

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

# QOL HA-QAHAL

# קול הקהל



Issue 57: Pesah  
DEDICATED IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
EZRA "EDDIE" SCHREM A"H  
BY HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN



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## QOL HA-QAHAL MISSION

To promote Torah throughout our community by providing a platform for our rabbis, lay members, students and institutions.

The SCA is dedicated to uniting our affiliate organizations based on our shared values in an effort to give our young people the tools needed to successfully perpetuate our way of life in the post-modern era.

## SCA VALUES

COMMITMENT TO HALAKHA  
RESPECT AND TOLERANCE  
INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY  
GROWTH THROUGH EDUCATION  
TORAH AND HIGHER EDUCATION  
LEARNING AND EARNING  
MEDINAT YISRAEL

*The SCA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charity.*



## THIS IS A PUBLICATION OF THE SCA.

To contribute articles or for more information and dedication opportunities, contact:  
[QahalNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:QahalNewsletter@gmail.com)

Editor in Chief: Murray J. Mizrahi

Editorial Board: Rabbi Nathan Dweck, Mr. Joseph Mosseri,  
Rabbi Albert Setton, Rabbi Harold Sutton

Design: Nina Lubin, Lenore Cohen

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Dedicated in Loving Memory of  
Ezra "Eddie" Schrem A"H  
by his wife and children

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## IN EVERY GENERATION

Rabbi Joseph Beyda

Our Sages skillfully crafted the Haggadah, the playbook for our Passover Seder, to impact those who would read and discuss it year after year. It is chock full of passages which captivate our imagination and stir our hearts. Statements such as, *Next Year in Jerusalem* and *Dayyenu* have become integral parts of our culture. Asking questions (*Mah Nishtanah*) and speaking to a diversity of children (the Four Sons) form the basis of understandings by which we live.

Perhaps the greatest example of this phenomenon is the statement, *b'khol dor va'dor omedin alenu l'khalotenu*. In every generation, there are those who rise up against us and try to destroy us. The idea that anti-Semitism is a constant scourge is well known. Our history is littered with persecutions, exiles and expulsions.

Recently, however, I experienced a poignant example of precisely this concept. While attending the recent AIPAC Policy Conference, I watched a discussion between former Israeli MK Natan Sharansky and his daughter, Rachel.

First, a bit of context. Sharansky is a modern Jewish hero. The living symbol of Soviet Refusniks, Sharansky was denied the right to leave the Soviet Union in 1973. After becoming a human rights activist, he was jailed in 1977

on false charges of treason and spying. Sharansky was freed in 1986 after many years of worldwide protests and demonstrations against the Soviet regime. He immigrated to Israel and became a major political figure there. Today, both he and his daughter reside in Israel along with their families.

As part of a dialogue between Sharansky and Rachel in front of a large audience, she talked about the challenge

of living in Israel during the most recent intifada, the “knife intifada.” She explained how challenging it was to prepare her children to escape a potential assailant with a knife. It was so difficult to communicate to a five year old child that there were people who sought to harm him. She connected it to the time that her father woke her up in the morning with a distressed face to tell her, “a terrible thing has happened, a Jew has killed the Prime Minister.” Rabin had been assassinated. Rachel

contrasted that with an experience Sharansky had when he was a child. His father woke him up and told him, “a wonderful thing has happened,” as he closed the shutters and lowered his voice, “Stalin died. He wanted to kill us all. As a Jew, you must rejoice, but when you go to kindergarten, don’t let anyone see it.”

From time immemorial, Jewish parents have had to



The Venice Haggadah, Printer: Giovanni di Gara, Publisher and proofreader: Israel ben Daniel ha-Zifroni, 1609



have difficult and challenging conversations with their children. They have had to convey that being chosen also means being despised. To be a Jew is to bear a heavy burden; understanding and accepting that burden begins

ideals and values that establish identity. Being part of an eternal covenant with God is one of the special aspects of what it means to be a Jew. It is not all roses, though. Dealing with adversity and hatred is also a primary component of

*“The Haggadah discussion is a primary tool for transmitting the shared ideals and values that establish identity.”*

at a very early age. However, like the Sharansky family, we can draw strength from the fact that this challenge is a multigenerational one. We all experience it from two sides: that of a child and that of a parent. Therefore, at the Haggadah, we make a point not only of stating the jarring fact that there are people who seek our destruction, but also we note the comforting fact that this is a shared experience. Knowing that we are neither the first nor the last to face this situation both consoles and empowers us.

At our Passover Seder, it is important to talk with our children about what it means to be a Jew. The Haggadah discussion is a primary tool for transmitting the shared

our Jewishness. Speaking openly and sharing our struggles with our children will help them confront and surmount the challenges they ultimately will face.



*Rabbi Beyda serves as the Rabbi of Congregation Bnei Yitzhak and the Principal of the Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School .*

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am both humbled and excited about my appointment as President of the Sephardic Community Alliance. Since its inception close to 10 years ago, the organization has sought to unite member organizations across the community with a shared value system. The SCA has enabled community institutions to leverage assets across multiple organizations, sharing resources, leaders and facilities to better serve the community. Programs such as the Ilead leadership training program, Project Education - addressing the tuition crisis and countless learning programs throughout the year were started through the efforts of the SCA.

Moving forward I am eager to continue our partnership with affiliates to build on our past successes and continue to find ways to serve the community in an ever-changing global world. My board of directors and I are working on executing a qualitative and quantitative census of our 30+ member organizations to help better understand our constituency and the challenges we face. We look forward to working with the Rabbis of our affiliates and giving them the tools they need to help them excel in their role as institutional leaders. Additionally, we will continue to empower our organizations to educate our community through daily and seasonal learning programs and events for the entire community. We are also developing ways to build our SCA tool box to offer more value and resources to our affiliates. Areas of focus will include, governance, marketing support

and programming support to name a few.

We hope to achieve our goals under the guidance of our Board of Trustees. Our founder Morris Bailey as well as our past presidents Eli Harari and Hymie Shamah serve on this board in addition to many seasoned lay leaders including Joe Carye, Stanley Chera, Ezra Ashkenazi, Jeffery Beyda and my father Alan Shamah. Through their guidance we hope to grow while remaining committed to the core SCA values.

I would also like to also welcome my operating board of directors – Eddie Falack, Maurice Levy, Ricky Novick, Sam Haddad, Jesse M. Sutton and Irving Safdieh – who have agreed to invest their time to empower, educate, unite and incubate programs and organizations across our wonderful community.

The SCA is a resource for your organization to benefit from. Please feel free to contact me or any of our directors to share your thoughts, ideas and concerns as we ensure that our values are preserved while we continue to grow as a community.

Wishing you and your family a Hag Kasher V'Sameah,

Joseph A. Shamah



SCA Board of Trustees; Left to Right: Alan Shamah, Hymie Shamah, Joe Carye, Morris Bailey, Stanley Chera, Ezra Ashkenzi, Eli Harari and Jeffery Beyda





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### RABBI ALEX ISRAEL

Rabbi Alex Israel teaches at Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi and at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies where he is Director of Community Education and the Summer Program. An active writer, he also contributes regularly to Yeshivat Har Etzion's Virtual Beit Midrash. Born and raised in London, Rabbi Israel made aliyah in 1991 and gained rabbinic ordination from the Israeli Chief Rabbinate following several years of study at Yeshivat Har Etzion. Rabbi Israel holds degrees from London School of Economics, London's Institute of Education, and Bar Ilan University.

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# PESAH THOUGHTS

## FREE TO FOLLOW RULES

Mr. Yaakov Bitton

Imagine two young men. Arthur and Bryan.

Arthur is not what you'd call a nice guy. A few years ago, he embezzled millions from his employer. He wasn't caught, and now likes to live without limits. He has no regard for the law, for others, or even for his own wellbeing. He lives "dangerously" and is a free spirit. Arthur has never taken "no" for an answer and seems to always get his way, without anyone getting on his way. He goes where he pleases, does what he wants, with whomever he wants, and takes orders from nobody. Nothing and nobody has ever managed to settle him down. He is successful, has access to all the pleasures this world has to offer and shows no restraints to his hedonistic impulses.

