed before the Haggadah and its origin resembled the Greco-Roman meal known as a symposium. The standard format for a symposium included an intellectual discourse following a meal in which the food prompted the conversation. The topic of discussion for rabbis was the Exodus narrative. The original structure of the Seder included no liturgy except for the blessing over the food and benedictions for sacred time such as Kiddush.[26] Hoffman describes the Seder as sacred theater:

> [The introductory prayers (1) set] the stage, the stage itself being the table and the special foods on which the company dined. The drama opened with (2) a rhetorical question or questions about the food, designed to stimulate (3)a free-flowing account of the Exodus response. The evening ended with (4) praise of God in the form of psalms, known collectively as a Hallel. The whole evening was thus structured to move from (1) food to (2) questions, (3) response, and (4) celebrative praise.[27]

Originally there was no written text for the Exodus narrative. The four questions, ordained in the Mishnah, were the set induction for the orally delivered narrative. The three original questions related to the three foods required at the Pesach meal (Exodus 12:8): *matzah*, *maror*, and *korban pesach*. In discussing

[26] Bradshaw and Hoffman, Passover and Easter v. 5, pp. 9-13

[27] Bradshaw and Hoffman, Passover and Easter v. 5, p. 13

the significance of each of these food items, the story of the Exodus was conveyed to the participants. As Rabban Gamliel explains in Mishnah Pesachim 10:5, the *pesach* tells of God passing over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, the *matzah* reminds us that our ancestors who were redeemed in Egypt and the *maror* recalls how the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt. Both in the open discourse of the original Seder and in the ordained telling in today's Haggadah, the questions serve as an impetus for telling the Exodus story.

IDENTITY

The struggle for balance in one's life comes, in part, from the frequent and unanswered questions that ask about the world and our place in it. The Seder night reminds us that asking questions is vital to a person's evolution and construction of identity. Michael Strassfeld teaches, Each year our understanding of the question must be different. This is the challenge of growth: have we grown wiser, not just older."[28]

The Four Questions are an exercise in growth and comfort with the unknown. Strassfeld further teaches that questioning is a sign of our freedom, but searching for answers is the next stage in affirming and confirming that freedom. Coming to the realization that not every question has an answer is the next stage of liberation.[29]

Nechama Leibowitz uses these questions as a classical explanation of the difference between a *she'alah*, an informational question and a *kushiyah*, a question which reflects analysis of context and identification of a contradiction.[30] "To be able to answer a question with a question is not avoidance, but rather displays a deeper understanding of the [original] question."[31] These are the types of questions that make a difference, that fuel our growth. These are the types of questions that liberate us from answers and drive us toward discovery.

Within our Seder, in particular, "[t]he plurality of approaches is appropriate to the presence of a number of questioners, each of whom are addressed according to their level of understanding and their approach to the matter."[32]

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

The Four Questions, or the *Ar'bah Kushiyot*, are traditionally recited or chanted by the youngest member of the group assembled, even if it is the group's leader. All of the children may recite them in unison or in succession.

It does not require a trained eye to realize that the questions asked at this point in the Seder are never directly answered. We might characterize the absence of answers as typical of adult responses to the questions of children—their curiosity often dismissed as juvenile questioning. But these questions, though recited by the youngest child or even by all of the children present, are placed into the soft hands of our children by the adults at the table. Even more, the rabbis envisioned these questions being asked by our children, perhaps to keep them involved, perhaps because sharp questions like these reflect an attention to

[28] Strassfeld, p. 15
[29] ibid.
[30] Reiner and Peerless, p. 29
[31] Strassfeld, p. 15
[32] Steinsaltz

detail and previous knowledge[33] and, therefore, must be asked by the marginalized members of our community to be taken seriously. Like the court jester who bears no real threat to the king's authority, our children's questions about already complex rituals are never really answered.

What can we say about the fact that the questions are never answered?
"To ritualize only one answer is to deny that there can be many answers which often are paradoxical. To think that life is simply black and white, or wine and *maror*, is to be enslaved to simplicity. "He who says 'I understand before you speak,' know him for a fool; she who says 'I can answer all things,' do no bother to question her."[34]

[33] Reiner and Peerless, p. 29
[34] Strassfeld, p. 15

WHERE DOES THE STORY BEGIN?
RAV VS SHMUEL

SUMMARY:
Having just looked closely at the Four Questions, we can't help but ask our own questions about how the Haggadah chooses to construct the narrative of the Pesach Seder. The same unsettled debate exists within the Haggadah itself. Responding to the Mishnah's instruction to begin the story with degradation, Rav and Shmuel argue about the definition of degradation. Shmuel, who actually begins the telling, holds that we start with physical slavery and move towards our liberation from bondage. Rav holds the opinion that we begin with our spiritual enslavement as idolaters. Though the chronology begins with Shmuel, the redactors of the Haggadah keep the readers guessing by beginning the section attributed to Rav's thinking with the phrase "*mi't'chilah*," "from the beginning."

BIBLICAL

The Mishnah (Pesachim 10:4) states that the answer to the questions must "*BEGIN WITH DEGRADATION AND CONCLUDE WITH PRAISE.*" There are multiple narratives within the Tanach that fulfill the Mishnah's declaration. The Talmud (Pesachim 116a) records a debate between Rav and Shmuel, two Babylonian rabbis, over what constitutes "degradation," and thus what story should be told at the Seder. Shmuel suggests that degradation refers to slavery in Egypt based on the account in Deuteronomy 6:20-23:

> *WHEN, IN TIME TO COME, YOUR CHILDREN ASK YOU, "WHAT MEAN THE DECREES, LAWS, AND RULES THAT THE LORD OUR GOD HAS ENJOINED UPON YOU?" YOU SHALL SAY TO YOUR CHILDREN, "WE WERE SLAVES TO PHARAOH IN EGYPT AND ADONAI FREED US FROM EGYPT WITH A MIGHTY HAND. ADONAI PRODUCED BEFORE OUR EYES MARVELOUS AND DESTRUCTIVE SIGNS AND WONDERS IN EGYPT, AGAINST PHARAOH AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD; AND GOD FREED US FROM THERE, SO THAT GOD MIGHT TAKE US AND GIVE US THE LAND THAT GOD HAD PROMISED ON OATH TO OUR FATHERS.*

Rav argues that degradation refers to idol worship based on Joshua's farewell speech to the Israelites in Joshua 24:1-18[35]:

> *JOSHUA SAID TO ALL THE PEOPLE: "THUS SAID ADONAI, THE GOD OF ISRAEL: LONG AGO YOUR ANCESTORS INCLUDING TERACH, FATHER OF ABRAHAM AND NACHOR, LIVED BEYOND THE EUPHRATES AND WORSHIPPED OTHER GODS. BUT I TOOK YOUR FATHER ABRAHAM FROM BEYOND THE EUPHRATES AND LED HIM THROUGH THE WHOLE LAND OF CANAAN AND MULTIPLIED HIS OFFSPRING. I GAVE HIM ISAAC, AND TO ISAAC I GAVE JACOB AND ESAU…THEN JACOB AND HIS CHILDREN WENT DOWN TO EGYPT… THEN I SENT MOSES AND AARON, AND BROUGHT PLAGUES ON EGYPT AFTER WHICH I FREED YOU- I FREED YOUR ANCESTORS- FROM EGYPT. NOW, THEREFORE, SERVE ADONAI WITH UNDIVIDED LOYALTY. …OR, IF YOU ARE LOATH TO SERVE ADONAI, CHOOSE THIS DAY OTHER GODS TO SERVE. BUT I AND MY FAMILY WILL SERVE ADONAI."*
>
> *IN REPLY, THE PEOPLE DECLARED, "FAR BE IT FROM US TO FORSAKE ADONAI AND SERVE OTHER GODS! FOR IT WAS ADONAI OUR GOD WHO BROUGHT US AND OUR ANCESTORS UP FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT, THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE, AND WHO PERFORMED THOSE WONDROUS SIGNS BEFORE OUR VERY EYES… NOW WE TOO WILL SERVE ADONAI, FOR ADONAI IS OUR GOD."*

[35] Text is abbreviated and translation is adapted from Noam Zion and David Dishon's "A Different Night" Haggadah, p. 72.

NARRATIVE

Should the Haggadah present the narrative of political enslavement beginning with slavery in Egypt and ending with political liberation or should it tell the story of spiritual servitude beginning with Abraham's liberation from idolatry? The Haggadah chooses to begin the story twice—the first time with slavery in Egypt (Shmuel's suggestion) and the second time with idol worship (Rav's proposal). The theme is the same, the content is different. By incorporating both narratives, the Haggadah suggests that "From degradation to dignity," can be a story of political liberation, spiritual redemption, and even our own story of freedom.

IDENTITY

The Torah reminds us time after time that we ought to care for the alien in our midst because we were once aliens in the land of Egypt. The lasting message of this group identifier is that the Israelites' experience in Egypt as slaves was alienating. It was disorienting. It has, since that time, been essential that every Jew identify as both a free person and a slave, as the tradition sees it. That is what this night is all about. When it comes time to recount this experience, however, there has been some disagreement about what moment constituted our lowest moment of alienation and slavery.

