

Outline of the Pesach Haggadah

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Ohr HaTorah Synagogue

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In the Torah we are told in several places to “tell your child” the story of Passover (Exodus 12:26, 13:8, 13:14 and Deuteronomy 6:20). We get the word “Haggadah” from this commandment, “*ve-higad'ta le-vincha*” “you shall tell your child” (Exodus 13:14). “Haggadah” means “Telling.”

In the Torah, we are not told how to tell the story. We assume the parent (the one telling the story) is telling the not-yet-learned child the story told in the book of Exodus 1-16. Anyone leading a Passover Seder should be familiar with the first sixteen chapters of the book of Exodus.

It is not until the time of the Mishna (the recitation of Jewish law compiled about 220 C.E.) that we have detailed instructions on how to perform the commandment of “The Telling.” We find these detailed instructions in the Mishna, tractate Pesachim (Passover), chapter 10, summarized below.

In preparation for studying this outline, first I will share some of the essential points of various biblical texts that the authors of the Mishna assume that the “Teller” already now.

A. Biblical

Exodus 12:1-10:

In this text, the first Pesach is established. This is called “Pesach d’Mitzrayim,” “The Pesach of Egypt.” The Passover of Egypt happened only once – when the people of Israel were preparing to escape from Egyptian bondage. In this biblical text about the first Passover “Seder”, we are told that lamb would be taken on the 10th of Nisan, slaughtered at dusk on the 14th, and then eaten in all the households that night, the 15th of Nisan (the Hebrew day begins at sunset). We are also told that the blood of the lamb would be put on the doorposts and the lintels of the dwelling place. The lamb would be roasted and eaten entirely with matzot and bitter herbs (maror). Nothing of the lamb should remain until morning.

Exodus 12.11-20

In this biblical text, the observances of Pesach are outlined, as well as the reason-- because God passed over (*pasach*) the houses of the Israelites. This text is where we get the word "Passover" In Ex. 12.14 we find established the memorial function of Pesach, as a reminder for the generations, "le-dorot." The "Pesach of the Generations," including our own today, is therefore called "Pesach le-Dorot."

Exodus 12:21-51

In this text, Moses orders the observance of Pesach, and the story of the actual Exodus is told: the last plague, the striking of the first born (which is described in verses 29-33) and the leaving in haste before the dough could rise. Further commandments connected with the observance are given: no alien may eat of the paschal sacrifice, it may not be eaten in places outside the house, and not to break the bones of the paschal offering.

Exodus 13:1-16

This section contains commandment to sanctify all first born to God, more laws of Pesach, and one of the four commandments to "tell your son" (*ve-higad'ta le-vinkha*). In this version of that commandment, the parent tells the child, "It is because of what Adonai did for me when I came out of Egypt." We are taught this commandment should be "a sign upon our hands and frontlet between our eyes," and this law of Adonai should be in always be in our mouths. We are told that laws should be kept when we come into the land of Canaan.

Exodus 14-15

In these chapters, we have the narrative of the parting of the Sea of Reeds in chapter 14, and then a poetic recitation of that event in chapter 15, called the Song at the Sea, Shirat HaYam.

Deuteronomy 26:5-11

This biblical section is a succinct summary of Israelite history, which was to be recounted before the first fruits of the land would be enjoyed. The history begins with the words, "*Arami oved avi*," "My father was a wandering Aramean." Before the Hebrew Bible was divided in chapters and verses in the 1300's, sections of the Bible were known by a significant phrase.

Isaiah 52.12:

This entire chapter of the book of Isaiah is messianic, and verse 12 contains a rather obscure reference back to the Exodus. When we come back from Babylonia, meaning exile, we will not leave in "*hipazon*" (in great haste, as we did in the Exodus from Egypt, see Exodus 12.11). In the messianic times, all will be redeemed and not in haste.

Thus, we have three Pesachim set up:

Pesach d'Mitzrayim (when we came from Egypt – everyone who wanted out, got out),

Pesach le-Dorot (Pesach observed throughout the generations, including ourselves – not everyone is free)

and the messianic Pesach, **Pesach le-atid lavo** (Pesach of the coming future), when everyone will be free.