Bryan is a family man. He is a model citizen who would never jaywalk, even if there are no incoming cars. He never travelled much, and tends to live a predictable and boring, even if productive, life. He lives frugally, and never feels quite tempted to obtain all the nice things this world has to offer. More than once, he gave up opportunities to get richer quickly because he did not want to be required to bend his own principles. He is honest to a fault, and you could say that his values sort of hold him back. His friends think that his life is weighed down by chains of responsibility.

Most people would say that Arthur is freer than Bryan. After all, Arthur seems to live as he chooses, while Bryan is constrained by a set of rules and principles that limits his options.

And this is the story of 'Am Israel.

Let's think about it with an open mind: were the Hebrews freer in Egypt, where they could very much do as they pleased, so long as they obeyed their Egyptian masters from 9 to 5? Or were they freer in the desert, where suddenly they couldn't as much as eat a piece of meat without obeying a strict, complex and at times seemingly arbitrary multi-step process to make sure it was Kosher? Many Israelites expressed their frustration with this new order. "*Zakharnu Et HaDaga Asher Nokhal BeMisrayim Hinnam!*" They complained to Moshe about the desert conditions: we still remember the fish we would eat for free in Egypt. For free? Whereas the *Man*--the heavenly bread--was in fact free of charge,



whatever the Israelites got to eat in Egypt was nothing more than a handout from the Egyptian masters to their slaves. Had the Israelites forgotten the toil and slavery to which they were subject? Did they miss it? Was such free fish such a great deal, once you factored in the hard labor? *Hakhamim* elucidated this point with a very sharp observation: the fish eaten by the Israelites in Egypt imposed no

responsibilities upon them.<sup>1</sup> But the food in the desert (even the *Man*), now that the Israelites were bound to the *Tora*, did. It wasn't "free" anymore.

On the other hand, from the point of view of the *Tora*, we certainly were "freed" from *Misrayim* and from slavery. This is precisely the motif of *Pesah*. Not only that, but *Hakhamim* posited that "...*SheEn Lekha Ben Horin, Ella Mi SheYosehev ve'Oseq BaTora*" ("...for the only free man is the one who acts within the bounds of the *Tora*.") The celebrated Jewish sage and poet, Rebbe Yehuda HaLevi, expressed this very explicitly: "*Avde Zeman, Avde Avadim Hem. Eved HaShem, Hu Levaddo Hofshi.*" ("Those subservient to the times, they are

<sup>1</sup> *Sifre on Bemidbar 11:5.*



slaves of slaves. Only he who is subservient to God can be said is free.”) Similarly, the very first of *Aseret HaDevarim* (the Ten Statements) makes this point too: firstly, God states He is our Lord (*Anokhi, HaShem E-lohekha*); second, God reminds us He freed us from Egypt (*“...Asher Hossetikha MeEress Missrayim...”*); third, God adds that He also redeemed us from being slaves (*“...MiBet ‘Avadim...”*). The order is deliberate. We can only be free, and can only truly escape Egyptian enslavement, after we accept that God is Lord over us.

So how could it possibly be said that the *Tora* makes a person free? It depends on what “freedom” means to us.

If talking about Arthur’s kind of “success,” we actually know of one certain individual who was the most “successful” person ever in the history of mankind. He was adored by his society: literally worshipped. He could have had whatever he wanted, with total impunity. Wealth beyond the wildest dreams. Power, honor, loyalty. Everything Arthur could only fantasize about. He was the Egyptian Pharaoh. Pharaoh was absolutely “free” to achieve earthly success. And yet, in the story of *Pesah*, he ends up being the least free of all. Facing a most obvious decision, to let the Hebrews go and spare his nation the calamities that were otherwise sure to befall them, the *Tora* tells, Pharaoh was incapable of choice.

Let me mention two other characters in the story of *Pesah*. They were women, which at the time was a social disadvantage. They were Hebrew--enslaved by Pharaoh and the Egyptian ruling class. Not only were they Hebrew women, but they were mere assistants to other Hebrew women. Probably the lowest echelon of Egyptian society. Their names were Shifra and Pu’a. And yet, something amazing happens. Pharaoh issues these two poor ladies a direct command (to kill the Hebrew babies). And they refuse. They disobey a direct order! Why? *“...Ki Yareu HaMeyaledot Et HaE-lohim...”* (“...for the midwives feared God...”). One can imagine that Shifra and Pu’a were likely deprived of many opportunities in Egyptian society. They would never be “free” to climb the socio-economic ladder and achieve the kind of “success” that characterized Pharaoh. But they were absolutely “free” to choose, to truly choose. They were free to resist the overpowering weight of a royal command.

King David describes a principled person as a tree whose

roots reach deep into the water-drenched soil (*“Ke’Ess Shatul ‘Al Palge Mayim”*), and a wicked person as chaff that is easily carried by the wind (*“KaMoss Asher Tiddefennu Ruah”*). The tree does not have too many options in terms of mobility. It cannot waver too far from its roots. However, it is free to withstand external pressure, winds that seek to tell it what to do and where to go. Chaff, on the other hand, is very mobile: one day here, one day there. But while it may feel as though it is ending up in various places because this is what it wants, in reality the chaff moves at the whim of external forces: winds that tell it what to do, what to believe, what to feel.

The *Tora*, principles, accepting God’s sovereignty, all can admittedly hold one back from reaching Arthur’s kind of success. And no Jew has nor will ever become as successful as Pharaoh. But then again, Pharaoh, with all his success, lacked freedom. Arthur may have a nicer car than Bryan; yet he is also far likelier than Bryan to act impulsively pursuant to clever marketing campaigns. He is less likely than Bryan to be able to stand up to peer pressure, or even to form his own independent opinions. For Arthur’s dreams, the *Tora* could be an obstacle. Like the prophet Hoshea’ famously said *“Ki Yesharim Darkhe HaShem, veSadiqim Yelkhu Bam, uFoshe’im Yikashlu Bam”* (“As God’s ways are straight, and the righteous ones run on them, while transgressors stumble on them”). A fellow who seeks to walk in a crooked manner will find that the straightness of a path is a hindrance.

The *Tora* is a recipe for attaining the ability to choose, as a free individual. No other system is as pro-choice as the *Tora*! And being pro-choice means being pro-responsibility. The *Tora*, with the structure and responsibilities it prescribes, is a formula that lets us grow roots that will withstand all kinds of winds. A principled person is less susceptible to social and other pressures. In that sense, only a person who acts consistently with the *Tora* can be said to be free.



Mr. Bitton received his *Semikha* from Yeshiva University, where he also obtained a B.Sc. in finance, an M.A. in Talmud and a law degree from Benjamin Cardozo School of Law. He practices law in New York with Kleinberg, Kaplan, Wolff & Cohen, P.C. advising private equity and hedge funds.



# SEPHARDIC CUSTOMS

## WHEN IS 'ALOT HASHAHAR (DAWN) IN NEW YORK?

Mr. Morris Arking

In *Masekhet Pesahim* (94A) the *Gemara* concludes that dawn precedes sunrise by the amount of time that it takes to walk 4 Mil (12,000 feet). There is a disagreement about whether the time it takes to walk a Mil is 18 minutes or 24 minutes. There is another opinion that says it takes 22.5 minutes.

HaRambam, in his commentary to the Mishna (*Berakhot* 1:1) writes that dawn is when light begins to shine and is visible in the eastern part of the sky which is one and one-fifth hours (72 minutes) before sunrise. From that comment it appears that HaRambam holds that it takes 18 minutes to walk a Mil. However, in his commentary to the Mishna (*Pesahim* 3:2) he writes that a Mil is two-fifths of an hour (24 minutes). Furthermore, it appears that HaRambam considers the time it takes to walk a Mil to be 24 minutes in *MT Hilkhos Qorban Pesah* (5: 8.9). Still in all, the later authorities understood that HaRambam still considered dawn to be 72 minutes before sunrise (*Magen Abraham OH* 89:2, *Kaf HaHayyim Sofer OH* 89:4).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Hakham Obadyah Yosef ruled that dawn is 72 minutes before sunrise (*Yehaveh Da'at* Vol. 2:8, *Yalqut Yosef* Vol. 1 pgs 136,137). The *Yalqut Yosef* specifies that the time of dawn is based on variable hours, so that dawn is 1.2 variable hours before sunrise (Also see *Hazon 'Obadyah-Yom Tob* pg.312 where Hakham Obadyah also specifies variable hours). Using variable hours to calculate dawn is based on the standard translation of HaRambam's commentary on the Mishna which translates, 'One and one-fifth hours before sunrise from the "Sha'ot Z'maniyot" (variable hours).