The discussion between Rav and Shmuel takes as a given that Israel's time enslaved in Egypt was monumental. Instead they focus their attention on the condition of enslavement, specifically what it means to talk about this enslavement as a state of degradation. What constitutes the lowest point of Israel's journey into peoplehood? Their servitude to foreign gods or service to Egyptian taskmasters?

The Vilna Gaon draws the parallel that, when in exile, as the Israelites were in Egypt, there are two dimensions of that experience that make it so difficult—"the spiritual and the physical. The Haggadah speaks first of our spiritual estrangement from God, then it outlines our physical enslavement."[36]

Physical enslavement requires physical freedom and this freedom can be imagined, as there are examples of it all around the one who is enslaved. Spiritual enslavement requires spiritual freedom and this cannot be easily imagined. For the person who is depressed, imagining a life that is otherwise is extremely difficult.

The Breslov Haggadah understands the tension between physical and spiritual enslavement in a different way. It considers that at certain times in our lives, we become subjugated to our own imaginations and the fantasies that both inspire and ensnare us. Here is how that connection is drawn into our narrative.

> "Pharoah" indicates Imagination (Likutey Moharan I 54:6). PHaRaOH is a permutation of HaORePH, the back or nape of the neck. He is symbolic of the "back" of human rational intellect – Imagination.
>
> We've all had illusions about ourselves. At times, we may have fallen into the exile of "self-delusion". Our self-image became inverted. And though we all possess noble souls…,we perceived ourselves as vassals, held in bondage by the forces which worked upon us. We imagined ourselves as powerless to control the outside influences or the inside emotions. We saw ourselves as inevitable sinners….
>
> It may have been many years before we became more aware of the true nature of our *selves*. Decades before we learned to appreciate the nobility of our Jewish souls. But now, we will take leave of our "exile." But now, we will be set free from being slaves to Imagination.[37]

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[36] Vilna Gaon, Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 10

[37] The Breslov Haggdah, p. 43

Perhaps, to bring the debate of Rav and Shmuel into the greater narrative that the Torah constructs, we as Jews must always remember our lives as slaves as the foundation of our lives as free men and women. This discussion urges us to consider that there is more to understanding the challenge of perspective than recalling the circumstances under which we lived, but we must also meditate on the condition of our soul and the strength of our will. The ascent from degradation to dignity is more than just a move from the narrow confines of slavery to the wide expanse of freedom, but also an emboldening of the spirit and a liberation of the mind. To keep our status as alien ever-present in our minds requires a thoughtful and reflective integration of all of these experiences, keeping the two in a delicate balance. To be free is to keep a part of slavery at all times.

The addict is always in recovery, even long after the addictive behavior has remitted. A soldier never ceases being so, despite the adoption of a more pacifist ideology. A Holocaust survivor is always a victim. To be a Jew means never being rid of the slave within. To drive this point to the core of one's being is one of the central purposes of the Passover Seder.

Another equally important purpose, however, is to celebrate the freedom enjoyed as ex-slaves. A survivor is, at least, a survivor and not a casualty. A recovering addict is still *recovering*. While we never escape who we are as people, our spiritual freedom supercedes any physical or metaphysical bondage we may suffer. The adjective is more significant than the noun it precedes. We are, primarily, *freed* slaves.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:
The *matzah* is uncovered at the beginning of Avadim Hayinu (SEE ABOVE COMMENTARY ON *MATZAH*) and remains uncovered through Shomer Havtachato, beyond Rav's telling.

As was mentioned previously, the *matzah* in this ritual represents the past and present. Therefore, when telling the story itself of our rise from "Degradation to Dignity" the *matzah* remains on the Seder table, exposed, as the ritual backdrop to our story. Just as these *matzot* know transformation, so too do those who are assembled at this Pesach celebration.

This section of the Passover Haggadah creates a unique style of Jewish practice that we might loosely categorize as ritual narrative. This constitutes a merging of two seemingly distinct acts within the Passover Seder that before this moment remained more carefully separated. Here they are deliberately overlapped.

Earlier in our observance of this holiday, ritual foods were blessed and eaten, consecrated wine was sipped, short stories were told and questions were asked. Here, however, the bulk of the narrative of the Haggadah begins.

We have previously introduced the *matzah* and its bizarre chameleon-like characteristics on this night. But it was the centerpiece of that moment. Here, with the beginning of the larger telling, the *matzah* is not so much introduced as lead character as it is playing a vital, supporting role to the story. If this Bread of Affliction is to transform, alongside our own transformation, into the Bread of Freedom then it must be visible during the tale of how that happened.

Similarly, our story about the change of Israel's status and identity, as individuals and as a people, is deeply connected to the commandments which insist that this commemoration be experienced gastronomically as

well as spiritually. In other words, our story is incomplete without these foods and these foods serve no purpose without the story.

Hence our ritual and sacred narrative come together to elevate each other. *Matzah*'s double role is explained by its presence during the telling. And the telling is internalized, literally, by heaping meaning onto this strange bread that we do not consume while enslaved, but wait until the story comes to a crescendo with realized freedom and singing songs of praise. "You gently lift the poor from the dust…Seating them with nobility (Psalm 113:7-8)!"[38]

[38] trans. Levy, p. 62

WHEN & HOW IS THE STORY TOLD?
THE RABBIS OF B'NAI B'RAK, RABBI ELAZAR & THE FOUR CHILDREN

SUMMARY:
These three sections— the Rabbis of B'nai B'rak, Rabbi Elazar & the Four Children—present different suggestions for how to tell the story: the length, the time (both in terms of the time of day and when in history), and the manner of telling to such a diverse audience. The commentaries will discuss these sections both as a unit and as individual parts.

BIBLICAL

According to Exodus 13:8, we are to tell the story of Exodus to our children on the 14th day of Nissan. But nowhere does it state what should be told. The Mishnah in Pesachim 10:4 explains that we do not simply tell the story. Rather it states that one "*BEGINS WITH DEGRADATION AND CONCLUDES WITH PRAISE, AND EXPOUNDS FROM 'MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN' UNTIL HE COMPLETES THE ENTIRE SECTION.*" The key word is **לדרוש** "to expound upon." There is a starting point, Deuteronomy 26:5-10, "*MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN…*," but no ending point. The Mishnah implies that we are to elaborate the biblical text with discussions, exegesis, *midrash*, questions and more. But how much are we supposed to tell in order to fulfill the biblical commandment? And how much elaboration is necessary to carry out the Mishnah's instruction? The answer is not clear. The Haggadah states, "*THE MORE AND THE LONGER ONE EXPANDS AND EMBELLISHES THE STORY, THE MORE COMMENDABLE.*" It then tells the story of the five rabbis of B'nai B'rak who spent the entire night telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Tanach does not command, nor suggest through example, that we should elaborate on the story until the morning. The Haggadah presents the all night discussions as an ideal.

When do we tell the story? Exodus 13:8 states, "*YOU SHALL TELL TO YOUR CHILD **ON THAT DAY**, 'IT IS BECAUSE OF WHAT ADONAI DID FOR ME WHEN I WENT FREE FROM EGYPT.'*" "ON THAT DAY," refers to the day in which God commanded the *pesach* to be offered—the 14th day of Nissan. (Exodus 12:6-14) It commands the specific day, but not when on that day. Traditionally, the story is told at night. But what is the basis of this tradition? Rabbi Elazar had a similar question. The Haggadah presents a *midrash* of Rabbi Elazar's question and ben Zoma explanation that it refers to Deuteronomy 16:3, "*IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY REMEMBER YOUR GOING-OUT OF EGYPT ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE.*" The *midrash* explains that if it had just said "*DAYS OF YOUR LIFE*" then it would suggest the daytime. But since it says, "***ALL** THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE*," it refers to night-time as well. To further answer the question of when do we tell the story, the Torah states in Exodus 12:24, "*YOU SHALL OBSERVE THIS AS AN INSTITUTION FOR ALL TIME, FOR YOU AND FOR YOUR DESCENDANTS.*" Telling the story of the Exodus is not a one time event. It is told in each and every generation. The *midrash* of Rabbi Elazar clarifies that it should not only be told in our life, but in the days of the Messiah as well.

