

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

It has been a long and cold and rainy winter here in Jerusalem. Because it is a leap year. Spring in the Jewish calendar has been delayed almost until the beginning of April. Nevertheless, it has arrived with each warming season and flowering greenery. The holidays of the Jewish calendar undoubtedly were meant to be celebrated here in Israel, where the climate matches the mood of the individual holiday. Here in Holy Land, we do not have snow falling on the Succah or freezing temperatures to accompany the Pesach Seder. Because of this confluence of calendar and nature, the holidays here in Israel take on a different perspective, an additional layer, so to speak, then the celebration of the holidays in the Diaspora.

As we recite the words of rapture that compose the song of songs of Solomon, we, here in Israel, are struck by the detailed and exquisite description of the nature of the land that we see before our eyes. Part of the idea of the Exodus from Egypt is that we were not just taken out from a land of slavery and oppression but were also guaranteed to arrive at a particular destination -- a land of beauty, sustenance, and inspiration. In the first message to our teacher Moshe, God already informed him of the destination and mission that was to be entrusted in the later generations of Jews. It was not sufficient merely to be redeemed from slavery and remain in Egypt as free citizens treated with equality and fairness. That existence is still deemed to be exile, for the country and the land is not ours, and never will be. It was, rather, the goal of arriving in the land of Israel, settling it, creating there a Jewish national state, a Holy Temple, and having a civilization that would serve to be an example for others to emulate, a light unto the nations.

I think, therefore, that the natural weather patterns which visit our planet year in and year out, are meant to reinforce this idea that the Jewish national dream can only be fulfilled in the land of Israel. For only there, was the connection between the natural, almost predictable environment of weather coinciding with the great moral values and teachings of the Jewish holidays most apparent.

The coming of spring, of sunlight and warmth, also attests to the coming of freedom and a purposeful national existence. The Jewish people, so to speak, are

born again every Pesach. It is not only that nature is renewed in the holy land, but also that the holy people find new spurts of energy each year, and a glimmer of the great future that yet awaits us and all of humankind. Jews have observed Pesach meticulously in every climate and geographical location on this planet. But, as our sages pointed out in many of their commentaries to the Torah, the observance of the holidays, and even of the commandments themselves outside of the land of Israel, were only meant to remind us of their existence so that we would be able to observe them correctly when we would eventually be restored to our homeland and our national existence. The holiday of Pesach restores this fundamental value in Jewish life and history and propels us towards the great future that we are yet to experience. ©2022 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

The Missing Fifth

Many commentators, among them the Vilna Gaon, have drawn attention to the influence of the number four in connection with the Haggadah.

There are four fours:

1. The four questions
2. The four sons
3. The four cups of wine
4. The four expressions of redemption: 'I will

bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians and free you from their slavery. I will deliver you with a demonstration of My power and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to Me as a nation.' (Ex.6: 6-7).

It may be, though, that just as an X-ray can reveal an earlier painting beneath the surface of a later one, so beneath the surface of the Haggadah there is another pattern to be discerned. That is what I want to suggest in this chapter.

The first thing to note is that there is, in fact, another 'four' on the seder night, namely the four biblical verses whose exposition forms an important part of the Haggadah:

1. 'An Aramean tried to destroy my father...'
2. 'And the Egyptians ill-treated us and afflicted us...'

3. 'And we cried to the Lord, the G-d of our fathers...'

4. 'And the Lord brought us out of Egypt...' (Deut. 26:5-8)

There are, then, not four fours, but five.

In early editions of the Talmud tractate Pesachim (118a) there is a passage that perplexed the medieval commentators. It reads: 'Rabbi Tarfon says: over the fifth cup we recite the great Hallel.' The medieval commentators were puzzled by this because elsewhere the rabbinic literature speaks about four cups, not five. The Mishnah, for example, states that a poor person must be supplied with enough money to be able to buy four cups of wine. In both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds the discussion revolves around the assumption that there are four cups on seder night. How then are we to understand the statement of Rabbi Tarfon that there is a fifth cup?

Among the commentators three views emerged. The first was that of Rashi and the Tosafists. According to them, there are only four cups on the seder night, and it is forbidden to drink a fifth. The statement of Rabbi Tarfon must therefore be a misprint, and the texts of the Talmud should be amended accordingly.