Other related texts to study: Ex. 23.15, where the holiday is referred to as Hag Ha-Matzot (The Festival of Unleavened Bread), also Ex. 34.18 and 25, Lev. 23:5-8, Deuteronomy 16:1-8, Joshua 5:1-11, II Kings 23:21-23, Ezekiel 45:21-24, Ezra 6:19-22, II Chronicles 30:1-5, 13-22, 35:1-19.



B. Rabbinic:

The core source for the Haggadah in rabbinic literature is Mishna Pesachim 10. The laws of the Seder are set forth. Several guidelines are given for the telling. This is a summary:

- a. The first cup of wine, the Kiddush, is poured, the blessings are recited and the wine is drunk. Vegetables are brought out. The *chazeret* (meaning here horseradish) is dipped in water or vinegar before the “sauce of the bread” (*parperet ha-pat*) – probably meaning the mixture of horseradish and charoset.
- b. Then the host sets out matzah, *chazeret* (horseradish), charoset and two cooked dishes. There is a dispute whether charoset (nowadays a mixture of that is supposed to resemble mortar) is a mitzvah. In times when the temple still stood, the priests would have brought out the paschal sacrifice. The “two cooked dishes” seem to replace the roasted lamb, the focus of Exodus 12:1-10.
- c. We see that the contents of a Seder plate are suggested, though the Mishnah makes no mention of a Seder plate:
 1. Zero’ah - The unbroken bone (reminding of the paschal sacrifice),
 2. Matzah (later tradition; three)
 3. Maror (horseradish)
 4. Chazeret (in the Mishnah, the same as maror, but came to mean lettuce) (on most plates, maror (horseradish) and chazeret are put together).

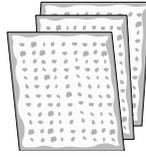
5. Salt water for the dipping
 6. Karpas (parsley or celery, for dipping, probably so you don't have to dip the horseradish)
 7. The egg, representing the two cooked dishes (we don't know why).
 8. (Modern tradition places other symbolic items - an orange, symbolizing inclusion of women in Jewish leadership roles, a toy frog, a slinky, an awl, a can of dust-buster or WD-40 (traditions differ), a selfie-stick, earpods, etc.
- d. The Mishna tells us that the second cup of wine is poured, and here "the son should ask the father," but "if the child does not have enough knowledge (*da'at*) to ask, the father teaches him "with the traditional Four Questions. In the Mishnah, the Four Questions are taught by the father to the son as examples of questions. A key value is taught here: the parent teaching the child how to ask questions.
 - e. Now we have directions on how to tell the story. First, the Mishna directs us to tell the story by beginning with degradation (*g'nut*) and ending with glory (*shevah*). In other words, the arc of the story should be going from a bad place to a better place. We will see that there are two different ways of telling the story from degradation to glory.
 - f. The second way we tell the story is to expound (*derash*) upon the section of the Torah called "Arami Oved Avi," "My father was a wandering Aramean" (Deut. 26:5-11). The "wandering Aramean" refers to Abraham. This section of the Torah is a concise telling of Israelite history, focusing on the Exodus from Egypt
 - g. The third way to tell the story is to explain the three main symbols of the Passover seder: Pesach (the sacrificial lamb), Matza (unleavened bread) and Maror (bitter herbs).
 - e. The fourth instruction is to regard ourselves as having personally come out of Egypt. This instruction is not actually a way to tell the story, but rather refers to an inner state of mind.
 - f. The Mishna then tell us to praise God for bringing us from bondage to freedom, sorrow to gladness, from mourning to a great Festival, from darkness to great light, from servitude to redemption.

All this seems to derive from the commandment to "*ve-higad'ta l'vinkha*" "tell thy son," from which the term "haggadah" "telling" is derived. The Seder, then helps one fulfill the commandment of the Telling.

It is clear that the telling in the Mishah was oral - no set script was used. One only had to follow the guidelines. As time went on, The Telling turned into "the Haggadah", the script of the Haggaday.

The Telling is a mitzvah; it is not only to impart information. The Telling, like all mitzvot, brings us closer to God and has a transformative effect upon us.