Now that we know when to tell the story, how are we supposed to tell it? Do we recite it out loud? Perform a musical interpretation? Write an analytical paper? The Mishnah, Pesachim 10:4 states "*ACCORDING TO THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE CHILD THE FATHER INSTRUCTS HIM/HER.*" The Haggadah presents the *midrash* of the Four Children, from Mechilta [Bo, Parasha 18], to help parents understand the different approaches they can take to ensure that each person—no matter one's intellect, age, interests, etc.—understands the story of the Exodus. The *midrash* is based on four biblical passages. Each verse suggests a different personality or intellect of a child:

The Wicked Child:	*AND WHEN YOUR CHILDREN SAY TO YOU, "WHAT IS THIS SERVICE TO YOU?" (Exodus 12:26) THEN YOU SHALL SAY, "THIS IS THE PASSOVER SACRIFICE TO ADONAI, WHO PASSED OVER THE HOUSES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN MITZRAYIM…" (Exodus 12:27)*
The Child Who Does Not Know How to Ask:	*AND YOU SHALL TELL YOUR CHILD ON THAT DAY, "BECAUSE OF WHAT ADONAI DID FOR ME WHEN I WENT OUT OF EGYPT." (Exodus 13:8)*
The Simple Child:	*AND WHEN YOUR CHILD ASKS YOU TOMORROW, "WHAT IS THIS?" YOU SHALL SAY, "WITH A MIGHTY HAND ADONAI BROUGHT US OUT OF EGYPT, OUT OF THE HOUSE OF SLAVES." (Exodus 13:4)*
The Wise Child:	*WHEN YOUR CHILD ASKS YOU TOMORROW, "WHAT ARE THE TESTIMONIES, THE STATUTES, AND THE JUDGMENTS WHICH ADONAI OUR GOD COMMANDED YOU?" (Deuteronomy 6:20) THEN YOU SHALL SAY TO YOUR CHILD, "WE WERE SLAVES TO PHARAOH IN EGYPT, AND ADONAI BROUGHT US OUT OF EGYPT WITH A MIGHTY HAND." (Deuteronomy 6:21)*

NARRATIVE

Why are the *midrashim* of the Rabbi's of B'nai B'rak, Rabbi Elazar and the Four Children included in the Haggadah? If you look at the information they provide- when and how to tell the story—one might suggest that it would be more helpful to include these *midrashim* in the introduction to the Haggadah or in a "How to Lead the Seder" manual, than in the middle of the Haggadah. The placement of these *midrashim* in the Maggid section is based on the rabbinic form of storytelling. In the Talmud, as well as in the Haggadah, one idea leads to another idea. The pieces of the story are compiled through connections and associations. Thus the Passover Seder becomes a nonlinear collection of texts, rituals and activities, brought together by associations. This method is especially true for these *midrashim*. Avadim Hayinu ends with saying that one should extend the story. The rabbis of B'nai B'rak are an example of extending the discussion. One of the rabbis of B'nai B'rak was Rabbi Elazar. Thus one story of Rabbi Elazar leads to another story about him which is connected to the Passover celebration. At first glance, these texts might seem out of place, but through the eyes of the rabbis these stories are a logical part of the narrative.

IDENTITY

The Four Children, perhaps more than any other section within the Haggadah, acknowledges that the audience assembled is a diverse one. Remember that this ritual is observed, primarily, within a private home. Yet the rabbis understood that even within a single family there could be four very different children. We now, in progressive and egalitarian circles, refer to these characters as the four *children*, but the rabbis titled them the four *sons*. The notion that these Four Children are all related to one another adds emphasis to the potential for diversity of personalities present at the table, as these four distinctly different individuals are flesh and blood. Even more when a group comes together from disparate members of the community can we imagine that a heterogeneous and divergent table has been set for this night.

Let us be clear that this is not merely a description of the Seder but a prescription of the Pesach celebration. All are welcome here and none shall be excluded. This night of transformation, this ritual of deliverance from the narrow and broken places, is for everyone. At various times in our lives, or even

various times within the Seder, we identify with a different child of the Four Children. Sometimes we embody more than one. Still at other times, none of them speak to our position.

The Mishnah[39] urges us to teach each child the Exodus story "according to his/her intelligence." For the rabbis this probably meant exactly what it seems, that some are more suited to a more sophisticated narrative while others will require a more basic explanation. But we might understand this as supporting the diverse ways that we all can come to a similar understanding of this night and the Exodus. Though we might come to that understanding via different avenues, we might all arrive there together. This night celebrates this diversity. "Difference is the condition requisite to all dignity and to all liberation. To be aware of oneself is to be aware of oneself as different. To be is to be different."[40]

This does beg the question, however, if this is a statement about diversity then why is there such a stigma attached to some of the children?

It is true that we tend to imagine the list, as it appears, as a hierarchy. Perhaps this is because we all wish to be the wise child, for whom the explanation is straightforward. If simplicity is what we seek, then why not elevate the one-who-does-not-know-how-to-ask? Perhaps, as Rabbi Richard Levy suggests, it is through this child, "the one who has moved beyond the questions, through whom we may understand what Adonai really did for each of us when we went out of Mitzrayim."[41] Rather than see this list of four as a hierarchy, or as an exhaustive list, let us see this as proof that we learn best in the presence of others different from ourselves with whom we can engage.

The self is essentially a social self.[42] The act of questioning allows one to compare oneself with another. These labels force us to confront which child we might be or might not be. We come face to face with our social selves. Furthermore, our relationships with others allow us the chance to seek definition in ourselves.[43] Leon Wieseltier might put it this way: If the Four Children are all present, then they must find a way to exist within the same Seder and therefore within the same person. "Because others with whom the self relates are many and diverse, the self will have many and diverse facets...."[44] A person is not simultaneously the wicked child and the wise child, but always has the capacity to be one or the other.

The Four Children best model for us what it means to have many different natures within the same person. Though all Four Children relate to the story differently, they all have a voice at the Seder.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

The sections about the rabbis of *B'nai B'rak* and Rabbi *Elazar ben Azariyah* are recited while the *matzah* remains uncovered. Then after *Baruch HaMakom* is recited or sung, the Four Children are introduced.

Part of the traditional telling within the Passover Haggadah is the discussion as to how to tell the story. This is a rare display of transparency to see, within a ritual, clues as to how that ritual should be observed. Perhaps it is done here because the Seder has always been celebrated within the private home. In order for

[39] Mishnah Pesachim 10:4
[40] Strassfeld, p. 4
[41] Levy, p. 33
[42] See Chapter 3, p. 7
[43] See Chapter 3, p. 8
[44] Scheibe, p. 42

any Jew, inexperienced or seasoned, to both carry out these rituals and find meaning in them the Haggadah must show how the pieces fit together. It does this in a number of ways throughout the Seder, some subtly and some more explicitly. Even in the instances where the Haggadah is most transparent—by discussing itself—there is a hidden message.

Before we come to our well-known, paradigmatic Four Children, we encounter two different models of approaching the story. Whereas the Four Children represent the diversity of the audience to which the story need be told, the tales of the rabbis of *B'nai B'rak* and Rabbi *Elazar ben Azariyah* assure those assembled on this night that there should be no shame in adding length to story, and that understanding does not come immediately.

The rabbis of *B'nai B'rak* are an image, not of the ideal Seder, but of the possible extreme that the Seder night can achieve. This story has been used incorrectly to justify an unreasonably lengthy Seder when it is more likely offered as hyperbole to give permission to going on at length. It is not an encouragement to talk about the Exodus from sundown to sunup. Rather it gives those assembled license to talk a little bit longer and, even, to encourage them to take advantage of the clarity that comes only under the cover of night.

Rabbi *Elazar ben Azariyah*, similarly, gives those present a clear message: fully grasping the weight of this story may not be, in fact is unlikely to be, possible at once. The implication is that much of our experience takes time for us to "merit" its meaning. Sometimes we are not in the right place to interpret what happens to us or to understand the weight of a story. We are reminded that clarity comes from time, from experience and patience. Therefore, after blessing the *Makom*, the Place, we encounter four examples of individuals, in this case children, trying to make sense of this experience.

The Four Children, in many ways, represent a marginalized group, as children, that can raise and ask the hard questions. This may give the participants in the Seder further support to ask questions about this story, about how it relates to their life. Up until now the conversation has been primarily between rabbis, the elite, the symbol of institution. Then come the Four Children, a group within the heart of the Seder that has no real status.

The only child who is presented as somewhat authentic is the least child-like of them all, the wise child. This child is most like the adults present and most similar to the rabbis that intermittently narrate the story. The fact that the least representative child is the only one with any consistent credibility only further emphasizes their lack of status.

At some Seders the leader assigns the reading for each of the Four Children to a different participant based on whether the description either fits the reader chosen or is an ironic choice for that reader. While this may add a bit of entertainment to the evening, it could easily detract from the ritual function of these readings: to give open license to any and every person present to ask questions that reflect that person's need to make sense of this night and the Event which it commemorates.

This night is for everyone present. While these stories may seem at first to promote the merits of the rabbis who observed Pesach with such diligence, they should be understood as three different invitations to participate in whichever ways a person is able.

SHOMER HAVTACHATO /GOD'S PROMISE & *V'HI SHE'AMDAH*/ STANDING UP FOR US

BIBLICAL

Before Joseph descends into Egypt and the Israelites are enslaved to Pharaoh, God tells Abraham that one day his descendents will be oppressed and promises to take them out of this captivity:

> *AND GOD SAID TO ABRAM, "KNOW WELL THAT YOUR OFFSPRING SHALL BE STRANGERS IN A LAND NOT THEIRS, AND THEY SHALL BE ENSLAVED AND OPPRESSED FOUR HUNDRED YEARS; BUT I WILL EXECUTE JUDGMENT ON THE NATION THEY SHALL SERVE, AND IN THE END THEY SHALL GO FREE WITH GREAT WEALTH. (Genesis 15:13-14)*

This biblical account is recalled in the Haggadah. It reminds the participants of the covenant God made with our ancestors and emphasizes that God acted just as promised to Abraham. God kept the promise to take our ancestors out of slavery.

NARRATIVE

Throughout the Haggadah, there is a retelling of the promises God made to our ancestors and acknowledgement of God fulfilling most of those promises. See the commentary to "The Cups of Wine." Now the Haggadah specifically links the promises to the covenant made between God and the Jewish people. The promises of redemption were not made to just any group of people. They were made explicitly to the Israelites whose forefather Abraham established a covenantal relationship with God. As expressed in Chapter 2, sacred narrative provides a paradigm for understanding one's identity and destiny in the world. Adding this section to the Haggadah, emphasizes the covenant as a central part of the narrative and thus a central part of our identity in this story of redemption.