The second was that of Maimonides. He holds that there is a fifth cup, but unlike the other four, it is optional rather than obligatory. The Mishnah which teaches that a poor person must be given enough money to buy four cupfuls of wine means that we must ensure that he has the opportunity to fulfil his obligation. It does not extend to the fifth cup which is permitted but not compulsory. Rabbi Tarfon's statement is to be understood to mean that those who wish to drink a fifth cup should do so during the recitation of the great Hallel.

The third view, that of Ravad of Posquières, a contemporary of Maimonides, is that one should drink a fifth cup. There is a difference in Jewish law between an obligation, *hovah*, and a religiously significant good deed, *mitzvah*. The first four cups are obligatory. The fifth is a *mitzvah*, meaning, not obligatory but still praiseworthy and not merely, as Maimonides taught, optional.

Thus there was a controversy over the fifth cup. Rashi said that we should not drink it; Maimonides that we may; Ravad that we should. What does one do, faced with this kind of disagreement? Jewish law tries wherever possible to propose a solution that pays respect to all views, especially when they are held by great halakhic authorities. The solution in the present case was simple. A fifth cup is poured (out of respect for Ravad and Maimonides) but not drunk (out of respect for Rashi).

When a disagreement occurs in the Talmud which is not resolved, the sages often used the word Teyku, 'Let it stand'. We believe that such

disagreements will be resolved in the time to come when Elijah arrives to announce the coming of the Messiah. One of his roles will be to rule on unresolved halakhic controversies. An allusion to this is to be found in the word Teyku itself, which was read as an abbreviation of Tishbi Yetaretz Kushyot Ve'ibbayot, 'The Tishbite, Elijah, will answer questions and difficulties.' This therefore is the history behind 'the cup of Elijah' – the cup we fill after the meal but do not drink. It represents the 'fifth cup' mentioned in the Talmud.

According to the Jerusalem Talmud, the reason we have four cups of wine is because of the four expressions of redemption in G-d's promise to Moses. How then could Rabbi Tarfon suggest that there are not four cups but five? The fascinating fact is that if we look at the biblical passage there are not four expressions of redemption but five. The passage continues: 'And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.' (Exodus 6: 8)

There is a further missing fifth. As mentioned above, during the course of reciting the Haggadah we expound four biblical verses, beginning with, 'An Aramean tried to destroy my father.' In biblical times, this was the declaration made by someone bringing first-fruits to Jerusalem. However, if we turn to the source we discover that there is a fifth verse to this passage: 'He brought us to this place [the land of Israel] and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey' (Deuteronomy. 26: 9). We do not recite or expound this verse at the seder table. But this strange since the Mishnah states explicitly, 'And one must expound the passage beginning, "An Aramean tried to destroy my father" until one has completed the whole passage.' In fact we do not complete the whole passage, despite the Mishnah's instruction.

So there are three 'missing fifths' – the fifth cup, the fifth expression of redemption, and the fifth verse. It is also clear why. All three refer to G-d not merely bringing the Jewish people out of Egypt but also bringing them into the land of Israel. The Haggadah as we now have it and as it evolved in rabbinic times is, in Maimonides words, 'the Haggadah as practised in the time of exile,' meaning, during the period of the Dispersion. The missing fifth represented the missing element in redemption. How could Jews celebrate arriving in the land of Israel when they were in exile? How could they drink the last cup of redemption when they had said at the beginning of the seder, 'This year slaves, next year free; this year here, next year in the land of Israel'?

The fifth cup – poured but not drunk – was like the cup broken at Jewish weddings. It was a symbol of incompleteness. It meant that as long as Jews were dispersed throughout the world, facing persecution and danger, they could not yet celebrate to the full. One

great sage of the twentieth century, the late Rabbi Menahem Kasher, argued that now that there is a State of Israel, many exiles have been ingathered and Jews have recovered their sovereignty and land, the fifth cup should be re-instated. That remains for the halakhic authorities to decide.

What, though, of the four questions and the four sons? There was a fifth question. The Mishnah states that a child should ask: 'On all other nights we eat meat that is cooked, boiled or roasted; but this night only roasted meat.' This text can still be found in the early manuscripts of the Haggadah discovered in the Cairo genizah. It refers to the time when the Temple stood and the food eaten at the seder night included the paschal offering, which was roasted. After the Temple was destroyed and the practice of eating a paschal lamb was discontinued, this question was dropped and another (about reclining) substituted.