There is much discussion of The Telling (Haggdah) in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesachim Chapter 10, pages 99b -121b



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The Order of the Telling (The Seder)

In the outline that follows, I present the theory that there are actually two “meals” – a spiritual one and a bodily meal. This theory helps us understand some of the traditions in the telling of the story. The spiritual meal contains instructions for fulfilling the general outline presented in the Mishna:

1. Tell the story from degradation to praiseworthiness, with two versions: slavery to freedom, and idol worshipping to worshipping one God.
2. Expound on Deuteronomy 26:5-11
3. Explain the three main symbols.
4. To see yourself as having personally come out of Egypt.

The main points of the Seder are usually broken down into 15 sections, with Maggid (from the word Haggadah), The Telling, being the longest. Here are the 15 sections, and what follow is a commentary on each section:

- | | |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1. Kadesh | 9. Maror |
| 2. Urchatz | 10. Korech |
| 3. Karpas | 11. Shulchan Orech |
| 4. Yachatz | 12. Tzafun |
| 5. Maggid | 13. Barech |
| 6. Rachtza | 14. Hallel |
| 7. Motzi | 15. Nirtzah |
| 8. Matzah | |

Outline of the Passover Seder

I. KADDESH: The first cup of wine is the regular kiddush of the holiday. The cups of wine are also seen in the Talmud as symbolic of the four (perhaps five) aspects of redemption suggested in Exodus 6:6-7. For wine as a symbol of redemption, see Psalms 116.13. The tradition leaves as unresolved whether we should have four or five ritual cups of wine.

II. U-REHATZ: This is the washing of the hands to prepare for the eating of the karpas, the greens. We say no blessing here, because this washing does not precede a formal meal, which begins with a blessing over bread. It rather hearkens back to the time of the Temple when one had to wash the hands before touching any produce dipped in water.

Going along with the idea that there is a “spiritual meal” embedded in the Telling, it seems that the Sages wanted us to engage in an act which necessitated washing of hands, just as a traditional Jew does before any meal. This washing of hands prepares us for the spiritual meal, the Telling, as opposed to the bodily meal which follows. Before that actual meal, we do another washing of hands, that time with a blessing.

III. KARPAS: The green vegetable is a symbol of spring and rebirth, but it also allows us to engage in the “spiritual washing” mentioned above. We make sure not to eat enough of a vegetable to require us to say a blessing after.

IV. YAHATZ: Breaking the middle matzah. Half the middle matzah is retained at the table, and the other half of the middle matzah is hidden somewhere, so that the children can go looking for it.

There are many interpretations of the three matzahs. Here is my preferred: The bottom Matzah is Pesach d’Mitzrayim, where redemption was complete for those who wanted it. All who wanted out got out.

The top Matzah is Pesach le-Atid Lavo, The Pesach of the (Messianic) Future, where redemption will be complete for all in the Messianic times. The bottom and top matzahs remain whole.

The middle Matza is Le-Dorot, the Passover of the generations, including ourselves, where redemption is not whole. Hence, we break the middle matzah, symbolizing the brokenness of our world.

Half of the middle matzah is hidden (the “afikoman”) symbolizing the hidden redemption and the wholeness toward which we strive. After the Afikoman (half the middle matzah) is found, it is reunited with the other half, made the middle

matzah whole again, and they are both eaten at the end of the meal, long with top and bottom matzahs of the Seder plate.

The breaking of the middle matza, by the way, can be seen as the breaking of the bread of the “spiritual” meal. Now that we have “washed the hands” before the karpas, we say a kind of a blessing (“ha- lachma anya” - “this bread of affliction”) over the matza, which begins the Telling, the spiritual meal itself.

V. MAGGID: We recall that this Maggid is the central section of the Seder, the Telling that we are commanded to do by the Torah.

Remember, there are three separate tellings in Maggid, and one direction regarding an inner attitude.