Shomer Havtachato /"Keeping the Promise" leads straight into *V'hi She'amdah*/ "Standing up for Us." The Haggadah emphasizes that just as God fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, God continues to keep this promise in every generation. The covenant made in Genesis 15:13-14 does not specifically mention Egyptian servitude. It simply states that Abraham's offspring will be strangers in a foreign land and they will be enslaved and oppressed. V'hi She'amdah picks up on this generalization, and states, "*FOR NOT JUST ONE PERSON HAS STOOD AGAINST US TO DESTROY US. BUT IN EVERY GENERATION THERE ARE THOSE WHO STAND AGAINST US TO DESTROY US, YET THE BLESSED HOLY ONE, KEEPS SAVING US FROM THEIR HAND.*" This statement connects the Exodus narrative to the personal narrative of future generations. In each generation Jews have experienced a sense of servitude and each time God has upheld the promise made to Abraham as it states "*THIS PROMISE HAS STOOD FAST FOR OUR FATHERS, [FOR OUR MOTHERS], AND FOR US.*" (*V'hi Sh-am-dah*)

This section was challenged by the events of the *Shoah*. Rabbi Richard N. Levy's reflections on V'hi Sh-am-dah address this concern.

> And the promises to Abraham are on their way to coming true. We have suffered greatly, but we have also become a people of some numbers around the world, and we have a stronger claim to the Land of Israel than we have had in 2000 years. Though our suffering continues, God has not yet failed to "keep saving us from their hand."[45]

[45] Levy, p. 37.

IDENTITY

"The Seder is a creation of and response to life in the diaspora."[46] Remember, it was originally a simple meal enjoyed over a story. The rabbis are the ones who elevated it to such a plenteous ritual. And as a creation of living in diaspora it is necessarily informed by and a response to life in the diaspora.

For this reason it is worth mentioning that the Jewish people share a unique *brit*, covenant, with God. With the recitation of Shomer Havtachato the Seder's participants are reminded that God first made that covenant with Abraham and Sarah. Contemporary Jews are the inheritors of this covenant. The promise was sealed with past generations and is affirmed by the present generation. V'hi She'amdah is that affirmation. The covenant, unlike a contract, evolves and changes with time.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

The *matzah* remains uncovered from the previous sections through Shomer Havtachato but is covered before V'hi She'amdah. Here, the glass of wine is raised. After V'hi She'amdah, the wine is returned to resting on the table and the *matzah* is, again, uncovered.

This is done, explains Rabbi Richard N. Levy, "so that the gift represented by the wine and the gift represented by the bread [*matzot*] can each be considered separately, as a separate cause for thanksgiving to God."[47]

Here the ritual narrative, that which integrates our ritual foods and gestures into the telling of our sacred narrative, exemplifies the difference in the roles of the *matzah* and the wine.

Shomer Havtachato represents a promise to Abraham and Sarah. This is a part of Israel's origins and therefore their past. This is the beginning of the covenant. Included in that covenant is the early understanding that the descendents of Abraham and Sarah, who offered *matzah* to the guests of their tent, would know hardship and slavery. For this reason, the *matzah* remains uncovered during the reading of Shomer Havtachato.

V'hi Shamadah, on the other hand, is a celebration of the continued fulfillment of the promise associated with the second cup of wine, therefore we pause our telling, by covering the *matzah*, to indulge in a moment of praise and hope for the promise of the future. With the cup raised the participants declare that God has and will continue to protect the people Israel.

After this, the cup is returned to the table, and the regular telling is resumed. The *matzah* is, again, uncovered.

[46] Cernea, p. 3, "In Each Generation"
[47] Levy, p. 36

THE NARRATIVE:
BIBLICAL TEXT: *ARAMI OVED AVI* (DEUT. 26:5-8)
MIDRASH OF DEUT. 26:5-8
THE TEN PLAGUES/ *MIDRASH* ON THE PLAGUES
DAYYENU

BIBLICAL

Four times in the Torah we are commanded to retell the Exodus:

Exodus 12:26-27: *AND WHEN YOUR CHILDREN SAY TO YOU, "WHAT IS THIS SERVICE TO YOU?" THEN* ***YOU SHALL SAY****, "THIS IS THE PASSOVER SACRIFICE TO ADONAI, WHO PASSED OVER THE HOUSES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN MITZRAYIM…"*

Exodus 13:8: *AND* ***YOU SHALL TELL*** *YOU CHILD ON THAT DAY, "BECAUSE OF WHAT ADONAI DID FOR ME WHEN I WENT OUT OF EGYPT."*

Exodus 13:4: *AND WHEN YOUR CHILD ASKS YOU TOMORROW, "WHAT IS THIS?"* ***YOU SHALL SAY****, "WITH A MIGHT HAND ADONAI BROUGHT US OUT OF EGYPT, OUT OF THE HOUSE OF SLAVES."*

Deuteronomy 6:20-21: *WHEN YOUR CHILD ASKS YOU TOMORROW, "WHAT ARE THE TESTIMONIES, THE STATUTES, AND THE JUDGMENTS WHICH ADONAI OUR GOD COMMANDED YOU?" THEN* ***YOU SHALL SAY*** *TO YOUR CHILD, "WE WERE SLAVES TO PHARAOH IN EGYPT, AND ADONAI BROUGHT US OUT OF EGYPT WITH A MIGHTY HAND."*

These sets of verses should look familiar. They are also the basis for the four children. In three out of the four set of verses the commandment is to say (א.מ.ר) and in Exodus 13:8, we are commanded to tell (ד.ג.ל). Based on these verses, we are instructed to include the following in our recitation of the Exodus story: (1) we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, (2) God passed over the houses of the children of Israel, (3) God brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and (4) information on what God did for us when we left Egypt. The Biblical verses present the key ideas that need to be included, but do not specify how the story should be passed on. The Mishnah clarifies the task. First, the Mishnah states in Pesachim 10:4 that the parent must teach the story based on the intelligence of the child. (See the commentary to the Four Children for further explanation.) Then it instructs the parent to start with degradation and conclude with praise (See commentary to Rav and Shmuel), and expound from "My father was a wandering Aramean" until he completes the entire section. The Mishnah provides a new, more defined set of requirements for the storytelling portion of the Seder. To fulfill the commandment to tell the story, we could read the first 17 chapters of Exodus. Rather than reading this detailed account, the Mishnah requires the biblical text that starts with Deuteronomy 26:5, "*MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN*," but it does not specify when exactly to end the story. It only makes the general comment "*EXPOUND…UNTIL HE COMPLETES THE ENTIRE PORTION.*" When the people offered the first fruits they recited the sacred narrative, "My father was a wandering Aramean" (Deut. 26:5-11) as part of the ritual. One possible interpretation of the Mishnah's instruction is that one recites the same narrative required for the first fruit ritual:

> *MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN. HE WENT DOWN TO EGYPT WITH MEAGER NUMBERS AND DWELT THERE; BUT THERE HE BECAME A GREAT, STRONG AND NUMEROUS NATION. THE EGYPTIANS DEALT HARSHLY WITH US AND OPPRESSED US; THEY IMPOSED HEAVY LABOR UPON US. WE CRIED TO ADONAI, THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, AND ADONAI*

HEARD OUR PLEA AND SAW OUR PLIGHT, OUR MISERY, AND OUR OPPRESSION. ADONAI FREED US FROM EGYPT BY A MIGHTY HAND, BY AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM AND AWESOME POWER, AND BY SIGNS AND WONDERS. GOD BROUGHT US TO THIS PLACE AND GAVE US THIS LAND, A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY. (Deuteronomy 26:5-9)

These five verses present a simple outline of the Exodus story. The Mishnah's instruction specifically uses the word לדרוש "to expound upon." We are taught to do more than simply recite this biblical citation. In fact, there are two requirements—one is to recite and the other is to discuss. As explained in Chapter 2, p. 54 and forward, the narrative presented in the Maggid section evolved over time. It began with this biblical excerpt, but was "expounded" through exegetical analysis, *midrashim* and *piyyutim* in order to fulfill the Mishnah's statute. However, it should also be noted that the Haggadah edits the pilgrim's story. It eliminates the final verse, "*GOD BROUGHT US TO THIS PLACE AND GAVE US THIS LAND, A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY,*" from the narrative. This verse is related to the fifth promise that has not yet been fulfilled.