Was there a fifth child? The late Lubavitcher Rebbe suggested that there is a fifth child on Pesach. The four children of the Haggadah are all present, sitting round the table. The fifth child is the one who is not there, the child lost through outmarriage and assimilation. Rabbinic tradition tells us that in Egypt, many Jews assimilated and did not want to leave. The Torah uses a phrase to describe the Israelites' departure from Egypt, *Vachamushim alu bnei Yisrael miMitzrayim* (Exodus 13: 18). This is normally translated as 'The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.' However Rashi, citing earlier authorities, suggests that *hamush* may not mean 'armed.' Instead it may be related to the word *hamesh*, 'five'. The sentence could therefore be translated as, 'Only a fifth of the Israelites left Egypt.'

The rest, he explains, perished in the plague of darkness. The plague itself was less an affliction of the Egyptians than a way of covering the shame of the Israelites, that so many of their number did not want to leave. The loss of Jews through assimilation has been an ongoing tragedy of Jewish history. How do we allude to it on seder night? By silence: the fifth child – the one who is not there.

So the beneath the surface of the Haggadah we find, not four fours, but five fives. In each case there is a missing fifth – a cup, an expression of deliverance, a verse, a question and a child. Each points to something incomplete in our present situation. In the half-century since the Holocaust the Jewish people has emerged from darkness to light. The State of Israel has come into being. The Hebrew language has been reborn. Jews have been brought to safety from the countries where they faced persecution. In the liberal democracies of the West Jews have gained freedom, and even prominence and affluence.

But Israel is not yet at peace. In the Diaspora assimilation continues apace. Many Jews are estranged from their people and their faith. Something

is missing from our celebration – the fifth cup, the fifth deliverance, the fifth verse, the fifth question and the fifth child. That is a measure of what is still to be achieved. We have not yet reached our destination. The missing fifths remind us of work still to be done, a journey not yet complete. *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The Festival of Passover is called by our sages "the time of our freedom" the celebration of our exodus from Egypt. It is also Biblically known as the "Festival of Matzot", the Holiday of Unleavened Bread.

The flat, rather tasteless dough that was never given a chance to ferment and rise, was the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Egypt. After a long day of servitude, they prepared the simplest fare possible and this was the same "bread" that our ancestors hurriedly prepared for their journey to freedom. Is it not strange that our liberty from enslavement by a mighty, totalitarian regime is symbolized by a half-baked pumpernickel flour and water interrupted from rising in its earliest stage of development?!

The Bible teaches that "You shall count for yourselves—from the morrow of the Festival day, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving—seven weeks, they shall be complete... you shall offer a new meal offering baked leavened loaves of bread" (Leviticus 23:15-17) to celebrate the Festival of the First Fruits, the Festival of Weeks.

Why, after all manner of leavening has been forbidden during Passover, do we celebrate this connected holiday (through the counting of each day from the second day of Passover continuing for a full seven weeks) with an offering of leavened, risen loaves of bread? And why is this culminating festival called "Weeks" (*Shavuot*), which connotes a period of counting rather than an achievement worthy of a significant holiday?

One final question; on Passover we read the magnificent Song of Songs, the love song between Shlomo and Shulamit, the shepherd and the shepherdess, God and Historic Israel. But this is not a poem of the lover seeking his beloved, a passionate chase culminating in conquest of the prize. It is rather a search, a hide-and-seek quest for love and unity which is constantly elusive. At the moment that the beloved finally opens the door, the lover has slipped away and gone. The very final verse cries out, "Flee, my beloved, and appear to be like a gazelle or a young hart as you upon the mountains of spices."

The answer to all three of our questions lies in

the distinction between the Western mentality and the Jewish mind-set. Western culture measures everything by the bottom line, the result of the game: “did you win or did you lose?!” The ancient world, and especially Jewish teaching, is more interested in the method, the search for meaning, how you played the game. Indeed, the Chinese religion is called Tao, the Way, the Indian one is called Dharma, the Path, and Judaism speaks of halakha, walking or progressing on the road.