- a. Tell the story by beginning with disgrace (g’nut) and ending with glory (shevah), two versions, as explained below.
- b. To expound (derash) upon the section of the Torah, “My father was a wandering Aramean.” (Deut. 26:5 and following text).
- c. Tell of the three main symbols: Pesach (the sacrificial lamb), Matza (unleavened bread) and , Maror (bitter herbs).
- d. The inner attitude: See yourself has having personally come out of Egypt.

Introduction to Maggid

- 1) Ha Lachma Anya “This bread of poverty”. The opening declaration of Maggid focuses our attention on the Matza. This focus on the Matza may function as kind of a “blessing over the bread” for the subsequent “eating” of the spiritual meal. It also draws attention to the bread of poverty, both the poverty of the economic/material sort and the spiritual sort. Absent the paschal sacrifice, the matzah is the preeminent Passover symbol. We begin by saying that we are now in slave, meaning that we live in a broken world, and suffer inner fracture, as well. We hope that we may celebrate next year in Jerusalem. Thus, we fulfill the guideline of beginning in disgrace and ending in glory.
2. Second Cup of wine is poured, but not drunk until the end of the Telling: Think of the second cup of wine absorbing all the teaching and discussion that serves to liberate us, and then we absorb it all in the drinking of the second cup of wine at the end of the Telling.



The First Telling: From G'nut to Shevah

The first telling, which follows the guideline of gnut (lowliness, degradation) to shevah (praiseworthiness), understands that movement in two different ways: the lowliness of economic, material slavery, and the lowliness of spiritual slavery or idol worship, hence two versions of the theme, “degradation to praiseworthiness.” You will notice that in the first version, the time for telling is expanded, but in the second, it is contracted. Perhaps time is expanded in the first version because the antidote to economic slavery is more options, expansiveness. Time is restricted in the second version because the antidote to spiritual slavery is always fewer options: the discovery of spiritual truth, which leads to commitment, fidelity and discipline.

First Telling--“From G'nut to Shevah,” version A -- From Slavery to Freedom:

3. Ma Nishtanah: The four questions. In the Mishnah, these are the questions that the father teaches the son who does not have enough knowledge, *da'at*, to ask. By the time of the Talmud, the questions are no longer understood as prompts, but rather as liturgy recited by the child. The notion of the child asking questions rests on the biblical reference, “And it shall be when your son asks of you . . . (Ex. 13.14)”

4. Avadim Hayyinu: We respond the questions by telling the story of our exodus from slavery. In other words, now that the attention of the child has been drawn, we set the context in which all these symbols are meaningful. Again, we begin with *g'nut*, degradation or lowliness, and tell toward *shevah*, praiseworthiness. We tell that we were slaves, that we were redeemed, and that we should tell this story at length, no matter how wise or learned we think we are.

4a: Ma'aseh b' Rabbi Eliezer: And we immediately we have an *example* of a wise and learned Sage telling the story at length, all night as a matter of fact. Some say this late-night telling was a planning session for the Bar Kochba revolt (132 CE), and the students' call to prayer was the call to battle.

4b: Amar Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah: The above example of telling the story all night raises a problem. In the Torah it says to recall the going out of Egypt “all the *days* of your life” (Deut 16.3). If that is

the commandment, why do we have an example of Sages recounting the telling *at night*? Rabbi Elazar tells how he learned from Ben Zoma that one should mention the Exodus in the evening as well. Others say: we will recite the story even in Messianic times. "All" the days means the days in this life the days of the world to come, as well.

5. Barukh Ha-Makom: This appears to be something of a blessing after the mitzvah of the first telling the story. We have four praises of God in this prayer, and then an introduction to the second telling, this second telling introduced by Four Sons instead of four questions.

First Telling version B --"From G'nut to Shevah,": From Idolatry to the One God

6. The Four Children. The "Four Sons" is a playful artifice created by editors of the Haggadah. The Torah does not speak of "four sons;" it just has four places where the mitzvah of telling is mentioned. Any archetype of Four would do!

6a: The "wise son's" question is from Deuteronomy 6.20

6b: The "wicked son's" is from Ex. 12.26 (note that both say "you.")

6c: The "simple son's" is from Ex. 13.14.

6d.: The "one who does not know how to ask" is from Ex. 13.8, where we have the commandment to tell, but without the introductory phrase, "and when your son asks you"

It seems noteworthy that our main mitzvah for the telling is connected to the son who doesn't know how to ask.