<sup>1</sup> Although the *Kaf HaHayyim* himself wrote that in his time (early 20th century) they calculated dawn approximately 90 variable minutes before sunrise.

However, *Yalqut Yosef* (Vol. 1 pg. 99) cites the opinion of MaHa"RI Fraji and Rabbi Yoseph Qafih that the accurate translation is "Sha'ot Shavot"<sup>2</sup> (even hours), not variable hours. *Yalqut Yosef* does not follow their translation because Maran uses variable hours in *Shulhan 'Arukh*. However, Maran only uses variable hours for times between sunrise and sunset, he does not use variable hours for times before sunrise and after sunset which do not vary proportionately to the length of the day.



HaRambam

Rabbi Leo Levi, in his book *Jewish Chrononomy* (1967), shows that the amount of time between dawn and sunrise is the shortest on the spring and fall equinoxes (March 21st and September 21st). It is a little longer in the winter (when the day is the shortest) and even longer in the summer. He explained that the sun is approximately 16 degrees below the horizon, 72 minutes before sunrise (in Jerusalem on March 21st or September 21st). Based on that, any city in the world can determine what time dawn is, based on what time the sun will be 16 degrees below the horizon on a given day. Since New York is further north of the equator than Jerusalem, dawn is never less than 82 minutes before sunrise in New York.

The custom has developed in our community to calculate dawn as ten percent of the time between sunrise and sunset, before sunrise (which is 1.2 variable hours). This formula does not make a geographical adjustment for New York which is commonly taken into consideration

<sup>2</sup> HaRambam uses the Arabic word "Ila'atdal" which is explained by R Leo Levy as "even season", meaning based on dawn in Nisan and Tishri, but would vary seasonally. When that translation was suggested to R Qafih he considered possible. Elsewhere HaRambam uses "Ilastawi" for even hours and "Zamaniye" for variable hours.



when estimating nightfall. Furthermore, it is based on an inaccurate translation of HaRambam's commentary to the Mishna. And lastly it is not consistent with the actual seasonal variations. Using ten percent of the day shortens the time between dawn and sunrise in the winter when that interval is actually longer based on measuring how many degrees the sun is below the horizon.

If one were to estimate dawn by viewing the sky in the early morning, the results would be consistent with measuring the position of the sun below the horizon, not with 1.2 variable hours. Therefore, calculating dawn based on degrees the sun is below the horizon is the formula used by Rabbi Meir Mazuz (see Or Torah Tebet 5755 [1995] Siman Mem Alef) and is also the formula used by MyZmanim, Luach Z'manei Hayom and by most other time charts that are available.

Using ten percent of the day before sunrise creates an unwarranted leniency when determining the time that a fast begins, as that time does not make any geographical adjustment between Jerusalem and New York, and the seasonal adjustment makes dawn later, instead of earlier in the winter time! Therefore those calendars that calculate dawn at 16.1 degrees below the horizon are more accurate and should be used to calculate dawn for our community.



*Mr. Arking is a regular contributor to Qol Ha-Qahal and lives in Brooklyn, NY.*

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# THE SEDER

## MASAH U'MAROR

Rabbi Dr. Raymond Harari

The most prominent items at the Passover *seder* are the *masah* and the *maror*. Indeed, Rabban Gamliel teaches us that the Passover *seder* would be incomplete without the presence of both these food items:

רבן גמליאל היה אומר: כל-מי שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו: פסח, מצה, ומרור.

Rabban Gamliel said: Whoever does not make mention of [i.e. explain] these three things on Passover does not discharge his duty, and these are they: The Passover-offering, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs.

Not surprisingly, they bring to the table dramatically different motifs. The *masah* represents the exodus from

to connect to our forefathers and our history in the fullest sense: the good and the ugly, the exhilarating and the depressing. Much like the holiday of Purim that we celebrated a month ago, Passover reminds us of the unusual turns that our lives as the Jewish people have taken. We have witnessed the worst of what humankind has dealt others and the best of what God has rewarded His people. In our own times, our people were both slaughtered during the Holocaust years and witnessed the miraculous rebirth of the Jewish people in its homeland.



Passover reminds us that both experiences and emotions are part of what it means to be a Jew. And by connecting

*“... Passover reminds us of the unusual turns that our lives as the Jewish people have taken.”*

Egypt while the *maror* represents the slavery itself. The *masah*, bread in its unleavened state, expresses God's impatience in delivering us from the hands of the Egyptians. For all future generations we would know that God's rush in taking us out of Egypt would be symbolized by bread that was not allowed to rise. The *maror*, on the other hand, reminds us of the bitterness of our oppression and the evils of the demonic power that ruled over the people of Israel for centuries.

These two food items, therefore, capture the essence of the holiday of Passover. They remind us of our obligation

to the messages that the *masah* and the *maror* send us, we propel ourselves to strengthen our relationship to the Almighty.



Rabbi Dr. Harari is the Rosh Yeshivah of Joel Braverman High School and Rabbi of Mikdash Eliyahu.

# THE STORY RE-TOLD: WHY BOTHER?

Rabbi Ezra Labaton Ph.D. A"H

The Haggadah is a revered text. Family members gather around the Haggadah on the first nights of Passover to plumb its wisdom and gather insights into our historical experience. As a people, this love of the Haggadah text expresses itself in the multiple commentaries that Rabbis have authored over the centuries: Midrashic commentaries, Medieval commentaries, Rabbinic commentaries, Kabbalistic commentaries, Renaissance humanistic commentaries, and of course Modern commentaries. A year does not go by without the publication of a new commentary on the Haggadah. This year [2010] Rabbi Norman Lamm's commentary was just published, while last year [2009] Rabbi Soloveitchik's commentary graced our table, gleaming with new ideas, thoughts and concepts. The pathways of Jewish creativity in reading and interpreting the Haggadah seem

And we all know the Torah,  
We are obligated to tell the story  
Of the Exodus from Egypt"

I ask why? What is the point of telling a story that we all know? We know the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. It's the same story as last year. Nothing new, nothing has changed. But the Haggadah persists and emphasizes: Even if we are Hachamim (accumulated much knowledge), even if we are Nevonim (insightful), and even if we are Zekenim (we have been to the seder table many times before and the story has not changed!) – still we must retell. And again the question comes to the fore: Why must we retell a story that we all know?

*"Exodus teaches us about the infinite power of the Almighty and His sovereign mastery over the universe."*

endless. On a yearly basis the Haggadah asks of us questions and expects newly minted creative answers. Or better, the Haggadah asks of us – begs of us – to ask the questions ourselves and respond to these self-imposed questions with answers of deeper understanding of what the Haggadah tries to teach us.

On this holiday of questions, I raise my Passover question on precisely that Haggadah passage that challenges us to study again and again, to raise new questions and provide new creative answers.

First, let us note that the Haggadah begins by asking its famous four questions. Then, the Haggadah answers these questions with the classic response of Avadim. For me, this very answer contains the seeds of my question. Here we read:

"Even if we are all wise,  
And we are all understanding,  
And we are all elders,

Certainly, the most obvious answer is that we are not retelling the story for ourselves but for the children who asked the questions. This answer, however, has to be rejected for two reasons. A) Even if we are completely alone, and there are no children, still we must retell the story. B) The next paragraph of the five great Rabbis – who were all Hachamim, Nevonim and Zekenim, sitting among themselves - retold the story till the wee hours of the morning! Proof positive, that even the greatest Rabbis, who know all, still must tell the story – even if they sit alone.