This section of the Haggadah also includes the biblical account of the ten plagues. They are incorporated in order to expand the narrative. In the Haggadah, the ten plagues are simply listed at first and then explained through *midrash*. The biblical account of the plagues is found in Exodus 7:14-11:10. It is not a simple retelling of the plagues. The Etz Hayim commentary explains that the plague narrative

> Is a sophisticated literary structure, with a pattern of three groups, each made up of 3 plagues. The climactic 10th plague has a character all its own. The first 2 afflictions in each group are preceded by a warning; the last affliction always strikes suddenly, unannounced. For the 1st, 4th, and 7th plagues, Pharaoh is informed in the morning and Moses is told to "station" himself before the king; in the second of each series, Moses is told to "come in before Pharaoh," that is, to confront him in the palace... This symmetrical literary architecture emphasizes the idea that the 9 plagues are not random natural disasters, but deliberate acts of divine will—their purpose being to deliver retribution, to coerce, to educate. They are God's judgments on Egypt for the enslavement of the Israelites. They are meant to crush Pharaoh's resistance and demonstrate to Egypt the impotence of its gods and the uniqueness of YHVH, God of Israel, as the one supreme sovereign God of Creation, who uses the natural order for His own purposes.[48]

The Literary Grouping of Plagues								
Group One			Group Two			Group Three		
1	Blood	Exo. 7:14-25	4	Wild Beasts	Exo. 8:16-28	7	Hail	Exo. 9:13-35
2	Frogs	Exo. 7:26-8:11	5	Cattle Plague	Exo. 9:1-7	8	Locust	Exo. 10:1-20
3	Lice	Exo. 8:12-15	6	Boils	Exo. 9:8-12	9	Darkness	Exo. 10:21-29

The *midrash* on the plagues picks up on this literary structure. See the "Narrative Commentary" for further explanation of the *midrash* on the ten plagues.

NARRATIVE

After we recite Deuteronomy 26:5-9, "*MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN...*" the Haggadah exclaims: צֵא וּלְמַד - "Go and Learn!" We are given the call to elaborate the story—to investigate the individual words and phrases and ask "what story is actually being told?" As we process and reprocess the words of the text each year, we add our own thoughts and understandings to the narrative. The biblical

[48] Etz Hayim, p. 358

text tells the story. But the individual words also provide clues that can offer new connections and a deeper understanding of the narrative. The Haggadah helps with the process of elaboration. It fills in what it assumes are the details missing from the text. The rabbinic *midrash* following the biblical verses expands the story by uncovering the meaning behind the individual words and verses. See Chapter 2, pp. 57-61 for an explanation of the process of *midrash* and the details of this particular *midrash* on "My father was a wandering Aramean."

The point of *midrash* is to expand the narrative in such a manner that it brings meaning to Jews in future generations. Rabbi Nathan Laufer explains that the

> Four verses in Deuteronomy deal with issues in consecutive order: First, why did the Jewish People go down to Egypt? Second, how were we enslaved? Third, why were we redeemed from slavery? And finally, how were we redeemed from slavery? The *Midrash*, the rabbinic interpretation of the biblical text... will in effect answer these questions by doing its own "retelling." By embroidering the four verses from Deuteronomy with other verses found throughout the Bible, the *Midrash* will give expression to the rabbinic understanding of Jewish destiny, history, theology, and justice.[49]

The format of the *midrash* is as follows: First, a single verse is provided such as Deuteronomy 26:5, "*MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN. HE WENT DOWN TO EGYPT WITH MEAGER NUMBERS AND DWELT THERE; BUT THERE HE BECAME A GREAT, STRONG AND NUMEROUS NATION.*" Second, a word or phrase from that verse is singled out such as "*HE WENT DOWN TO EGYPT.*" Third, the rabbis provide an interpretation for that word or phrase, sometimes using other biblical verses such as "*HE WENT DOWN TO EGYPT,' COMPELLED BY DIVINE DECREE.*" The second part of this sentence is the rabbi's answer of why the Jewish people went down to Egypt. The rabbis continue the process with other words and/or phrases from that verse and then move on to the other verses. See Chapter 2, pp. 59-61 for another explanation of this process.

In using Laufer's explanation of the *midrash*, each verse of Deuteronomy 26:5-8 suggests a question. One could also say that the verses point to difficulties in the narrative. The rabbis, through their *midrash*ic commentary, provide an answer to the question or explanation of the problem. In the chart below the verse, question, problem and answer are all provided. The question and answer are based on Laufer's understanding of the biblical text and rabbinic *midrash*[50] and the problems are suggested by Rabbi Richard N. Levy:

Verse	Question	Problem	Answer
Deut. 26:5—*MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN. HE WENT DOWN TO EGYPT WITH MEAGER NUMBERS AND DWELT THERE; BUT THERE HE BECAME A GREAT, STRONG AND NUMEROUS NATION.*	Why did the Jewish people go down to Egypt?	Why did the Jewish people leave *Eretz Yisrael*?	A divinely directed destiny
Deut. 26:6—*THE EGYPTIANS DEALT HARSHLY WITH US AND OPPRESSED US; THEY IMPOSED HEAVY LABOR UPON US.*	How were we enslaved?	Why did God let us be enslaved?	A multistage process of delegitimization and oppression: 1. Pharaoh saw the Israelites as a threat

[49] Laufer, p. 83
[50] Laufer, pp. 83-101

			2. Pharaoh placed a labor tax on them 3. The Egyptian authorities enslaved the Israelites with strenuous and grueling work.
Deut. 26:7—*WE CRIED TO ADONAI, THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, AND ADONAI HEARD OUR PLEA AND SAW OUR PLIGHT, OUR MISERY, AND OUR OPPRESSION.*	Why were we redeemed from slavery?	What were the motivating factors for God to redeem us? Why at that moment?	God's emotional empathy with the Jewish people—God heard, saw and felt their pain. Through this identification God remember the covenant made with their ancestors. (Exodus 2:23-24)
Deut. 26:8—*ADONAI FREED US FROM EGYPT BY A MIGHTY HAND, BY AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM AND AWESOME POWER, AND BY SIGNS AND WONDERS.*	How were we redeemed from slavery?	The text doesn't speak of God's hand and arm. How were these manifested?	The power of the plagues

The last verse to be explained in the *midrash* is "*ADONAI FREED US FROM EGYPT BY A MIGHTY HAND, BY AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM AND AWESOME POWER, AND BY SIGNS AND WONDERS.*" According to the Haggadah, "wonders" refers to the plagues. Thus the rabbinic *midrash* leads straight into reciting the ten plagues. It is a straight forward list. No commentary. This simple format is unusual for the rabbinic period. Therefore we must ask, "Why does the Haggadah include no commentary about each plague?" The Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 10b states

> *WHEN THE EGYPTIANS WERE DROWNING IN THE SEA OF REEDS, THE MINISTERING ANGELS BEGAN TO SING GOD'S PRAISES. BUT GOD SILENCED THEM, SAYING: "HOW CAN YOU SING WHILE MY CHILDREN PERISH?"*

This statement made to the angels teaches us to rejoice in our liberation, but cautions us from celebrating the death of our enemies. Thus the narrative includes the plagues, but does not expound them.

After the plagues are recited, the Haggadah includes the story of Rabbi Yehuda abbreviating them into an acrostic. The plagues are as follows:

The Ten Plagues			
דָּם	Blood	שְׁחִין	Boils
צְפַרְדֵּעַ	Frogs	בָּרָד	Hail
כִּנִּים	Lice	אַרְבֶּה	Locust
עָרוֹב	Wild Beasts	חֹשֶׁךְ	Darkness
דֶּבֶר	Cattle Plauge	מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת	Death of the First Born

Rabbi Yehudah's acrostic groups them into three groups, similar to the grouping presented in the "Biblical Commentary":

דְּצַ"ךְ עֲדַ"שׁ בְּאַחַ"ב

Why does the Haggadah provide this mnemonic device? Perhaps, it was thrown in as an interesting fact. But it can also be used to spark some ideas for other messages to be found in this part of the narrative. In addition to the interpretation presented in the "Biblical Commentary," Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests

> The first plague in each group (blood, beasts, hail) reduced the Egyptians to strangers in their own land; the second plague (frogs, cattle plague, locusts) robbed the Egyptians of their pride and sense of superiority; and the third plague in each triad (lice, boils, and darkness) imposed actual suffering on the people of Egypt. The tenth plague (the death of the firstborn, including Pharaoh's own son) was, of course, the final blow that led to the capitulation of Pharaoh.[51]

The Maharal of Prague, the great Rabbi Judah Loewe, provides another suggestion for Rabbi Yehudah's arrangement:

> The plagues may be understood in three groups. Blood, frogs, and lice all attacked the Egyptians from below. The second group, Beasts, Pestilence, and Boils, attacked the Egyptians on their own level. The third group, Hail, Locusts, and Darkness, attacked the Egyptians from the heavens above. Thus, all Creation was turned against the Egyptians, while in the Slaying of the First-Born, listed alone, it is God alone who seals the destruction of Mitzrayim.[52]

After the acronym there is a dialogue between three sages—Rabbi Yosi, Rabbi Eliezar and Rabbi Akiva—about how many plagues struck the Egyptians. Why is the dialogue included in the narrative? Once again it is part of rabbinic story telling. Each rabbi's explanation was part of Jewish tradition. When discussing the ten plagues, these perspectives would be brought up in order to further the discussion and elaborate the narrative. As we read these interpretations today, they help emphasize the greatness and power of God and the punishment of the Egyptians.

Dayyenu takes the narrative a step further, actually fifteen steps further. This poem is a step-by-step account of the kindness of God. Each refrain provides another example of God's compassion and love of the Jewish people. Traditionally there are fifteen steps. Most contemporary liberal Haggadot take out the steps which emphasize the defeat of the Egyptians. Is fifteen an arbitrary number, or is there some significance to the number? First of all, fifteen is a prevalent number in the Passover celebration—Passover occurs on the 15th day of the month and there are fifteen sections (or steps) of the Seder. Fifteen is also significant in Jewish tradition—the letters of God's name, "yud-hey" equal fifteen, it is taught that there are fifteen generations from Abraham to King Solomon, King David wrote fifteen songs of ascent, "*shirei ha'ma'alot*," and there are fifteen steps that lead up to the Temple in Jerusalem (which is also the final step of the Dayyenu).