Hence Passover is only the beginning of the process, the road to redemption, which takes us out of Egyptian enslavement, but only brings us as far as the arid desert. We count seven weeks paralleling the seven sabbatical years leading up to the Jubilee; but the actual Festival itself—replete with the vision of Israel rooted on her land, bringing first fruits to the Holy Temple, welcoming even the Moabite Ruth into the Jewish fold as the ultimate achievement of universal redemption—is called the Festival of Weeks after the process which will get us there, overseeing the development from half-baked dough to the fully risen loaves of bread. During the last five thousand years, the end-game, the actual redemption, has eluded us—but that is hardly the real point. It is the weeks of preparation, the arduous expectation and the paving of the way, which makes the Festival of Weeks the significant piece.

That is the true meaning behind Song of Songs. Love is not the act of conquest, the achievement of unity; it is the search for unity, and the closeness between the two which it engenders, not the obliteration of the one into the other which absolute unity suggests.

And so, the truest commandment is not to effectuate the Messianic Age, but rather that we await its arrival and prepare the road for its coming. This preparation for the Messiah was the most important aspect of the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, ztz”l. He taught the necessity of preparing ourselves for the coming of the Messiah rather than the identification of who it may be. The State of Israel is not Redemption Realized, not even to the most ardent religious Zionist; it is merely the “beginning of the sprouting of the redemption,” a work-in-progress which will hopefully pave the way towards our worthiness to be redeemed.

Talmid Hakham, the Hebrew phrase for a Talmudic Scholar, does not mean “wise individual,” rather it means a student of the wise, a good Jew who aspires to the goal of wisdom. The greater a person’s wisdom, the greater is their understanding that they have not yet achieved complete wisdom. What counts is their aspiration, as the achievement is beyond the grasp of mortal humans.

Hence, especially during the Passover Seder, the questions are more important than the answers; indeed, the author of the Haggadah typesets the four children by the quality – and music – of their questions.

“When the one Great Scorer will place a grade next to your name, He will mark not whether you won or lost, but how you played the game.” ©2022 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"This day shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it as a festival to Hashem throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time.” (Shmos 12:14) Every year we have our Pesach Seder, and it recalls the miraculous salvation and redemption of the Jewish People from Egypt. We know that it was not merely a physical salvation, but an emotional, psychological, and spiritual one as well. Hashem displayed miracles and wonders that showed His mastery over the Universe and the Children of Israel became the Jewish nation.

At the Seder, we recline as free men and we revel in our liberty. We tell and retell the stories so that everyone feels like they’re living through it again. Our Seder, though we don’t have the korban Pesach now, is supposed to remind us of the one we had in Egypt, on the eve of the Exodus.

But if we look at that original Seder, do we see the freedom? Do we find the calm, luxurious atmosphere of a regal feast? Not at all.

We find that they had to first spread the blood on the doorposts and lintel as a protection. They had to eat it with their shoes on, their belts tightened, and ready to leave at a moment’s notice. They couldn’t go out of their homes and they were not free to eat the korban as they saw fit. There were very specific guidelines to how it had to be eaten. All in all, it seems to be a very different Seder from what we experience now. However, that’s only when your definition of freedom is the ability to do what you want.

Instead, if we consider freedom the ability to do what we must, and what we ought, then the message of the first Seder is very clear. Why were the Jews being redeemed? Was it so they could stop slaving and sit in an easy chair and live the “good life”? To just rest and relax, eat and drink, and follow their whims? Not at all!

We were redeemed for a purpose. We were supposed to be girded and ready to march ahead. Ready to dwell under Hashem’s protection and follow His orders. Our freedom lies in not being bullied by society to have to conform to its ideas of success or to accept its values as our own.

We understand that the Seder we relive and the memories we recall each year are to remind us that we all have a higher calling in life; that we are on our way to meet our destiny as the People of Hashem, and as we do that, all our other masters fall away, and we become again, as we did when we left Egypt, servants of Hashem alone.

Before the days when kids were taught Mah

Nishtana in school, parents used to do unusual things at the Seder to get children to ask questions. One Seder night when the Imrei Emes was a little boy, his father, the Sfas Emes of Gur, started his Seder and waited expectantly for his young son to start inquiring about odd happenings. However, the boy sat quietly without the slightest hint of a puzzled look on his face. The Sfas Emes did all sorts of strange things in order to get the boy to ask, but to no avail.

Finally, the Sfas Emes asked his son if he noticed anything different about that night's meal. Avraham Mordechai said that of course he did. "Then why," asked the concerned Sfas Emes, "did you not seem alarmed and ask any questions?"