Ramban solves the enigma of why great Rabbis must retell a story that is already known to them by emphasizing the important role that the Exodus plays in our world view. In his commentary to Devarim (6:20-21), he elaborates on the Avadim Hayinu answer to the Ki Yish'alecha Bincha verse. Exodus teaches us about the infinite power of the Almighty and His sovereign mastery over the universe. Yesi'at Misrayim demonstrated this mastery over the natural order and we collectively as a nation witnessed this demonstration of Divine power. Our recognition of Bore

Olam is rooted in our collective experience and vicarious experience of the Exodus. The story must be re-told, if only to re-experience and deepen that awareness of the Sovereign master of all. The re-telling may not grant any new information – but it highlights how central this experience was for the Jewish people. After all, the Ramban argues, the Ten Commandments do not introduce Bore Olam not as He who created heaven and earth, but as He who took us out of Egypt. Further, the stated reason in Devarim for the holiday of Shabbat is Yesi'at Misrayim. Given this central role, the story must be re-told – no matter how wise we are or how many times we heard the story before.

Rabbi Soloveichick, in his Haggadah commentary, raises the very same question. Why must great Rabbis re-tell a story well known to one and all? He roots his answer in the peculiar formulation of the Haggadah itself. The Haggadah says, מצוה עלינו לספר, ביציאת מצרים – “we are commanded to tell the story of the Exodus.” The more conventional way to express this thought would have been מצות עלינו לספר את יציאת מצרים.

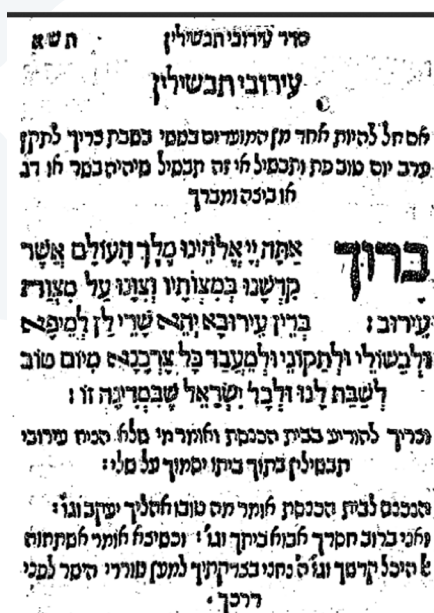
Rabbi Soloveichick explains the distinction between these two formulations. The latter (לספר את) refers to a fixed narrative, a story with clear demarcations: A beginning, middle and end. After the narrative is told and the details known, there is nothing more to say. The Haggadah’s formulation (לספר), however, indicates more than a simple re-telling. Here the misvah is, “להעמיק בו ולהבינו על בריו ולא רק לספר את המעשה שהיה” — we are required to add dimensions to our knowledge of the story. The Haggadah demands not a simple review of events that took place, but a deeper understanding of the theological and spiritual forces, as they intersected with the historical fact of the Exodus. That is, though the great Rabbis may know the simple story, they must deepen – from year to year – their understanding of this central event. Indeed, why the Almighty interacts within the historical process and when, is a profound philosophical question that even the greatest of Jewish minds must think about and revisit.

Here Rabbi Soloveichick is teaching us that our knowledge and understanding of Bore Olam should grow from year to year (presumably, after a year of more Torah study) and therefore we should be able to add new and deeper insights – every year. Rabbi Soloveichick demands of the story teller more than a simple re-telling of the story. He must deepen our understanding of the event, adding new dimensions each time the misvah of sippur is engaged.

Leaving aside the Medieval commentary of the Ramban and the Modern commentary of Rabbi Soloveichick, one may analyze the Haggadah’s phrase from a Rabbinic contextual/literary point of view. We note that this formulation of “וכל”

“המרבה...הרי זה משובח” (“the more that one does...the more praiseworthy it is”) appears in only two other contexts in all of the vast ocean of Rabbinic literature. First, we find this formulation in the Mishna of Sanhedrin (5:1). Here, the judges of a capital case are told that the more they ask, the more they challenge - the more praiseworthy. The accused, about to be executed, may not be able to defend himself from the testimony of the two witnesses. Here the judges must take on the role of the defender of the accused and challenge the witnesses. After all, a person’s life hangs in the balance. The judges must go beyond the pro forma questioning of the witnesses. The judges, through their challenges to the witnesses, will save a life - or not. Here, the Mishna demands of the judges to ask more, beyond the minimum, and even beyond the maximum, for the sake of the accused. And the judge who goes beyond – is praiseworthy.

A second formulation of this type is found in Mo’ed Kattan (Yerushalmi 18b). Here the Gemara declares that the more that one engages in the mourning rituals for his deceased parents deserves praise. The Gemara here is concerned with the proper honor due to the mourner’s parents. The Korban Edah adds that the purpose of the “רבו” - doing more honor to the deceased - is that it provides more comfort for the mourner. Indeed, the hesped based on this “רבו” could give added significance and meaning to the life of the deceased



Erub Tabshlin from Mahzor Aram Zoba, Published 1527



which as well provides help to the mourner.

Do these three contexts, all of which have this very specific formulation – have anything in common? Can one shed light on another? Or, more specifically, do these two other Rabbinical contexts – with the same formulation as our Haggadah – expand or enhance our understanding of the Haggadah’s formulation? Without overly eisegizing the matter, perhaps this unique formulation indicates that in the same way that a judge in a capital case can ask ordinary questions, and receive ordinary answers, so too a person telling the story of the Exodus can do so in an ordinary fashion – simply going through the motions. Or, the judge may seek out every nook and cranny, may challenge every detail, may bring the event to life through his incisive, penetrating, well-chosen words. Here the story teller is warned through this formulation that Yesi’at Misrayim must be told with the same zeal and passion, with the same concern and intensity, with the same penetrating insight, as a judge who sees the life of

Similarly, the narrative of the Exodus could be recited in an ordinary, run-of-the-mill fashion – adding neither depth, meaning, significance nor insight. The same story told as last year. Or, as the gifted maspid, the well chosen words of the story teller can re-create the narrative in a way that adds significance and meaning to the re-telling. The same participant as last year may grace the seder table and though he heard the very same story, sees it with greater clarity and greater insight. The narrative has been re-told in a fashion that has added a deeper dimension of understanding and is seen in a broader framework. In all these cases, the extra effort is praised. This literary analysis of the key Rabbinic phrase has indeed helped us understand why the known story of the Exodus has to be retold. The other two Rabbinic contexts added a dimension of understanding to the Haggadah’s formulation.

There is one final way of approaching a solution to the question, why must great Rabbis, who know the story, re-tell it? Simply, because words matter. Words convey more

***“Words convey more than knowledge. Words have the power of changing the speaker of the words – even when the speaker recites words which he has recited many times before.”***

the accused in his hands. The judge and the story teller are both praised if they conduct themselves beyond the expected measure. The judge must interrogate properly, while he who tells the story of the Exodus must tell the story appropriately - learning the right lessons from the interrogating judge.

And the same is true for the mourner of parents who finds comfort in engaging in *עסקי של מת* (the needs of the deceased), or for those who seek to comfort the mourner with a hesped that frames the life of the deceased in a way that helps the mourner deal with the tragedy. A hesped could be ordinary or pro forma, where the maspid fails to give meaning and a broader context to the life of the deceased. The mourners remain unmoved and un comforted. The ordinary words spoken are insipid and empty of meaning. Or the maspid, through the power of the spoken word, can turn a tragic loss of sadness into a meaningful event that adds a dimension of significance to the life of the deceased, thereby helping the mourner work his way through the mass of emotions he feels at this loss.

than knowledge. Words have the power of changing the speaker of the words – even when the speaker recites words which he has recited many times before. The speaker may be moved by his recitation of a narrative he knows – if the appropriate words are chosen – even if he learns nothing new with no new dimensions explored. These words – though recited many times before – penetrate his heart, mind and soul, stimulating a new spiritual response. Such is the power of the recited word.

Prayer may be a good analogy. Many have prayed the same words time and time again. In the last fifty two years that I have supplicated my Creator, not one word has changed. Yet, the words are still meaningful; they still have the power to move, stimulate, shock and even transform me. Admittedly, some days of prayer are better than others. But on the “better” days, the very same words that I have recited literally thousands of times before, can recharge an old spiritual battery. The Rabbis of the Talmud, who organized and chose these words of prayer, praise and

thanksgiving, understood well the energizing power of the Siddur's words. [For more on the power of Prayer, see Rabbi Eliezer's monograph on the "Art of Prayer," and R. Abraham Heschel's Man in Search of God – both works are wonderful expositions on the efficacy and life transforming power of prayer.]

The very same could be said of the Exodus narrative. The words themselves, though recited for years prior, still have the capacity to move and energize the story teller. Thus, even if alone, even if it's a story many times re-told, and even if the teller is the greatest of scholars – this time may be different. These very same words may serve to provide a spark of spiritual change in the teller of the narrative.

Or, put a bit differently, the misvah of "Sippur Yesi'at Misrayim," is not about new knowledge, new aspects, new dimensions or new insights. It's about creating a feeling of "בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות (להראות) את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים" "in every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt." Admittedly, living in the lap of luxury as most of us, it's hard to imagine ourselves as slaves, serving the awesome Pharaoh. Not so for the Jew subject to the flames of the Inquisition, Chmielnicki pogroms or concentration camp. They all saw themselves as living in compromised slave-like situations. For them the servitude was real, as were their prayers for redemption. We have a more difficult time with the notion of seeing ourselves as redeemed from Egypt. Yet, try we must. And the words of re-telling are there to

create psychologically and emotionally- even momentarily - the experience of servitude and redemption.

Imagine that these words of the Exodus narrative have been told and retold thousands upon thousands of times, by millions upon millions of Jews, during the last two thousand years. The Jews who told and retold the story may have been wise, and aged, and may have heard this very same narrative many times before. Yet, they were always faithful to the misvah and once again retold the story. Either to emphasize its importance or to gain some new insight into Divine providence and how it operates within the historical context; or, because the words had the power to change the story teller himself, or enable him to experience in some fashion or other, the servitude and redemption experienced by our forefathers. However we understand the misvah of Sippur, let us point out that it is the key to a meaningful Haggadah experience. The Ba'al HaHaggadah certainly knew how to stimulate the right questions, now we must take the challenge and find the right answers.



*Rabbi Dr. Labaton's A"H Doctoral Thesis on Rabbi Abraham ben Haramabm and many of his classes can be found on <http://rabbilabaton.com/>*

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# MAKING IT YOUR HAGGADA

Rabbi Meyer Laniado

Over the past week quite a few people have asked me which Haggada to buy. The questions have ranged from which one is "the best," which one is "our tradition" to which one is the "easiest to use." To best answer this question I will elaborate on what the Haggada is, how it developed throughout our history, and how to properly use it.

This *missva* of the Haggada is related in two *pesuqim*. The first is *zakhor et haYom haZeh asher yesatem me'eres misrayim*, remember this day on which you left Egypt, and the second is *veHigadeta leBinkha baYom haHu*, and you should relate to your son on this day. The term *zakhor*, remember, and *vehigadeta*, and you should relate are key to understanding the *missva* of the Haggada.

Jewish memory, *zekhira*, is not solely about the past, it is to create meaning in the present and the future. That is

audience. The *missva* is not *veAmarta*, to say or read the text, but rather *lehagid*, to relate the message. That is why it is called a Haggada. The Haggada is a curriculum, a lesson plan, for delivering the lessons of how God frees us from slavery. You are the teacher, and your job is not to read the lesson plan to your students, but to teach, in your own words, and from your own experiences.<sup>2</sup> One should read the lesson plan both before and during the seder, but not think that just reading is enough.

## The History of The Haggada

Originally, *Am Yisrael* only had the basic ritual laws, *qorban pesah*, *masa*, *marror*, *hames*, and the general instruction, *vehigadeta*, of relating the miracles and wonders that occurred. How to deliver the message was left to each family to prepare on their own. Each father knew the minds of his children

***"Jewish memory, zekhira, is not solely about the past, it is to create meaning in the present and the future."***

why we fulfill the *missva* of *Zakhor et hayom haze* not just by 'remembering' and 'recalling' the events of our redemption, but by the action of transmitting the message to the next generation.<sup>1</sup> The question is how one should relate this message. It is the next *pasuq* which clarifies this.

Remember the term *vehigadeta*? It is has the same root as Haggada, and is related to the word *magid*, storyteller. You are the *magid*, the storyteller, and your *missva* is *lehagid*, to relate the story in an engaging and relevant way to your

and understood their culture.<sup>3</sup> He carefully crafted the night with engaging questions, props, and discussion topics. Over time our Rabbis gave us more and more guidance, directing us, but never thinking we would just read the directions to our children. The directions were meant for us as a teacher to prepare and use as notes during the lesson.

## From Two to Three to One Haggada

Rabban Gamliel was the first to start the process of standardizing our Haggada. We read his words at the end of our modern Haggada, *Rabban Gamliel omer: mi shelo amar shelosha debaraim*, one who doesn't say these three things. It is that part of the seder where we point to the *massa* and the *marror*, but make sure we do not point to the *Pesah*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There are three *misvot* in the Torah of *Zakhor*, each of which is not fulfilled through an intellectual remembering: *Shabbat*, *Zekhor et yom hashabat leqadesh*, *Amaleq*, *Zakhor et asher asa lekha amaleq*, and *Pesah*, *Zakhor et hayom haze*. Each of these *misvot* are fulfilled through taking an action in the present, creating meaning for the here and now, and not solely through memory of things past. The *missva* of *Zakhor* for *Shabbat* *Zakhor et yom hashabat leqadesh*, is not that we take a moment to remember or commemorate that world was created in six days, rather we recognize G-d as the creator of the world. The next *missva* of *Zakhor* is *Zakhor et asher asa lekha Amaleq*, we should 'remember' what *Amaleq* did to us. Does this mean that we should remember a 3000-year-old event when *Benei Yisrael* were attacked or is this meant for us to learn something for the present? *Rambam* in *Melakhim uMilhamot* Chapter 5 Law 5 states that the 'memory' of *Amaleq* is so that we are able to take action and destroy *Amaleq* when we come upon them. It is not about the past events, it is about creating meaning in the present from the memory of the past.

<sup>2</sup> והגדת לבנך ביום זה הוא לאמר: בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי מצרים

<sup>3</sup> לפי דעותיו של בן אביו מלמדו

<sup>4</sup> Since we do not want to imply that the meat on our table is a *qorban*. It is forbidden to offer a *qorban* outside of the *Beit Hamiqdash*. *Rabban Gamliel* lived during the end of the second *Beit Hamiqdash*, and therefore was speaking to an audience that had a *qorban Pesah* at their seder.



Note that Raban Gamliel does not say to point, he instructs us to say, *amar*. He directs us on how to tell the story of our redemption. We could convey a story by developing a theme, but we could also relate a story through character development. Raban Gamliel is instructing us to make sure that we elaborate on the *Pesah*, God's role; the *Massa*, our role; and the *Marror*, the Egyptians' role. His educational methodology is that of props, utilizing the ritual items displayed on the table to engage the student.

The next lesson plan introduced to us, after the

of the greatest Jewish academies of the 3rd century, Sura and Nehardea. The head of the academy of Sura was Rab, and the head of the academy of Nehardea was Shemuel. Rab said the freedom we should be focusing on is spiritual, because our ancestors were idol worshipers, and that is why his Haggada states: *mithehila obdei aboda zara*. Shemuel said the focus should be on our physical enslavement and freedom, and that is why his Haggada states: *abadim hayinu lepharo*.

Before exploring these two models let us first define physical and spiritual slavery. One who is physically enslaved



destruction of the Beit Hamiqdash, does not say who authored it<sup>5</sup>. This curriculum instructs us to develop the theme of freedom by starting with the negative and ending with the positive, *mathil bignut umsayem bishbah*. We are then given a base text to expound upon. The question is, what is the start of this story, what is the negative that God has saved us from? Is it our enslavement in Egypt, or our enslavement to an idolatrous mindset? This was the dispute between two

cannot physically move at will. He may be chained in jail or have task masters controlling him using force. To be physically free means one has the freedom or the liberty to move and act as one wants. This is the type of freedom we have in America. One can behave according to their desires as long as it does not infringe on someone else's liberties.