The steps of Dayyenu praise God for the kindness bestowed upon us throughout our journey out of slavery. Up to this point the central narrative was missing a defining moment in the biblical story and

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[51] Wolfson, p. 154

[52] Levy, p. 52

Jewish history—there is no mention of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. As explained in Chapter 2, Dayyenu centralizes Sinai and the Torah in the sacred narrative of the Haggadah. It conveys the message that the liberation from Egypt was not completed until the Israelites received the Torah at Sinai and settled in the Promised Land. Refer to Chapter 2, p. 61 and forward for a more extensive explanation of the Dayyenu's influence on the sacred narrative.

IDENTITY

The story of the Exodus from Egypt finally begins. There is no more discussion to be had about the subject. The Mishnah states that this telling starts with the passage from Deuteronomy (26:5-8) which begins, "My father was a wandering Aramean." The Haggadah, in its own inimitable way, then moves through these verses and breaks them into pieces to parse the entire story of Israel's rise from slavery to freedom, from degradation to praise.

Part of the reason this is done is to fulfill the rabbinic command that the story be told this way. But it is also done in order to make the story more complete, to make the memory of the Exodus in its entirety one that is owned by each and every Jew present at the Seder. The theory holds that this brings the story to life. "Living memory enables the binding of time and the realization of human identity."[53] That is, for the participants of the Passover Seder, who did not personally leave slavery and cross the parted sea into freedom, this narrative must become part of their memory.

This can be very hard for us. In fact it is hard to believe that the world can be constructed by our experiences. But perhaps, within the Seder, all present can become convinced that the rules of the world in which we live are not so simple. What is past is present, what is present is future and miracles can and do happen.

> The miracle of the ten plagues is an important image because it reminds us that external forces in the universe can help us even when we are unable to help ourselves. Our experience, unfortunately, may teach us not to trust that the universe will be a positive force in our lives. We do not have experiences of being helped and do not believe anyone will be there. These miracles help us trust that the universe can be powerful, compassionate, and supportive. External forces can miraculously break the power of the old Ego identity and our attachment to the *Kelippah*, the material form with which we have identified.[54]

Dayyenu affirms for those participating in the Seder two things. First, that all these blessings were bestowed upon "us." Dayyenu reinforces the notion that tonight, perhaps more than any other time, we are not alone. Tonight every person is a part of something larger. Together, in this group setting, our lives are palpably intertwined.

Second, Dayyenu performs a sort of historical survey, working its way through a larger narrative that goes far beyond that of the Exodus. This, too, is a reminder about the purpose of this elaborate narrative: that our story of transformation is never fully complete and our freedom is never fully realized—except on this night. Tonight we take a step back and see the bigger picture, keenly aware of our privilege and freedom.

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[53] Scheibe, p. 135
[54] Ziff, p. 73

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:
The *matzah* remains uncovered throughout all four of these sections.

When we arrive at the Ten Plagues, ten drops of wine are removed from our wine glasses and dabbed onto our plates. Some traditions include an additional six drops of wine: (1) three drops for the three plagues mentioned in the preceding section by the prophet Joel[55] (2:30) and (2) three drops for the mnemonic of the ten plagues, D"TZa"CH A'Da"SH B'A'CHa"B.

As for why this mnemonic is included and has three additional drops matched with each of its words is not entirely known. Adin Steinsaltz teaches, in his commentary on the Haggadah, that one commentator on Psalm 105, which deals with the Exodus from Egypt, mentions the same ten plagues but in a different order. The mnemonic, which is attributed to Rabbi Judah, may have been created to remind students of the proper order of the plagues as they follow in the book of Exodus.[56]

Our ritual narrative continues, as does our transformation from slaves to free persons, with the continuation of this varied telling of the Israelites' move from slavery to freedom, from degradation to praise. Here, our *matzah* remains uncovered, as we are still recounting our past as slaves. Though the mention of great signs of God's power and might seem like a natural time to lift our cups to take note of the promise of redemption; instead we use our wine in a different way.

Given the role that wine has taken up until this point, we notice here a distinct break with the rules that seem to apply to wine. This shows us that when evil exists in the world and when that evil is judged and punished, the rest of the world is affected. Tonight we are reminded that while we cannot allow wrongs to persist, the eradication of their causes is no less harsh, no less terrible.

The custom of dipping one's finger into the wine for each plague and then placing drops on one's plate is an old one. It has been understood to reflect that, no matter how atrocious the wrongs committed by the Egyptians, no one deserves to suffer. Therefore each person subtracts from their joy for each punishment that the Egyptians endured. There is also a kabbalistic tradition to pour wine from one's glass (as wine is never supposed to be touched) for each plague onto a broken plate. The wine on the plate is then discarded.[57] This could be understood to take our more common understanding to the next level. That devastation felt by one people means that there is brokenness everywhere.

In these approaches to the plagues, the Seder becomes keenly aware of the world outside. This is somewhat rare for a transformative ritual such as this one, to look outward into the concrete world. Though the universal message that no one deserves to suffer is never explicitly compared to the conditions of our world today, it need not be articulated to be understood. The message is implicitly clear.

Dayyenu begins with the exclamation, "How many are the benefits that God/the Place has conferred upon us!" What follows are fifteen enumerated blessings bestowed on Israel by the Almighty, each of which brings a chorus of response, "Dayyenu! It would have been enough for us!" These fifteen items correspond to the fifteen steps that led between the lower and upper courtyards of the Temple, upon

[55] Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 18
[56] Steinsaltz
[57] Steinsaltz

which the Levites would sing praises to God. These same steps, of course, correspond to the fifteen Psalms that begin similarly, *Shir Ha'ma'alot.*

Here, with the praise of "The Place," Temple practice is brought back into the Passover ritual. Rabban Gamliel shortly thereafter references the Passover ritual that was performed when the Temple was still standing. This reminds the participant, in subtle ways, that the ultimate redemption is to be returned to the land of Israel, where, according to the wishes and imaginations of the rabbis, Temple practices would be reinstated. But a larger lesson looms. These songs of praise, as we get nearer and nearer to the end, bring us closer to fulfilling the command to begin in degradation and end in praise. Regardless of how far off Israel's ultimate redemption lies, tonight Israel will know freedom and celebrate.

RABBAN GAMLIEL: PESACH, MATZAH AND MAROR

BIBLICAL

Exodus 13:8 states, "*YOU SHALL TELL YOUR CHILD.*" Throughout the commentary we have asked and answered the question, "What do we need to do in order to fulfill the obligation 'to tell your child'?" Rabban Gamliel gives another answer presented in Mishnah Pesachim 10:5:

> *RABBAN GAMLIEL USED TO SAY, "WHOEVER HAS NOT REFERRED TO (EXPLAINED THE REASON FOR) THESE THREE MATTERS ON PASSOVER HAS NOT FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION (OF NARRATING AS STATED IN EXO.13:8, "YOU SHALL TELL YOUR CHILD."), AND THESE THREE ARE: PESACH, MATZAH AND MAROR. PESACH—BECAUSE THE OMNIPRESENT PASSED OVER THE HOUSES OF OUR ANCESTORS IN EGYPT. MATZAH—BECAUSE OUR ANCESTORS WERE REDEEMED IN EGYPT. MAROR—BECAUSE THE EGYPTIANS EMBITTERED THE LIVES OF OUR ANCESTORS IN EGYPT."*

Rabban Gamliel explicitly states that we must explain the significance of three objects—the *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror*—in order to fulfill our obligation of telling the Exodus story. As explained in the "Four Questions Commentary," the original structure of the Seder was based on the Greco-Roman meal known as a symposium. Throughout the meal the food was used as a means for sparking a conversation. At the Seder, the food led to the telling of the Exodus. As Rabban Gamliel explains, each food points to a different part of the story—the *pesach* tells of God passing over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, the *matzah* reminds us that our ancestors were redeemed in Egypt and the *maror* recalls how the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt.

The use of these three objects—*pesach* , *matzah* and *maror*—in the Passover rituals is originally ordained in Exodus 12:8. God tells Moses that on the night of the 15th day of the first month "*THEY SHALL EAT THE FLESH (PESACH)..., ROASTED IN FIRE; THEY SHALL EAT IT WITH UNLEAVENED BREAD (MATZAH) AND BITTER HERBS (MAROR).*" In the biblical accounts the *pesach* sacrifice was the most prominent object in the Passover celebrations. The entire ritual on the first night revolved around the sacrifice. Rabban Gamliel's statement changes the status of *matzah* and *maror*. In Exodus 12:8, they are presented as side items to the meat provided by the *pesach* offering. Rabban Gamliel gives *pesach*, *matzah* and *maror* equal status. Each of them is significant to the celebration However, the destruction of the Temple once again changed the status of these objects. Today, *matzah* and *maror* are more central to the Passover celebration. After the destruction of the Temple, the centralized sacrificial system came to an end and the ritualized practice of offering sacrifices was no longer an option. The *pesach* offering which had been central to the Passover celebration was now removed from the rituals, whereas the *matzah* and *maror* continued as their own entities. Today, these two items constitute sections of the Seder and are an integral part of the Passover customs. The *pesach* is now secondary and is only recalled at the moment in the Seder when we point to *z'roa* (shankbone) on the Seder plate. Not wanting to completely eliminate this significant Temple practice from the Passover celebration, it is remembered through the *z'roa*.

NARRATIVE

Why is Rabban Gamliel's statement placed after we have already told the story? If these particular food items were used to provoke certain aspects of the story, as suggested in the "Biblical Commentary," wouldn't we have already captured those points in reciting "*MY FATHER WAS A WANDERING ARAMEAN...*" (Deut. 26:5-9) and the *midrash* that follows? Rabban Gamliel specifically relates the rituals of the Seder with the telling of the Exodus story. The story telling begins by asking questions about the food (The Four Questions). As the formalized storytelling section of the evening comes to an end, the

ritual items and their connection to the story are once again brought to our attention. They serve as bookends to the Maggid. In a few moments we will eat the *matzah* and *maror*. Although we will have concluded the Maggid, the food will provoke further discussion and thus the story will be continued throughout the meal.

IDENTITY

Rabban Gamliel introduces the three elements that are most essential to the Seder according to the biblical commandment to observe this holiday. The *Pesach* represents the outstretched right arm of God as it is symbolized by the *z'roa*. Its placement on the Seder plate is in the upper-right to solidify its symbolic role. "The usual explanation of the name is that it refers to God's forearm, which brought the Israelites from Egypt. However, when joined to the concept of a consecrated first-born, a "light unto all nations," Israel is the sacred and powerful "forearm" of God on earth."[58] As the expression goes, "God has no hands but ours." The *Pesach* reminds us that we, too, are powerful and capable of making changes in our lives.

When looking at *Maror*, however, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch looks at God's and our abilities differently.

> "*Maror*, or the bitter hours of trial in one's own life, can demonstrate to the individual that God is his personal Guardian ... *Maror* acknowledges hopelessness and lack of independence, and only there does one learn to cast one's burden on God." Perhaps that is why God is not mentioned in the passage regarding *maror*. During Pesach and *Matzah*, God came to us. It was only through *maror* that were forced to come to God. Only through the bitterness of *maror* do we allow ourselves to taste the sweetness of *Pesach* and *Matzah*. That is why Hillel combines all three for the *Korekh* section.[59]

The relationship between these three items is elaborate, just as the relationship between slavery and freedom—though seemingly straightforward—is also complex. The combination of these foods is considered further in the way that,

> *Matzah* and *Maror* are closely related. *Matzah* is dough which has not changed state. It is symbolic of the Jews who retained their identity while in Exile. The strength of these Jews, though, was derived from the "*Maror*," the oppressive and bitter life against which they struggled. This is the reason why Hillel the Elder taught that it is proper to eat *Maror* together with the *Matzah*. Both were crucial to ensure survival in the face of assimilation and redemption in the place of slavery.[60]

These three symbolic foods teach the lessons of dependence and independence. These are the symbols of the struggle and growth of the Jewish people. There is no freedom without bitterness, but there is no hope without sustenance. The harsh bitterness of slavery is a sense that cannot be erased. Therefore, it has become fodder for the enduring freedom enjoyed by the Jewish people. Our slavery and our freedom exist in a peculiar symbiosis.

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[58] Cernea, p. 134

[59] Greenberg and Roth, In Every Generation, p. 316 (The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism)

[60] Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 29

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

These three foods are the only ones mentioned in our earliest biblical references to Passover. According to Rabban Gamliel in the Mishnah (10:5), the only foods over which explanation must be given during the Seder are the *Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*.

PESACH – This is traditionally a roasted bone, or *z'roa*, from a lamb, though it could be a goat. In North America, a chicken or turkey bone is common as well. It represents the Paschal Offering that was sacrificed in the Temple. While there is an explanation about the *Pesach*, it is not lifted like the other items. There is no blessing said because the *z'roa* is symbolic of the Pesach sacrifice and is not actually eaten.

To fulfill the mitzvah of eating the *Pesach*, the *Afikoman* stands in and is eaten in its place during Tzafun. In a sense, the *matzah* of the *Afikoman* is transubstantiated into the Passover sacrifice because the sacrifice can no longer be offered at the Temple. The *Pesach* is substituted by the *charoset* during Korech, which then transfers its status onto *matzah*, as part of the Korech. Finally it is consumed in the form of the *Afikoman*.

MATZAH – This has already been discussed in great detail. The important point here is the *Matzah* will finally be eaten, but only after Hallel.

The *matzot* are covered during Hallel. at the end of which the second cup of wine is drunk. Then the hands are washed and the *matzah* is blessed with both "*hamotzi*" and "*al achilat matzah*."

MAROR – The *maror*, or bitter herb, is usually horseradish. Sometimes romaine lettuce is used because it begins sweet but then goes bitter in your mouth,[61] which is meant to remind you how the Israelites were gradually led into the bitterness of slavery from much more positive conditions.

What would have been a requisite blessing, "*borei p'ri ha'adamah*" is not recited as it is covered by the all-encompassing *motzi* which preceded it. However, as this is one of the three required foods for the Passover Seder the blessing "*al achilat maror*" is said.

The second dipping of the two within the Seder occurs after the *maror* has been eaten by itself. The *maror* is dipped into *charoset* and eaten like a sandwich between two pieces of *matzah* (called Korech). As the tradition no longer involves eating the Passover lamb with *maror* and *matzah*, the *charoset*—with its own symbolism—serves as delectable stand-in for the substance of the Pesach. But the true stand-in for the Paschal lamb becomes the *Afikoman*.

In another brilliant stroke of ritual creativity, the Haggadah brings a seemingly banal teaching by Rabban Gamliel—that the Seder is incomplete without the mention, and extrapolation, of the *Pesach*, *Matzah* and *Maror*. This brings the group back to Temple times when these were the only requirements of the Passover telling, before the elaborate ceremony of foods, wine and *midrashim*. We are brought back to simplicity to tell those present two very important things.

First, this is the end of the required foods of the Seder. We have come to the most essential part. Once this is done, we can eat.

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[61] Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 29

Second, these three ritual foods remind the group of a simpler time when the Temple still stood, the time that the rabbis hoped to see restored. This hope is that ultimately the freedom that comes at the end of the story will lead to the ultimate redemption of Israel and return to Jerusalem and the Temple.

So strong is this notion, that the entire Seder is framed by a return to Israel (in addition to our more dominant guiding frame, from degradation to praise). The beginning of the Seder, in HaLachma Anya, looks forward to "Next year in the land of Israel," and the final words of the entire Haggadah are "Next year in Jerusalem!" As present as this message is, it is still subtle and behind the scenes. On a night when God's fulfilled promises are praised, it would be subversive to dwell on the final promise, the fifth promise of being brought into the land, that has not yet come to fruition.

It is worth noting as well that throughout the Seder night Elijah's Cup, which is associated with this fifth promise, sits on the table as a silent witness to the promise yet unfulfilled.

The simplicity of this meal and its origins quietly call out for a simpler, but much grander, situation. Within the Seder those participating can look beyond the night and imagine a different world and redemption realized. Here, anything is possible.

SHULCHAN ORECH

BIBLICAL

The first Passover celebration occurred the night immediately before the Exodus. God instructs Moses and Aaron in Exodus 12:3-8:

> *SPEAK TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL AND SAY THAT ON THE TENTH OF THIS MONTH EACH OF THEM SHALL TAKE A LAMB TO A FAMILY, A LAMB TO A HOUSEHOLD. BUT IF THE HOUSEHOLD IS TOO SMALL FOR A LAMB, LET HIM SHARE ONE WITH A NEIGHBOR WHO DWELLS NEARBY, IN PROPORTION TO THE NUMBER OF PERSONS: YOU SHALL CONTRIBUTE FOR THE LAMB ACCORDING TO WHAT EACH HOUSEHOLD WILL EAT... YOU SHALL KEEP WATCH OVER IT UNTIL THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THIS MONTH; AND ALL THE ASSEMBLED CONGREGATION OF THE ISRAELITES SHALL SLAUGHTER IT AT TWILIGHT. THEY SHALL TAKE SOME OF THE BLOOD AND PUT IT ON THE TWO DOORPOSTS AND THE LINTEL OF THE HOUSES IN WHICH THEY ARE TO EAT IT. THEY SHALL EAT THE FLESH THAT SAME NIGHT; THEY SHALL EAT IT ROASTED OVER THE FIRE, WITH UNLEAVENED BREAD AND WITH BITTER HERBS.*

The Passover celebration begins as a home ritual. The Israelites gather around the dinner table with friends and family to mark their imminent departure from Egypt. In Exodus 12:24, Moses instructs the Israelites, "*YOU SHALL OBSERVE THIS AS AN INSTITUTION FOR ALL TIME, FOR YOU AND FOR YOUR DESCENDANTS.*" Moses' instruction commands future generations of Jews to come together each year on the 14th day of *Nisan* and create an experience that is reminiscent of this first Passover. Each year we are to gather around the table just as our ancestors did, to remember and celebrate our Exodus from Egypt. When we finally eat the Passover meal, we are fulfilling this commandment.