The youth answered with pure innocence, "Because I know my father is smart and whatever he does he has a very good reason for doing. Why should I be the slightest bit disturbed?" ©2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

At first glance, Chad Gadya is a kind of light hearted song whose sole purpose is to provide an entertaining ending to the seder. Yet, in order to truly understand its meaning an analysis of the structure of the seder is required.

In general terms, the seder is divided into two parts. The first half which precedes the seder meal deals with the past—a retelling and reenactment of the Exodus from Egypt. The second half, which follows the seder meal, deals with the future—words of praise and song that complete redemption come soon.

It is because of this separation that we break the matza at the onset of the seder. Matzo is the symbol of redemption. One half remains on the table as we recount the past event, and the second half-- not coincidentally the larger half representing the hope of the greater redemption which is yet to come—is set aside to be eaten at the end of the meal, the section that looks toward the future.

If you take a look at most haggadahs, the bulk of commentary focuses on the first half of the seder, and there is little discussion about the last half. But this section deserves just as much attention. It begins with the eating of the afikoman, that second half of matza. This part of the seder is called tzafun. Tzafun literally means hidden, and is always associated with redemption whose time is unknown to us. The word tzafun sounds like tzafon which means north. It is said that the Messiah will come from the north.

Tzafun is followed by the Grace After Meals, the prayer of thanksgiving for food eaten during the main course. This prayer, that we recite after each meal during the year, interestingly includes the prayer that God send to us Elijah the Prophet who announces the coming of the Messiah.

We emphasize Elijah's presence though at the seder immediately after the Grace, when we open the door for Elijah, symbolic of our yearning for the Messiah. For the Messiah to arrive, we cannot sit on our hands—we have to do our share and open the door.

What follows is the Hallel. Appropriately, the first two paragraphs of the Hallel, which deal with redemption from Egypt, are recited prior to the meal. The last paragraphs deal with the future, the hope that God will bless us (Ye-Varech Et Beit Yisrael) with redemption and hope. Thus, these paragraphs are recited after the seder meal.

And after reciting these words, we begin reciting the Greater Hallel. This Great Hallel contains prayers of hope that all of humankind will be redeemed. Included in this set of prayers is the famous Nishmat Kol Chai - may the soul of all living beings bless you O Lord.

With this we drink wine, celebrating the hope of future redemption just as we drank wine after telling the Passover story before the meal.

The seder has now officially come to an end as the statement - Chasal Siddur Pesach is read. But as in all powerful experiences, a feeling of exhilaration remains. In the case of the seder, this feeling is expressed through an ultimate encounter with God. The encounter, called Nirtzah, which means may God hear our words favorably, includes songs that allow our hearts and souls to soar heavenward.

One such song is Va-yehi Ba-chatzi Ha-laylah, literally and it was in the middle of the night. Night is the symbol of exile. The middle of the night represents the exile of the exile, the deepest darkness. As we sing these words, we're certain that somehow, no matter how dark, light will come. We continue with Adir Hu which speaks of the hope that God rebuild the Temple speedily. We move on with the famous Echad Mi Yodei'a which we proclaim some fundamentals of faith including the Oneness of God, so crucially necessary for redemption.

And here we conclude with the Chad Gadya, a playful story which demonstrates how, in the long chain of natural events, God prevails. The goat is devoured by the cat and the cat is bitten by the dog and the dog is slain by the stick and the stick is consumed by fire, and the fire is extinguished by water which is drunk by the ox, which is slaughtered by the slaughterer whose life is taken by the angel of death. But in the end, it is God who overcomes that angel.

One wonders, why is this deep message written in metaphor. It may be to teach that so much in Jewish history cannot be understood as it occurs, it can only be deciphered in hindsight. And it may be that the Chad Gadya is written playfully and humorously to teach that to survive against the odds requires the ability to laugh. Our very existence is difficult to believe, and in that sense almost funny.

As we sit down to the seder this year, we will be focusing not only on past redemption, but on the hope for future redemption. And we will sing Chad Gadya, that funny little song to remind us to laugh. The Chad Gadya, the song written in metaphors to remind us that even though we don't understand—one day we will. ©2022 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

As we sit down on Pesach (Passover) night at the Seder, we make a transition that we wouldn't realize unless we think about it. All day we prepare the food, making sure we don't have Chametz (leavened bread), making sure we have all the Marror (bitter plants) and eggs ready. The unleavened bread is to remind us that we're still poor, the Marror to remind us of the past exile, and the eggs dipped in salt to remind us that we're still in exile. Then, we start the Seder, and the first thing we say is how this is the "time of our freedom". We continue by telling the story of how we were freed, and we even act like we're kings by leaning when we sit! Are we slaves, or are we free kings?