One who is spiritually enslaved cannot think for one's

<sup>5</sup> סתם משנה ר מאיר it is likely from Ribbi Meir or his teacher Ribbi Aqiba

Continued from page 19

self, and instead makes decisions based on what society defines as good and bad. A person who is mentally enslaved may live according to the rules and expectations created by one's surrounding society. This person feels locked into the rules dictated by others. They cannot make decisions outside of what has been set as the 'normal' parameters. These two models of slavery are not mutually exclusive, and one can be both physically AND spiritually enslaved.

## Educational Methodology of The Haggada

All three of these Haggadot have a particular educational methodology. These Haggadot all have a similar structure. Each of the three Haggadot start with a method of engaging the student, next with at least one piece incorporating the message, and finally close with a section of praise to God for His role in freeing us.

The first Haggada we encounter in our modern Haggada is that of Shemuel. The educational methodology introducing his Haggada is the *ma nishtana*<sup>6</sup>, and aims to point out to the student the ritual changes, eliciting the question: "Why are we doing all of these things tonight?"

While the student is engaged, one can relate the message of physical slavery, *abadim hayinu*, that we were physically bound to serve the Pharaoh of Egypt. If this is difficult for the student to understand one should try and find more relevant examples. The Haggada itself brings more relevant examples. These include a story of physical oppression during the time of Bar Kokhba where the Tana'im were *mesaperim beyesiat misrayim kol oto halayla*, relating the story of our exodus from Egypt the entire night. These Tana'im left their families and students and traveled to Benei Beraq for a seder. The seder, a time where we would expect these great rabbis to be with their families and their student's teaching, was a time they decided to have a seder alone. This was during the Roman oppression, and they may have been meeting to discuss how to deal with the oppression. Note their seder lasted all night; they clearly were not just reading through a Haggada text. The final piece of Shemuel's lesson plan, before the praise section, is a piece about *Yemot Hamashiah*, a time when we have our own national sovereignty, which is true physical freedom.

<sup>6</sup> Note *Ma Nishtana* predates Shemuel and is not unique to him. See *Mishna Pesachim* 10:4

Rab's Haggada is also introduced with a specific educational methodology, the Hakham, and Rasha section.<sup>7</sup> This educational method is similar to that which introduces Shemuel's in its focus on responding to questions where possible. The difference between these two models is that the one introducing Rab's utilizes differential education, while the one introducing Shemuel's utilizes the unique rituals performed on this night, including reclining and only eating *Massa* to help elicit questions.

## Fulfilling Our *Missva* of *Zakhor* and *Vehigadeta*

Our modern Haggada contains these three lesson plans to guide us as educators. It is imperative that we take the time to choose a lesson plan and develop it prior to the night of *Pesah*. Think about which educational methodology or which message would be most appropriate for your audience. Then take some time to find some of your own contemporary and tangible examples of freedom.

So, on *Pesah*, we fulfill the *missva* of *Zakhor et hayom haze*, and *vehigadeta lebincha*, not just by 'remembering' and 'recalling' the events of our redemption, but by the action of transmitting the messages to the next generation. To do this, we speak about the great miracle of a tribal nation enslaved and engrossed in the conventions of Egypt transforming into a nation free both physically and spiritually. We need to express how our past, the birth of our nation, has formed us, is relevant to our lives, our future as well as our children's. This will ensure the continuation of our children as part of the nation, and our national role as *mamlechet kohanim vegoy qadosh*.

Moadim Lesimha,

Rabbi Meyer Laniado



Rabbi Laniado is a Rabbi at Congregation Magen David of West Deal and Hillel Yeshiva High School.

<sup>7</sup> This predates Rab. See *מכילתא ותלמוד ירושלמי מסכת פסחים פרק י' הלכה ד*



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# ISRAEL SPOTLIGHT

## AIPAC POLICY CONFERENCE- THE START OF SOMETHING BIG

Mr. Eddie Esses

Choose To Lead.

That's what 25 young adult leaders of the community chose to do by attending the AIPAC (America Israel Public Affairs Committee) annual Policy Conference in Washington D.C last week. The conference serves as by far the largest annual pro-Israel gathering in the country. It's an opportunity for those across all ages, political ideologies, and even religions to unite behind one shared belief: that the U.S-Israel relationship is monumentally important for both countries and must be forever strong.

This group was truly dedicated. Most of the group left their houses **at about 4AM Sunday** in order to arrive at the conference on time for the first General Session where they heard remarks from new AIPAC President Mort

special session with AIPAC Director of Long Term Strategy, Jonathan Kessler. He spoke to the group on the importance of engaging both friends and family members to become more active in the America-Israel political process. The group came out of the session inspired and motivated to go out and make a difference. The evening was topped off with a gathering at the Jefferson Hotel of the entire Sephardic community from all ages attending the conference along with numerous AIPAC staff including Northeast Managing Director, Elliot Brandt. It was inspiring to see the passion from so many community members for AIPAC and the amazing work they do.

Monday was sure to be an action packed day. After another general session, lobbying caucuses broke out where everyone would be educated on how to lobby as well as

***“We’d also like to give a special thanks to the Center and the SCA for all their help in coordinating this entire event.”***

Fridman among others. Afterwards, everyone headed to multiple breakout sessions that they were able to select from before the conference. Session topics ranged from Strategy on Iran all the way to African American-Israel relations and were given by Congressmen/women, AIPAC professionals, professors and other experts. I personally had the opportunity to hear Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida discuss American Foreign Policy in relation to Israel and Congressman Ted Deutch, also of Florida, discuss America's strategy on Iran. Being able to hear about the passion for the American-Israeli relationship from and even get to personally meet these amazing elected officials was truly a tremendous experience.

**On Sunday night**, we gathered the group together for a

AIPAC's current legislative agenda. Later that day came the General Session everyone had been waiting for. The entire conference, 18,000 people strong, would hear remarks from numerous big political players including Senator Chuck Schumer, Senator Bob Menendez, Ambassador Nikki Haley, and Vice President Mike Pence among others. Ambassador Haley was the clear rockstar of the night, getting more and longer standing ovations than a President at a State of the Union address.

Finally, the big day arrived. **Tuesday morning** opened with a bang as we got to hear from Prime Minister Netanyahu. He even surprised the crowd by pulling out a PowerPoint presentation on many amazing Israeli contributions to the world. Immediately afterwards came the culmination of

the conference with what AIPAC is all about: lobbying. Our group from New York's 11th district would be meeting with Congressman Dan Donovan who serves as the representative for the majority of the community. Our group was led by Jackie Ashkenazie who has had a personal relationship with the Congressman for years. We had an excellent and productive meeting with the Congressman where we discussed numerous topics including the importance of America's annual financial assistance package to Israel as well as the current state of the Iranian threat. The Congressman's knowledge of the topics as well as his passion and commitment to Israel was clear throughout the meeting. He certainly understands the strategic importance of the American-Israeli relationship and will be continuing to support it on Capitol Hill.

None of this would have been possible without the support of community leaders Jackie Ashkenazi and Joey Shamah, who led the effort in raising the funds to get the admission cost of the conference sponsored for our group. Their passion for AIPAC is easily seen and has been a true source of inspiration for us right from the start. We'd also like to give a special thanks to the Center and the SCA for all their help in coordinating this entire event. It is truly

remarkable what becomes possible when these organizations join forces behind a great movement. This year proved to be the community's largest ever attendance at the conference with over 170 community members attending in total. But it's not enough. AIPAC is an unbelievable organization that continues to be the primary driving force behind pro Israel political involvement in America. The work they do in order to assure that Congress continues to be a place of strong bi-partisan support for Israel is nothing short of incredible. It's an organization that many many more of us need to be involved with.

To find out how you can get involved with AIPAC and/or politics in general, please reach out to Eddie Esses at [eddiemesses@gmail.com](mailto:eddiemesses@gmail.com).



*Mr. Esses is a young professional who currently runs his own business focusing on retail and online sales. He graduated Baruch College in 2015 with a BBA in entrepreneurship.*



Left to Right - Eddie Esses, Congressman Ted Deutch, Joey Saban, and Florencia Saban





# FROM THE ARCHIVES

## PASSOVER: THE HOLIDAY OF OUR FREEDOM

Mr. Sam Cattan A"H

The first of our festivals is the Holiday of Passover in which God showed His might in Egypt for the sake of His preferred people. We were lowly slaves in the land of Egypt and our enslavers were desirous of destroying our existence as a Nation.

The Almighty did not forget His promise to Abraham and with his great power, redeemed us from our slavery in Egypt.

The observance of this Holiday has many aspects which are very well-known. The first of which is to recite the HAGGADAH, in which we tell the story of our miraculous delivery from Egypt to our children in order to establish for all generations to come the basis of our faith in God, and the reason of our existence as a free people. Only "Kosher for Passover" foods and beverages may be consumed or even present in our households.

As we came out of Egypt some 3,400 years ago, the sun of freedom broke out and shined upon us. It was truly the miracle of all time. The Talmud states that "in the month of Nissan we were redeemed and we will once again be redeemed in this same month." May the Almighty hasten that day.

Passover, the Festival of Massot, begins on 15 Nissan.



Mr. Catton A"H was named Ba'al HaSefarim (master of the Books) by Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu A"H when visiting his grandson Morris during his year studying in Israel. The name is a testament for his unceasing dedication to publishing books for his beloved community. He saw this as a duty to unite the community through unified prayer.



Title Page form a Hebrew-Arabic Haggadah in the Allepian Custom, printed in 1897



**שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ-יְהוָה**  
**אֶחָד:** לא יהיה לך  
 בלחש בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד:

**וְאֶהְיֶה לָּךְ** לא תשא **אֶת יְיָ-יְהוָה** **אֶל-יָדְךָ בְּכָל-**  
**לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:**  
 וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם  
 יִסְמְךָ מֵעַל-לְבָבְךָ: וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבִנְיָךְ וּדְבַרְתָּ בָּם  
 בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ  
 וּבְקוּמְךָ: וְקִשְׁרָתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ  
 לְטֶטֶם בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: לא תחמוד וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל-

בְּרֹאשִׁית בְּרֹא אֶל-יָם אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:  
 תָּהוּ וְכָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים  
 הָמָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי אוֹר וַיְהי  
 אֵת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר  
 אֶל-הַחֹשֶׁךְ לַאֲוֵר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה  
 יוֹם אֶחָד:

**אֲחֻזָּה** בְּנֵעַם פְּנִיךָ. אֵל נָשָׂא וְרָם. אִימָתִי אֲשַׁתְּחֹוה  
 הֵיכַל קָדְשִׁי. לָךְ אִישִׁי אֶקְרִיב עוֹלָה עֵת אֲצַא  
 חֲפָשִׁי. לְעַד לְעוֹלָם:

**נָאֵה** וּמְרוֹמָם. צוּה חֲסֹדְךָ עָלֵי יוֹמָם. כְּבִרְכַּת אֲבֹרְהָם.  
 בְּרַךְ לְעַבְדְּךָ נְחֹפֶר וְנִכְלָם:

**יְחִיד** אֵל וְנוֹרָא. הַבּוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירֵי חַי וּמְרָה. אֲשִׁיר לָךְ  
 רַחֲמָן. קָרֵב זְמָן. עִם לֹא אֶלְמָן. לְעַם גְּאֻמָּן:

**רָפָא** עִם גְּדֻהָם. וּפְדָה נָא לָהֶם מִשְׁכָּבִים. עֲגוּנִים בְּגִלוּתָם.  
 וּמִתְנַחֲמִים בְּתוֹרָתָם. הָשֵׁב לָהֶם עֲדִים. חַי וְקַיִם  
 כִּימֵי עוֹלָם:

**אֲתָה** אֵל שְׂדֵי אֲמֹר נָא לְצַרְתָּם דִּי. הֵם עִם יְדִידֵי רְצָה  
 לְשִׁירָם וּלְמַהֲלָלָם:

**לְמַעַן** אֲבוּתִי. סֶלַח נָא חֲטָאתִי. רָם כִּי אֵין כְּמוֹךָ. אֵל עוֹן  
 נוֹשָׂא וְצוֹר מַחֲסֶה. חֲסֵד עוֹשֶׂה. לָנוּ לְעוֹלָם: תָּם

אֲשַׁת-חַיִּל מִי יִמָּצָא. וְרַחֵק מִפְּנִינִים מְכָרָה: פֶּטַח בָּה לֵב  
 בַּעֲלָהּ. וְשִׁלָּל לֹא יִחָסֵר: גְּמֻלָּתָהּ טוֹב וְלֹא-רָע.  
 כֹּל יָמֵי חַיֶּיהָ: דְּרָשָׁה צָמֵר וּפְשָׁתִים. וּתַעֲשֶׂה בְּחֹפֶץ פִּסְיָה:  
 הַיְתָה כְּאֻנוּת סוֹחֵר. מִמְּרַחֵק תָּבִיא לַחֲמָה: וְתִקֵּם בְּעוֹד  
 לַיְלָה וְתִתֵּן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ. וְחֹק לְנִעְרֻתָּהּ: זְמָמָה שָׂדֶה  
 וְתִקְחֶהּ. מִפְּרִי כִפְיָה נִטְעָה כָּרֶם: חֲגִרָה בְּעוֹז מִתְנִיָּה.  
 וְתִצְמַח וְרוֹעַמָּה: טַעֲמָה כִּי טוֹב סִחְרָה. לֹא יִכְבֶּה בַּלִּילָה  
 גִּרָה: יְדִיָּה שְׁלֹחָה בְּפִישׁוֹר. וּכְפִיָּה תִמְכּוּ פֶלֶךְ: כִּפְיָה פֶרֶשָׁה  
 לְעֵנִי. וְיְדִיָּה שְׁלֹחָה לְאֻבִּיוֹן: לֹא תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשְׁלָג. כִּי  
 כָל-בֵּיתָה לְבָשׁ שָׁנִים: מִרְבָּדִים עֲשֻׁתָּה-לָּהּ. שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן  
 לְבוּשָׁה: נֹדַע בְּשָׁעָרִים בַּעֲלָהּ. בְּשִׁבְתָּהּ עִם זִקְנֵי אֶרֶץ:  
 סְדִין עֲשֻׁתָּה וְתִמְכֹּר. וְתִגְוֹר נִתְּנָה לְכַנְעָנִי: עוֹ-וְהִדָּר לְבוּשָׁה.  
 וְתִשְׁחַק לַיּוֹם אַחֲרוֹן: פִּיָּה פִתְחָה בְּחִקְמָה. וְתוֹרַת-חֲסֵד  
 עַל-לְשׁוֹנָה: צוּפִיָּה הִלִּיכוֹת בֵּיתָהּ. וְלֶחֶם עֲצָלוֹת לֹא תֵאָכַל:  
 קָמוּ בְנֵיהָ וַיִּאֲשְׁרוּהָ. בַּעֲלָהּ וַיְהַלְלָהּ: רַבּוֹת בְּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חֵיל.  
 וְאֵת עֲלִית עַל בְּלָגָה: שָׁקַר חֲחוֹן וְהֵבֵל הִיפִּי: אֲשֶׁה יִרְאֵת  
 יְיָ הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל: תִּגְוֹלָה מִפְּרִי יְדִיָּהּ. וַיִּהְלֹוהָ בְּשָׁעָרִים  
 מַעֲשִׂיָּה:

PRESERVING AND TRANSMITTING OUR SEPHARDIC EDUCATION,  
 LITURGY AND TRADITIONS FOR GENERATIONS





# JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

## MAIMONIDES 13 PRINCIPLES: 8 & 9

Rabbi Harold Sutton, Mr. Murray Mizrahi

The following series examines the 13 normative principles of Judaism formulated by Maimonides. The full text of all 13 principles can be found in Maimonides commentary to the Mishnah, in his introduction to the 10th chapter of Maskhet Sanhedrin- Perek Heleq, which discusses Olam Habah. This article will focus on the eight and ninth principles - **The divine origin of the torah and the immutability of the torah and misvot.**

1. The existence of the Creator.
2. G-d's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. G-d's noncorporeality .
4. G-d's eternity.
5. The exclusive worship of G-d.
6. The existence of prophecy.
7. The unique prophecy of Moses.
8. **The divine origin of the Torah.**
9. **The immutability of the Torah & Misvot.**
10. Divine omniscience and providence.
11. Reward and retribution.
12. The Messiah and the messianic era.
13. The Resurrection of the dead.

### The Eight Principle: The divine origin of the torah

היות התורה מן השמים. והוא שנאמין כי כל התורה הזאת הנתונה ע"י משה רבנו ע"ה, שהיא כולה מפי הגבורה. כלומר, שהגיעה אליו כולה מאת ה' יתברך, בעניין שנקרא על דרך השאלה "דיבור". ואין ידוע היאך הגיע, אלא היה משה ע"ה שהגיע לו, וכי הוא היה כמו סופר, שקוראים לו והוא כותב כל מאורעות הימים, הסיפורים והמצוות. ולפיכך נקרא "מחוקק". ואין הפרש בין "ובני חם כוש ומצרים" "ושם אשתו מהטבאל" "ותמנע היתה פלגש" ובין "אנכי ה' אלקיך" ו"שמע ישראל". כי הכל מפי הגבורה,

והכל תורת ה' תמימה טהורה וקדושה אמת.

וזה שאומר שכמו אלה הפסוקים והסיפורים משה סיפרם מדעתו, הנה הוא אצל חכמינו ונביאינו כופר, ומגלה פנים יותר מכל הכופרים. לפי שחשב שיש בתורה לב וקליפה, ושאלה דברי הימים והסיפורים אין תועלת בהם, ושהם מאת משה רבנו ע"ה.

וזהו עניין (סנהדרין ז') "אין תורה מן השמים". אמרו חכמים ז"ל, הוא המאמין שכל התורה מפי הגבורה, חוץ מן הפסוק הזה, שלא אמרו הקב"ה אלא משה מפי עצמו. וזה "כי דבר ה' בזה".

השם יתברך ויתעלה ממאמר הכופרים.

אלא: כל דיבור ודיבור מן התורה יש בהן חכמות ופלאים למי שמבין אותם, ולא הושגה תכלית חכמתם, ארוכה מארץ מידה ורחבה מגי' ים. ואין לאיש אלא להלך בעקבות דוד משיח לאלוקי יעקב, שהתפלל "גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך" (תהלים קיט).

וכמו כן פירוש התורה המקובל גם כן מפי הגבורה. וזה שאנו עושים היום מתבנית הסוכה ולולב ושופר וציצית ותפילין וזולתם, הוא בעצמו התבנית אשר אמר השם יתברך למשה, והוא אמר לנו והוא נאמן בשליחותו.

והמאמר המורה על היסוד הזה, הוא מה שנאמר (במדבר טז) "ויאמר משה בזאת תדעון כי ה' שלחני לעשות כל המעשים האלה כי לא מלבי"

Maimonides describes that the torah was transmitted to Moshe who exactly recorded every word. The Torah is "completely from the mouth of the Almighty ...in a manner metaphorically called speech... And [Moses] was like a scribe who was dictated to...". This is why the *Soferim* (lit. counters) throughout Jewish History so painstakingly developed a numerical system to preserve the authenticity and accuracy of our texts. The community of Aleppo had a special role in safeguarding of the *Keter Aam Soba* which was used as a standardized copy by communities the world over. This idea dovetails with the following principle that no one has the authority to add or detract from the torah:

## The Ninth Principle: The immutability of the torah and misvot

ההעתק, והוא כי התורה הזאת מועתקת מאת הבורא השם יתברך לא מזולתו. ועליה אין להוסיף וממנה אין לגרוע לא בתורה שבכתב ולא בתורה שבעל פה. שנאמר "לא תוסיף עליו ולא תגרע ממנו". וכבר ביארנו מה שצריך לבאר ביסוד זה בפתיחת זה החיבור.

in the masoretic tradition, which is far more intricate and exacting than any other known text- holy or not.

In deciphering true scholarship from illegitimate critique on the issues of authorship and post exilic dating, see Abraham SYahudah's *Language of the Pentateuch* and more recently Joshua Berman's *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient*

***"The community of Aleppo had a special role in safeguarding of the Keter Aam Soba which was used as a standardized copy by communities the world over."***

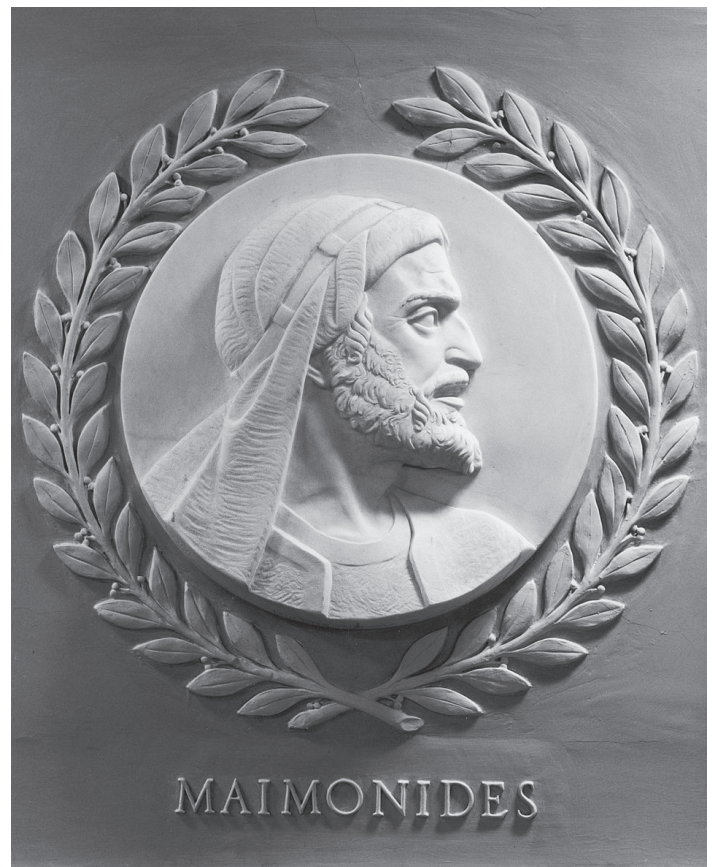
A college student recently asked the following question: "From where does the principle that God wrote the Torah emanate? Why is it a necessary principle of Jewish Faith?"

The Torah is the Constitution of the Jewish people- our statutory law which was divinely inspired through revelation by the historical events at Mount Sinai. As such, it cannot be detracted from or added to, only defined by our rabbinic legal system. The Torah stands for the Jewish people as the Eternal word of God.

While Maimonides includes in his 13 Principles the divine origins of the 5 Books, the threat of biblical criticism is actually much wider. The Torah provides for our value system. Dozens of revolutionary ideas are put forth in these books that changed the world forever. A 'critique' of the torah is often a thinly veiled attempt to undermine the value system encoded within it. In a world of moral relativity and pluralistic compromise, the principles and values set forth in the torah shine as a beacon of ethics and hope in an immoral world.

In content, the Torah's system of morality and justice are superior to all systems which preceded it. The attempt to delegitimize the form of the torah are often oblique attempts to find flaws in its superior content. Instead of debating the merits of the message, some attempt to focus on the form of the Torah. For example, many who believe in the world view of the New Testament find cause to detract from the Hebrew Scriptures by calling them "old". While beyond the scope of this short essay, much of the work of the late Rabbi Salomon D Sassoon A"H focused on demonstrating the multifaceted and intricate form of torah through number symbolism. This is but one example of incredibly complex form preserved

*Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism.* Many of this publication's readers who have been blessed with a Hebrew education should take confidence in their advantage



Bas relief of Maimonides in the U.S. House of Representatives

in understanding biblical texts in their original form. Often a yeshiva graduate who has read the Bible in its original form is more qualified to discuss the Bible than the so called "experts" who do not speak or read Hebrew.



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