NARRATIVE

Shulchan Orech is simple. There is no script or prescribed rituals. It is a time when we close our Haggadot, place them off to the side and enjoy the company of those sitting beside us. But the narrative does not end. This section of the Seder is the time when we add our own narrative to the story of the Exodus. As we eat the food reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt, we tell our own stories—memories of past Seders, personal tales, world news, Jewish events, etc. The Mishnah states (Pesachim 10:5) and the Haggadah recalls, "*IN EVERY GENERATION A PERSON IS OBLIGATED TO SEE HER/HIMSELF AS IF S/HE ACTUALLY CAME OUT OF EGYPT.*" When we leave the details of the Haggadah and immerse ourselves in these personal conversations, we add ourselves and our stories to the Exodus narrative.

IDENTITY

For many Jews, if not most, this is what is most memorable about the night of Passover. Not only because the complex narrative has come to a temporary hiatus—though it is not finished—but because many of the most memorable foods and moments come during the festive meal. *Matzah* Ball Soup, Gefilte Fish and the various kosher-for-Passover side dishes. These are not required parts of the meal from the perspective of the tradition, though they have become essential elements for most of its participants. The mere fact that these foods are not part of the canonized platter used on this holiday does not mean that they have no value.

We have learned throughout our study of the Passover Seder that a person's individual and family narrative should be incorporated into the larger Jewish narrative that is the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Sharing these customary foods provides an opportunity to take ownership of this night and for new stories to be shared. For many the meal is the easiest place within the Seder to add one's own

personal flourish, to share something which is important or telling about oneself or one's family history. Here families celebrate recipes and share stories handed down throughout the generations. Individuals showcase their personalities and bring their own culture to the tables to join the story.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

Traditionally the Seder meal commences with eating the hard-boiled egg that symbolizes the *Chagigah* Offering,[62] the offering associated with all festivals. No blessing is recited over the egg, but its place is not insignificant.

Unlike the Paschal offering, which is formally acknowledged within the Seder, the *Chagigah* (Festival) Offering is not. The roasted egg (which is eaten in its hardboiled form) sits on the ceremonial plate throughout the Seder unmentioned and untouched. This is to keep from confusing the practices of the Temple from those now observed at the dining room table. It would be improper to mimic the Temple sacrifices, thus the practices ordained solely for the Temple are not formally introduced into the home. Therefore, the egg sits without being mentioned.

The egg is chosen for a few reasons. The egg is round, like the cycle of the year. This reminds us that we are entering a new year of sorts, as spring begins. Along similar lines of thinking, it represents birth and emphasizes this holiday's tie to the season and the birth of the Jewish people. Last, the egg is unique in that the more you cook it, the harder it becomes. This is likened to the Jewish people who, despite outside oppressors throughout the generations, have only grown stronger and more resilient.[63]

The formality of the Passover Seder ritual takes a short break at this point in the evening. The lack of structure here is not without purpose. Sometimes, the most affective part of a ritual is the "blank" space between its structured components.

[62] Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 30
[63] ibid.

SHFOCH CHAMATCHA & KOS ELIYAHU

BIBLICAL

As the Seder comes to an end, we open the door and declare the following three biblical verses:

> *POUR OUT YOUR FURY ON THE NATIONS THAT DO NOT KNOW YOU, UPON THE KINGDOMS THAT DO NOT INVOKE YOUR NAME, FOR THEY HAVE DEVOURED JACOB AND DESOLATED HIS HOME.* (Psalm 79:6-7)

> *POUR OUT YOUR WRATH ON THEM; MAY YOUR BLAZING ANGER OVERTAKE THEM.* (Psalm 69:25)

> *OH, PURSUE THEM IN WRATH AND DESTROY THEM FROM UNDER THE HEAVENS OF ADONAI!* (Lamentations 3:66)

There is no commentary or additional words in this declaration. It is a simple compilation of biblical verses that demand that our contemporary oppressors be brought to Divine justice.

See the commentary of "The Cups of Wine" for information regarding Kos Eliyahu.

NARRATIVE

Rabban Gamliel ends the Maggid by bringing us back to the Temple period as stated earlier in the "Ritual Commentary for Rabban Gamliel." Now after the meal, Shfoch Chamatcha brings the group through three separate quotes: two from Psalms and the last from the book of Eicha. The book of Eicha, of course, responds to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Surely, this is no way to sing God's praise and proclaim God's promise of deliverance! On the contrary it is used here to show that there is trust in God to restore Israel to a more exalted place and to rebuild Jerusalem. With the cup holding the fifth promise of returning the people Israel to Jerusalem, the door of the home is thrown open and Israel's enemies are cursed using these words. Then the fourth cup is filled, the final of the promises that is realized, and Hallel is finished. Praise for God continues. And finally, the Seder concludes with Next Year in a (Rebuilt) Jerusalem!

IDENTITY

The night of Pesach is called, *LAYL SHIMURIM*,[64] a Night of Guarding or a Night of Vigil. This night is a safe place. This night is designed to be a place of questioning and of sharing, of waiting and of indulging, of eating and drinking, of slavery and freedom.

This night presents a rare opportunity in the contemporary lives of individuals to look inside themselves and ask often hard questions about their lives. But there is no time for substantive answers. As the Seder nears its end the front door of the home is opened. The hermetic seal on this experience is broken and the world is let in for a moment, as if to prepare one for the eventual exit from this meal.

This is an act of bravery. While at one time opening the front door and making the declaration "*Shfoch Chamatcha*" was a demonstration of faith in God's protecting power—as neighbors and communities have not always been so welcoming—for most, the Jewish people's circumstances have changed. Tonight, however, this act of bravado has a different tone.

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[64] Exodus 12:42

Just as sharing with a group one's own personal narrative requires courage, so too does taking our newly exposed and, hopefully, transform*ing* selves back into this world. Therefore, the safe cover that has been found at the Seder table in the company of others is used to ease the transition back into the world. In the presence of this newly formed community, where drink and story have been shared equally, the community stands to welcome the world back into the lives of those assembled. Whether blessing or curse awaits, they will be confronted head on with the courage and self-assurance found together here this evening.

RITUAL

DURING THE PASSOVER SEDER:

Elijah's Cup is sometimes filled before the Seder begins. There is also a tradition passed down from Rabbi Naftali of Ropschitz that when we come to this part of the Seder an empty goblet is passed around the table and all present fill that cup from their own. The promise of the future is filled with the hopes, dreams and desires of all those willing to help bring it to fruition. "The redemption that is to come will be shaped from all our efforts, and all our prayers.[65]"

While there is no blessing said over this cup of wine because no participant drinks from it, its purpose is very important. It symbolizes the fifth promise made by God in Exodus 6:8, "I will bring you into the land…." As this promise has yet to be fulfilled, from a theological viewpoint, this cup is paired with the prophet Elijah who will foretell the coming of the Messianic Era. This cup plays a role when the front door of the home in which the Seder occurs is opened to recite Shfoch Chamatcha[66], "Pour out Your fiery-anger." This passage is intended as a demonstration of faith that on this Night of Deliverance, God protects the Jewish people to such an extent, that they can open their doors and promise Divine justice upon their oppressors openly.

The developmental psychologist Erik Erikson teaches that ritual is what human beings do in order to make sense of the world in which they live. As human beings grow older, ritual adapts to their growth. Despite slight changes, each ritual provides a safe constant for those who practice that ritual. It offers them support when things are changing.

Ritual is also the conduit between the private and the public life. Our two worlds (if only it were two) are simultaneously kept distinct and merged. The Passover Seder is one such ritual that is repeated each year and shared between all generations. It is the safe space that adapts to our growth and new needs from generation to generation.

Throughout most of the evening, the world is kept outside of the Seder. While we bring our private lives to the table and use the story of the Exodus as a filter for our experiences, we generally keep the world at bay. When we arrive at Shfoch Chamatcha, nearing the end of the night, we shift slightly to allow the

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[65] Levy, p. 95

[66] "The custom of beginning the second half of the Seder with these verses asking God to punish the other nations is not found in the Haggadot of the Gaonic period. Apparently it was composed in the eleventh century, when the Gentiles accused the Jews of mixing gentile blood in the Matzot. This caused the Jews much tragic torment. Therefore, this prayer was inserted after the meal, asking God for revenge against the enemies of the Jews. Many traditions recite different selection[s] of verses here, all referring to the same theme. The Ashkenazic custom includes the verses from Tehillim 78:6-7, 69:25 and Eikha 3:15 (Yeshiva University Haggadah, p. 36)."

merging of these two worlds. What was once done as a private offensive against the Jewish community's oppressors is now a semi-public statement, primarily, about God's strength and desire to deliver the Jewish people and the world to a better place. Though the words have not changed, their context has. This is the adaptation of ritual as it navigates us between our private and public lives.

Some circles choose not recite these verses from Psalms and Lamentations at all. Instead they sing *Eliyahu HaNavi*, hoping to hasten the return of the prophet Elijah to foretell of the coming redemption of Israel and all the world.

Shfoch Chamatcha is the acknowledgement that our private and public lives are inseparable. The world outside will always affect us, no matter how tall we build our walls or how many locks we put on our gates.

As with the rest of this night, we must hope that the Passover ritual will affect the world outside and the internal lives of those who have participated. Tonight cannot remain an isolated event.

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