R' Yerucham of Mir explains that the "time of our freedom" means that not only was it when we were freed from slavery many years ago, but it's the time when we can do the same today. What does that mean? Aren't we free? And if we're not, how does Pesach 'free' us? That's where Pesach, Matzah and Marror come in. Those are the 3 things that remind us, especially when we're feeling like kings, that we were slaves, and that we're still in bitter surroundings. If you think about it, because we were saved from slavery by G-d, we are now indebted to Him, which means that we're still not, and never will be, truly free. Pesach teaches us that "freedom" used just for the sake of being "free" is "dumb", and that it's only worth something when we use that freedom to do something good, and be constructive with our lives. ©2016 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI ARI WEISS AND YITZ WEISS

No More Questions

The Maggid section of our seder begins with the traditional asking of the four questions, or the Ma Nishtanah. The source of the Ma Nishtanah is a Mishna in Tractate Pesachim,¹ which lists for us the questions with few variations from the text that we use today. The Mishna explains (according to Rashi, an early medieval commentator) that after the second cup of wine is poured, the child should begin to ask on his

own why there is a deviation from the norm and why the meal hasn't yet begun. However, if the child doesn't understand enough to ask, the father must teach him to ask the questions included in the Ma Nishtanah.

The Mishna adds in a line towards the end which states, "according to the son's understanding, the father should teach him." According to the Mishna, the son is not supposed to ask all of the four questions. Instead, only the question(s) that reflect the child's "understanding" should be taught and asked. This explains a common question among children who first learn their Ma Nishtanah; It seems that there is only one question, "why is this night different?" followed by four statements of why the night is different. However, according to the Mishna, it is almost as if there are four questions of "why is this night different?" and one need only "check off" the appropriate section that fits his or her perception of the difference.

The Hagadah, in speaking of four "sons," teaches us some important lessons about how to relate to our children and to each other. The four "sons" are really four different personalities. There is a wonderful book called *Who Do You Think You Are Anyway* by Dr. Robert Rohm which investigates personalities and determines that there are four basic personality types. Most people are actually a blend of all four types.²

The "D" type personality is an individual who is dominant, domineering, directed and driven. This person is outgoing and task oriented - one who is less concerned with the feelings of others he must work with (or through!) than in completing the job at hand. The "D" leads - and lets you know he is in charge.

The "I" type personality is an individual who is inspiring, influential and impulsive. This person is outgoing and people oriented - one who is more concerned with how others see him (his image) than with focusing on tasks or accuracy. The "I" isn't just the life of the party - he takes the party with him wherever he goes!

The "S" type personality is an individual who is soft-spoken, steady, supportive and stable. This person is reserved and people oriented - one who is more focused on being a part of the "team" and doing his share. He wants to be well liked by everyone and although not very driven, he is the type to stick something out and see it through to the end.

The "C" type personality is an individual who is competent, cautious and careful. This person is reserved and task oriented. He is most concerned with accuracy and correctness - he's never wrong!

Our chacham, the wise son, seems to fall into the category of the "C" type personality. He's an individual who is very interested in the "nitty-gritty" - he wants all the facts and figures. We are taught to

² For a more in depth discussion on this topic the book is available from Personality Insights, Inc. at 770-509-7113.

¹ 10:4

respond in kind - tell him all the intricacies of the seder even to the final detail of the afikoman.

The rasha, the wicked son, seems to have a “D” type personality. The rasha is arrogant and obnoxious - “what does this service mean to *you?*” Our rabbis are teaching us that to get through to someone who has such a strong personality sometimes you have to “punch him in the teeth” (i.e. get his attention) before he will listen.

The tam, the simple son, personifies the “I” type personality. He is an individual with a flair for the dramatic. The Hagadah tells us that to explain the Pesach story to a child with an “I” personality we must weave a graphic, flowery recount of how we were slaves in Egypt and Hashem redeemed us with lightning, thunder, clouds and pillars of fire!

The sh’eyno yodeah lishol, the child who doesn’t know how to ask a question is our “S” personality. He is shy, timid and content to remain in the background just watching and helping others enjoy the seder. To him the Hagadah says “at p’tach lo” you must initiate the dialogue. Not every child will ask questions - even if he doesn’t ask we need to be sure he learns of his heritage.

From our understanding of the Mishna, we begin to understand the statement of the Sfas Emes, a great chassidic leader in Poland in the beginning of the twentieth century, that each question of the Ma Nishtanah parallels one of the four sons.

The first question, “on all other nights we eat chametz (leavened bread) and matzah; on this night only matzah”, clearly belongs to the chacham. After all, the only difference between chametz and matzah is literally seconds. At 17 minutes 59 seconds it’s matzah, and at 18 minutes, it’s chametz. The wise son, who notices and asks about details, asks what difference a few seconds can make.

The “wicked” son, who asks in a negative, belligerent tone, is the one who asks, “on all other nights we eat any vegetable; on this night only bitter herbs.” His question is, “why do we have to go through this all again?” Or “why can’t we eat good tasting vegetables like we always do?”

The “simple” son relates to new *actions*. He has no interest in the philosophical difference between chametz and matzah, or why we *don’t* do something. When he sees an obligation to do something new such as dipping, he asks, “on all other nights we don’t have to dip even once; on this night we are obligated to dip twice?”

The sh’eyno yodeah lishol, though, logically shouldn’t have a question. After all, he’s defined as the son who doesn’t ask. The truth is that some Rishonim³ (medieval Talmud commentators) don’t list a fourth question. We can explain the question of reclining as having to do with the last son, in that reclining doesn’t

involve any extra action or impetus. The question of the last son reflects his lack of motivation to do or ask about anything other than what he is always doing. Specifically, sitting. However, to understand the question of the last son more fully, we need to examine the four sons on a deeper level.

Rav Nachman from Braslav, the great chassidic rabbi and founder of Braslav chassidut, explains the four sons in a different light. Normally we view the wise son as the “good” son, the wicked son as the “bad” son, the tam as “stupid” and the last son as “really stupid.” Rav Nachman explains the sons a bit differently. The chacham, he says, is not wise but an intellectual. He constantly feels the need to probe deeper and doesn’t feel satisfied with the simple answer. The question of the chacham exemplifies his constant search for deeper understanding of the mitzvah. The answer to the chacham is “ain maftirin achar haPesach afikoman” - there is a time when one must stop. In this case, one must understand that there is a time when one cannot probe any deeper, and the rest must be accepted on faith. If the chacham does not understand that, then he may easily become a rasha.

The rasha, like the chacham, is an intellectual. This explains why the questions of both are so similar. The only difference between the chacham and the rasha is that the rasha probes deeper to find a way to disprove the Torah. The chacham looks for greater understanding. In actuality, the chacham and the rasha are really very close to each other and there is but a fine difference between them.

The tam is actually the greatest of the sons. According to Rav Nachman, tam doesn’t mean “simple” but “perfect” (tamim). The question of the tam is that of complete faith - “what is this?” The tam has what the chacham hasn’t achieved yet - complete, simple faith.

This explains a unusual gemara in Megillah⁴ which says that Queen Esther’s other name was Hadassah, because “Tzadikim (righteous people) are called hadassim (myrtle branches).” Why in the world would tzadikim be likened to a myrtle? Well, the myrtle is one of the four species taken during the holiday of Succot, and each of the species has its own special significance. The etrog has a sweet smell and taste, symbolizing a Jew who knows the reasons for the mitzvot and therefore does them. The lulav has a taste but no smell, symbolizing the Jew who knows the reasons but chooses not to do the mitzvot. The hadas has smell but no taste, symbolizing the Jew who doesn’t know the reasons for the mitzvot, yet does them anyway, and the aravah, with no taste nor smell, is the Jew who neither knows nor does the mitzvot. Isn’t it logical that the etrog is the chacham, the lulav is the rasha, the aravah is the sh’eyno yodeah lishol and the hadas is the tam? Based on the explanation of Rav

³ The Rosh, for example.

⁴ 13a

Nachman, it is obvious that the tzadik is the embodiment of the faith of the tam, shown in the hadas.

But what about the sh'eyno yodeah lishol? To better understand Rav Nachman's explanation, let's first go back to our Hagadah.

In the Maggid section, we focus on four key verses that describe our exile and redemption from Egypt. In fact, these verses from the parsha of bikkurim⁵ are the prototype for all exiles and redemptions that ever occurred and will occur to the Jewish people. The first of the steps is "Vayered Mitzrayma...." We went down to Egypt - for a good reason, mind you - and became great and successful there. The second step was "Vayareiu otanu haMitzrim vayaanunu...." We were afflicted in galut, making the exile suddenly uncomfortable. The third step is "Vanitzak el Hashem...." We finally cry out and pray to Hashem to save us until the fourth stage occurs, "Vayotzienu Hashem...." - Hashem saves us.

In truth, every galut and geula is the same - we go into galut for what seems like a good reason, the galut turns against us, we finally realize that we can't handle it ourselves and we need Hashem's help, at which time we daven and Hashem redeems us. Almost sounds simple.

But actually, these are our four sons at work again. The chacham understands that he can be as self-sufficient and successful in galut as he is in geula - sometimes even more so. (After all, what's the difference between chametz and matzah? Only a few seconds? Why should that matter?) He therefore goes out to galut, as the first posuk of Maggid indicates and he becomes very successful. That's why we answer the chacham with the halachot of Pesach. He needs to know the laws of what to do to remain Jewish in galut and not become a rasha.

The rasha feels the brunt of the exile, and how the galut turns against the Jews, as told by the second posuk. His shortcoming is that he blames it on his Yiddishkeit and Hashem. (Why does Hashem make us eat these bitter vegetables, anyway? Until now we could eat any type of vegetable.) He will stay in this

phase until he can reach the level of the tam. That's why we answer the rasha "if you had been there, you wouldn't have been redeemed."

The tam is the one that has the simple faith to look to Hashem and daven for help which begins the redemption process. This is why we answer



the tam, "with a strong hand Hashem saved us from Egypt." It's just a matter of time, then, until the redemption. In truth, the last two questions of Ma Nishtanah focus on freedom (dipping) and redemption (reclining) while the first two focus on exile (matzah) and bitterness (marror).

Now we understand the last son. It isn't that he doesn't know how to ask a question. It's that he has no more questions to ask. His phase in the four verses is that of redemption. When you see Hashem split the sea in front of you, I imagine there is little room left for doubt. That is why the fourth son has no questions. That is also why his is to the question of reclining, which is an expression of redemption and freedom. The last son just sits back, reclines and sees the redemption from Hashem. Rav Nachman writes that the last son refers to Yishmael who did teshuva before he died. As Rav Nachman explains, someone who does complete teshuva is as though he has no more questions to ask.

The four stages of galut and geula as outlined in the Maggid have with them the four languages of redemption. Each son, just like he has his own question, has his own method of redemption. The chacham, who is doing well in galut, needs "vehotzaiti" - "I will take you out." Just as a person has the ability to walk out of a room on his own, so too the chacham has the ability to walk out of galut if he so chooses. The next lashon, "vehitzalti" - "I will save you" belongs to the rasha, who is definitely in need of saving. Just as one who needs to be saved can't protect himself against his oppressors, so too the rasha who is feeling the brunt of the galut needs to be "saved" by Hashem. The tam, though, has merited being "redeemed" - "vegaalti." He cried out to Hashem and thereby deemed himself worthy of a redemption. Finally the last son, the last stage, who has lived to see the final redemption, watches as Hashem "takes" - "velakachti" and makes us His nation once more.

But where do we stand? At what stage are we? Perhaps we need to ask ourselves this question before we recite the Ma Nishtanah. Which question is ours? Do we notice the difference between chametz and matzah - the difference between exile and redemption - even if the distinction now may seem slight? Maybe we can only see the bitter herbs that we're commanded to eat, and long for regular vegetables. Possibly though, we can see the green vegetable that is dipped into the salt water of our tears - and is then taken out and enjoyed. We can see how the bitter herbs of our suffering are dipped into the cooling charoset - maybe the mortar of our future bais hamikdash. Hopefully we will merit sitting back and witnessing the final redemption G-d willing, as we mimic on Pesach with our reclining. © 1998 by Rabbi Ari and Yitz Weiss. This dvar torah was developed during the course of several Pesach seders around the table of Rabbi Mordechai & D'vorah Weiss, now of Efrat.

⁵ Devarim 26 (specifically verses 5-8)