7. Yachol mi-Rosh Hodesh: As in version A of the first telling, we have an initial discussion of time when we talk about the Exodus. In version A of the first telling, the movement was toward expanding the time of telling, not just during the day but during the night, as well. Here we limit the telling to when the symbols are actually lying before us - the evening of the Seder, the 14th -15th of Nisan.

8. M'tehila: A second understanding of "g'nut" (degradation): In the version A of this first telling, we were slaves; in this second version of the first telling we were idol worshippers.

9. Barukh Shomer Havtaho (Blessed is the One Who Keeps His Promise): Similar to Baruch HaMakom, this is a blessing of the One who has faithfully kept the covenant, and this paragraph functions to close the second version of the first telling.

10. Vehi She-Amda: A continuation of the preceding, where we bless the One who “keeps faith” with us even till now. This closes the entire first telling.



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The Second Telling: Explicate Deut. 26:5-9

11. Tze U-Lmad (Go and Learn) (also known as the section that everyone skips): This, the second Telling, is accomplished through the “drashing out” of Deut. 26:5-9, “Arami Oved Avi.” We have a line-by-line drash, or close textual analysis, of this section that can go on for several pages in a traditional haggadah.

The drashing out of the Torah story is an example of “da’at” “knowing” at work. We must be able to see below the surface, to ask questions which lead to discovery, to understand the worlds of meaning behind each word. For those familiar with Talmud and Midrash, what follows is delightful play with the text. For the rest of us, it can be abstruse and boring, so remember the main idea: use your mind and imagination to fully explore all the possibilities in a narrative of liberation. You can skip this part!

In our family, we typically replace this long rabbinic midrash with choosing some text that we can all enjoy interpreting. A poem, an essay, a speech, anything that takes us deep and is worthy of interpreting.

Verse 26:8, at the end of the section under study, tells of God’s bringing us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, with signs and wonders. This leads to a discussion of the 10 plagues. Our outline picks up again at this point. Remember, the portion on the plagues is still part of the Second Telling, the “learning out” of Deut. 26:5-9.

10. The Reciting of the 10 Plagues

10a: Rabbi Yose says: There were 10 Plagues in Egypt, but 50 at the Yam Suf (Reed Sea) and he gives his proof of 60 total plagues.

10b: Not to be outdone, Rabbi Eliezer says that each plague in Egypt was worth four each, and he gives his proof, so we have 40 (10 x 4) in Egypt and 200 at the Yam Suf (4 x 50), 250 total.

10c: Not to let Rabbi Eliezer outdo him, Rabbi Akiva shows that each plague was actually worth five, so we have 50 in Egypt and 250 at the Yam Suf, 300 total.

(Again, this section can be quite boring to the modern reader; for those who appreciate rabbinic textual interpretation and wit, however, it is an exquisite and quite playful example of the rabbinic mind at work, especially its attention to detail and search for the meanings of subtleties.)

And just as we have fulfilled the obligation to lengthen our telling, we also go at length in concluding this Second telling, with the Dayyenu (enough already!)

11. Dayyenu, The Litany of Wonders. There are 15 Wonders in all, 15 being the numerical equivalent of one of God's names (Yah), and the number of the Song of Ascents in the book of Psalms.

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The Third Telling: Tell the Story through the Three Main Symbols

12. Now we have the telling through the three major symbols. Rabban Gamliel says that we haven't told the story unless we have told about:

12a. Pesach: the Paschal Lamb

12b. Matzah: the bread of affliction

12c. Maror: the bitter herbs

The Fourth "Telling " An inner attitude

B'chol dor va'dor: "In each and every generation." With this section, we follow the last guideline in the Mishnah regarding how to tell the story: by reminding ourselves that every person in every generation must consider him or herself as having personally come out of Egypt.

Conclusion of Spiritual Telling, a kind of "Birkat HaMazon" (blessing over the meal) over the Spiritual Meal.

Psalms of Hallel: The blessing before these Psalms summarizes the themes of the Maggid, and these Psalms function as closure to the spiritual telling. They help fulfill the function of the Mishnaic commandment to praise God for all that God has done in bringing us slavery to freedom. We chant only the first part of Hallel, Psalms 113-114

Second Cup of Wine: This cup is drunk after the "spiritual birkat ha-mazon" (the benedictions after the meals), just as in very traditional homes, the blessing after the meal is said over a cup of wine.

The Meal

VI. RACHATZAH: The washing of the hands for the actual meal. Here we say a blessing, because we are getting to do real eating.

VII. MOTZI: The blessing over the bread we will all eat. "Lechem" refers to any item made from the five grains of the Land of Israel, wheat, rye, barley, spelt or oats, even Matzah. (There is a dispute whether the oats of today are the same as the oats (*shibolet shu'al*) of Bible and Rabbinic literature.

VIII. MATZA: The blessing over the commandment for eating matzah on Pesach. Eat from the top and middle matza.

- IX. MAROR: The commandment to eat the bitter herb, which we traditionally dip in the charoset (chopped nuts and apples, etc). Eat the maror, with only a little charoset at first, then you can pile it on.
- X. KORECH: In Temple times, Hillel would combine all the symbols, Pesach, Matza, Maror. Now we only use Matza and Maror, plus the charoset. Make the sandwich from the third, bottom matzah. If have lettuce on the Seder plate, include that, too.
- XI. SHULHAN OREKH: Eat the meal.
- XII. TZAFUN: The eating of the Afikoman (Greek for “after the meal”), which has been hidden until this time. The Afikoman came from the half of middle matza which we broke at the beginning of the Seder. We are now reuniting the broken matza, and the two meals (spiritual and physical), as well as the two parts of ourselves, the spiritual and the bodily. Our very eating becomes symbolic of the whole human being.
- XIII. BAREKH: The third cup of wine is poured, and we chant Birkat HaMazon. The Third Cup is the regular cup of wine we use for the blessings after a festive meal. At the end of Birkat HaMazon, the Third Cup is drunk.
- IV. HALLEL: The Fourth Cup of wine is poured here, and most pour the fifth cup, Elijah’s Cup, as well. As we pour the fourth cup, we recite Sh’fokh Hamatkha (“Pour out Your Wrath) which expresses the messianic hope of retribution against evil oppressors. We finish the Hallel (Psalms 115-118), then recite the “great hallel”, Psalm 136, and Birkat Ha-Shir,(blessing of song) the poem “Nishmat Kol Chai.” Other Songs

The Fourth Cup can be seen as a final, unifying cup which unites all the previous meal. The Hallel is a Birkat HaMazon over both meals, the spiritual and the corporeal.

Review of the Four Cups:

1. First cup is the regular kiddush, Sanctification of the Day
2. Second cup is special. It is poured and drunk in honor of the spiritual telling. This is the cup of Redemption.
3. Third cup is the regular cup for festive benedictions after we eat (Birkat HaMazon). This is the cup of “grace” or “thanksgiving”.
4. Fourth cup is special. It is poured and drunk in honor of Hallel, the praising of God, which functions to unite both the spiritual and bodily meals.

5. Fifth cup, or Elijah's cup. The fifth cup would seem to link us to messianic times, Pesach le-Atid Lavo, the Passover of the Coming World. Literally speaking, it is called Elijah's cup because Elijah will settle all Talmudic disputes when he shows up, including the one as to whether we should drink four or five cups of wine. Since his appearance will auger messianic days, the sense is that he will say "yes" to that question. The undrunk cup is symbol of our waiting for the redemption of the world and our work in this next year to bring that redemption about.

The final poem, Nishmat kol Hai, is a final, lyrical blessing of God, which found its way into the Shabbat Morning Service. The fourth cup is now drunk at the conclusion of Hallel, just as cups two and three were drunk over either Hallel or Birkat HaMazon. More songs go here.

XV. NIRTZAH: The Seder is completed, and now we take care of final business. Scheduling for next year (may it be in Jerusalem), counting the Omer on the second night, and all those wonderful songs still waiting to be sung.



לְשַׁנָּה
הַבְּאֵר
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם