

NCSY Israel presents

# TORAH 4 TEENS BY TEENS

Haggadah Companion  
Pesach 2020





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# A Message from NCSY Israel's Regional Directors

Rabbi Michael Kahn & Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg

**T**he story is told of the great Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev who traveled to the city of Mezeritch to learn from the great Maggid, Rav Dov Ber. After many years of studying in Mezeritch, he felt it was time to return home. At his return Rebbe Levi sensed that his father-in-law was upset with his decision to learn in Mezeritch. He asked Rebbe Levi what he learned there that he couldn't have learned anywhere else. Rebbe Levi answered "I learned that there is a God". His father-in-law was shocked by this response. He called over his servant and asked her if she believes in God to which she responded "Of course I believe". The father-in-law turned back to Rebbe Levi and retorted "You see even the servant knows there is a God. For that you went to Mezeritch?!" Rebbe Levi responded "She says that, but I know that".

At the conclusion of the Haggadah we proclaim "אחד מי יודע? אחד אני יודע", what does it really mean to know Hashem? The Netivot Shalom of Slonim answers that "knowing Hashem" is the synthesis of our mind and our heart. We intellectually understand that there is a God and we also feel his presence in our lives. It is a level that is hard for many to achieve on a typical day. But the Seder night is a time that is beyond the mundane. It is the experience of our mind and heart fusing together to reach the highest heights — the heights of knowing there is a God. As we tell over the Haggadah on Pesach night, we experience the calm state of Am Yisrael before we went into Egypt; we then feel the pain and suffering through Egypt; and ultimately we rejoice in the redemption of our freedom. It is our experience through the Haggadah that we see the seder/order of the night. Amidst the dark night we experience this level of knowing and understand that there is only "The One" God that is in control, who we put our faith and trust in.

At NCSY Israel we don't just offer the experience to hear about God, rather, together we get to know Him. Whether it is an inspirational Seudat Shlishit, package delivery for Chayalim, or intellectually stimulating discussion at a Latte and Learn, we offer the tools to build that relationship with God and the land of Israel.

As we are living through these difficult and unclear times, let us experience and know that Hashem cares about us. As we recite the Haggadah this year, may we merit to transform this Seder experience into our everyday lives.

## Kadeish, Urchatz

Reva Kesselman  
12th Grade, Efrat

Traditionally, everyone begins their seder by singing the 15 steps, "Kadesh, Urchatz, etc." (By the way, Motzi Matza is actually two different steps!) Why do we do that? Nowhere else do we start by announcing what we are going to do. Does anyone on Friday night begin the Shabbat meal by singing that we will recite Shalom Aleichem, then make Kiddush, then wash and make Hamotzi on the challah, then eat the meal, sing some zemirot, and then say birkat hamazon? Of course, we do not. So why do we do it on the seder night? I suppose one could give the "go-to" answer of "so that the kids will ask," but it turns out that there is a deeper meaning to this as well.

Rabbi Pinches Friedman points out that there were 15 steps that led up to the Beit Hamikdash, and Dovid Hamelech wrote 15 chapters of tehillim beginning with Shir HaMaalot (song of ascent) that were sung by the leviim on each of the steps. The 15 steps of the seder correspond to the 15 steps going up to the Beit Hamikdash. Just as each step closer to the Beit Hamikdash brings us closer to Hashem, so too each step of the seder is supposed to bring us closer to Hashem through a deeper understanding of the great miracles that He did for us then and throughout the generations.

It turns out that the number 15 has deep

meaning in other contexts. The gematriah of Hashem's name ה-י-ה, equals 15, and the gemara states that Hashem created the two worlds — Olam Haba and Olam Hazeh — with that name. After shma we also read 15 descriptions of Hashem — "And firm, established and ensuring, right, faithful, beloved, cherished, delightful, pleasant, awesome, mighty, perfect, accepted, good and beautiful". Coincidence? I think not.

As we prepare for Pesach and the seder, and start to sing Kadesh Urchatz as we do each year, let us remember that each step that

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we take during the seder brings us closer to Hashem and gives us a greater appreciation of our relationship with Him. And in that merit, we hope that next Pesach, we will actually walk up the 15 steps to the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash and celebrate Pesach there.



## Seder Challenge: Ask Your Parents Your Tough Questions

Rabbi Avi Berman  
Executive Director, OU Israel

Seder night provides us with a unique opportunity to engage in spiritual growth and family bonding through the medium of questions and answers. Imagine you had never seen the Seder ritual and were observing it for the first time. The reality is that it would look very strange. From dipping a vegetable in bitter, salty water, to the seder plate, to hiding the Afikoman and even hitting family members and guests with scallions (depending on your family minhag). Why is it that we partake in such strange activities?

Many of you know the answer. It's the same answer you've been told since kindergarten. The purpose of these unusual practices is to get the kids to ask questions. But did you ever stop and wonder why? What's the significance of asking questions? Why do we start the story of Yetziyat Mitzraim with the Ma Nishtana?

Masechet Psachim teaches us that the Ma Nishtana should be asked by children. If there are no children present, a wife should ask her husband, and if one is having a Seder alone (which has now become less obscure due to our now familiar concept of coronavirus quarantine) one must even ask themselves the Ma Nishtana questions. (See Rambam Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 8:2, Shulchan Aruch Ohr Chaim 473:7)

There is a story told of two close friends and Chavrutot, Reb Yochanan and Reish Lakish (Baba Metziah 84a). For every Sugiyah that Reb Yochanan taught Reish Lakish, Reish Lakish would respond with 24 questions. Then, Reb Yochanan would be forced to come up with 24 different answers to these

questions. When Reish Lakish passed away, Reb Yochanan was distraught because he thought, "how will I come up with these 24 Chiddushim on each Sugiyah without Reish Lakish's questions?" From here we see that the best way to learn is by asking questions.

So many of us, particularly in the teenage and young adult years, are faced with many unanswered questions. Perhaps we are too shy to ask them or feel that others will trivialize them, so we stay quiet. Seder night urges us to ask our parents, advisors and teachers these tough questions. Challenge

### What's the significance of asking questions?

them with a question that has been bothering you for a while. Open your minds to find the answers you have been seeking.

Leil HaSeder provides us with the opportunity to be part of a link – the chain dating back from our ancestors in Egypt, to our grandparents, parents, and children and grandchildren to come. Let's not be satisfied simply listening to the story of the exodus and understanding 80% of the story. Only by asking those tough questions will you, your parents and everyone at the Seder internalize its messages 100%.

*This concept of learning Torah through questions is a Chiddush from my Rav, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Zechrano Tzadik Kadosh L'vracha, the Rishon LeTzion former Chief Rabbi of Israel.*

## The Four Sons

Ari Emmer  
10th Grade, Modiin

As we know there are the four sons in the Haggadah: the חכם, the רשע, the תם, and the שאינו יודע לשאול. There are many questions that are asked in regards to this part of the Haggadah and its significance to the seder.

What do the four sons in the Pesach Haggadah represent and what do we learn from each one?

The חכם represents the people that believe in Hashem and know he exists. They aren't ashamed of it and worship him with pride.

The רשע represents all the people that know that they should serve Hashem but remove him from their lives. They purposely violate Hashem and think they can get away and hide from him. They consciously act as though Hashem is not present and not involved personally in this world.

The תם is a sincere person who learns Torah and is growing to be a talmid chacham. We see that Yaakov Avinu is referred to as "איש תם", a plain man of integrity dwelling in tents (Bereishit 25:27). A man that is referred to as תם sees Hashem's greatness through the Torah.

The שאינו יודע לשאול views Hashem as something abstract and therefore speaks of him but in the third person as "ברוך הוא". He is illiterate in Torah knowledge and does not know the greatness of Hashem. He doesn't even know he should be asking questions.

Today there are many that say that there should be a 5th son added, what would he represent?

He would represent the people to whom the word "Pesach" is meaningless. They act as though Hashem doesn't exist. Although they may know that there is a Seder it is treated as an unknown event. We have to reach out to them and try to reintroduce the meaning of the chag.

Why is the word "אחד" repeated before each son?

Generally, the word "אחד" means the oneness of Hashem. The Haggadah is trying to teach us that every Jew regardless of how he sees Hashem and the Torah still has the impact of "echad"- Hashem in them. Therefore, it is empathized here to remind all sons that they need to spend time to bring Hashem and the Torah closer.

The Haggadah is trying to teach us that every Jew regardless of how he sees Hashem and the Torah still has the impact of "echad"- Hashem in them.

When reading about the four sons in the Haggadah we need to consciously think about all the people in our lives and see which son they relate to. We need to be accepting to all around us, however at the same time it is important to help raise and strengthen each Jew's belief in Hashem. Including and teaching ALL Jews at a seder is a perfect opportunity to do that.



## Matchilim B'gnut U'mesayeim B'shevach

AZ Thau

Jerusalem Chapter Director, NCSY Israel

The Gemara in Meseches Pesachim 116a has a machlokes between Rav and Shmuel. The gemara says that there is a chiyuv in the mitzvah of sippur yitziat Mitzrayim to start with gnut (shame) and end with shevach (praise). The gemara asks, when we say that we need to start with gnut, what kind of gnut are we referring to? Shmuel says Avadim Hainu, the fact that we were slaves to Pharaoh. The shevach is that Hashem took us out of that slavery. Rav says that the gnut is that our ancestors were idol worshipers. The praise is that Hashem brought us close to serve him. The focal point of this argument is what is more shameful: having been in physical slavery and servitude or having been spiritual slaves originally (idol worshipers)?

This is a very important debate that we have often and not just during the Seder nor during sippur yitziat Mitzrayim. What is more important: physicality or spirituality? Seemingly it is a machlokes, but I would like to suggest that it is not. Both are of utmost importance! We cannot serve Hashem properly if we are unhealthy or not taking good care of our physical body and our environment. At the same time our life loses its significance if we don't serve Hashem! If we don't dedicate ourselves to serving him then what is our life about? This duality and necessity is the reason I believe that the Haggadah cites both of these opinions!

If we would have stayed slaves to Pharaoh in Mitzrayim then we would have spiritually lost

ourselves even if we would have physically stayed alive. For that reason, we needed to leave in a haste and we couldn't wait there even another moment. On the other hand, if we would have stayed who says we would have survived at all?! Again, we see this duality. At the same time, if we would have left and entered into the desert without any guidance, we might have physically been alive but for what? That is why Rav says the praise is that Hashem brought us close by serving him.

### What is more important: physicality or spirituality?

I believe the message of Pesach, the Seder and sippur yitziat Mitzrayim is clear and relevant to our lives. We must balance the fact that we are both physical and spiritual creations of Hashem. We are here for a reason and not just by chance. We need to make sure that we can physically live to the extent that if our life is in danger we are obligated to violate the Torah so that we may live (there are many exceptions to this rule, but that is for a different time).

May we take these special times to reconnect and rediscover ourselves and our connection to Hashem and our families and may we be zocheh to serve Hashem to the best of our abilities both physically and spiritually.

## Vehi Sheamda

Hillel Krief

Gush Etzion Chapter Advisor, NCSY Israel

**"והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו! שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לכולתנו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכולתנו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם"**

*"This has stood for our fathers and us! For not only one enemy has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us; and the holy one blessed be he saves us from their hand."*

There are the things we sing at the seder, there are things we talk about at the seder, and there are things we do both of. Vehi Sheamda is under the first category of things we generally sing to a nice tune that everyone knows. Elaborating about Vehi Sheamda? Have we ever thought about or studied this wonderful song? My guess is probably not. So let's study it together.

The first four words of the song are **והיא שעמדה** ו**לאבותנו ולנו** "This has sustained our fathers and us." What does the word **והיא** — "this" in our context refer to? What has "sustained our fathers throughout time until us?" The second thing we must notice is that the root of the word **עמד** is used three times in this short passage. The author of the Haggadah must be pointing us to something.

To understand our first question we simply have to look back into the previous paragraph we read before Vehi Sheamda which speaks about the fact that Hashem made a covenant with Avraham. Now we know what it means when we say Vehi Sheamda... What has sustained our nation since Avraham? The **ברית בין הבתרים**! The covenant that G-d made with Avraham that we would be servants and strangers in a foreign land and then Hashem would take us out, the process that made us His nation.

We now must try to understand why the word **עמד** is used three times here. Each time it is used to describe someone else. **והיא שעמדה לאבותנו ולנו** is saying that Hashem is the one that stood up for our fathers and us. **שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לכולתנו** is saying that everyone else raises up to destroy us. **אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכולתנו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילו מידם** is saying that it has always been that

everyone rises up to destroy us, but Hashem is the difference. Vehi Sheamda is telling us that at the end of the day, there is going to be no stalemate, because the covenant that we have with G-d is stronger than anything.

The question is, why? What about this covenant makes G-d want to keep us standing? What does a covenant mean? Let's learn some pesukim in Amos that may answer our question.

*"Hashem says about the entire family He took out of Egypt: 'only you did I know from all the families of the earth; therefore, I will visit upon you all of your sins. Will two walk together unless they agreed to do so?'" (Amos 3:1-3)*

To Hashem — we are a family. Hashem has one family, and that is us. When we sin, Hashem gets hurt just like in any other relationship when one wrongs the other. And just like any other relationship, Hashem communicates back to us about how he feels we are acting "therefore I will visit upon you all of your sins." Hashem is telling us that we are walking together side by side in everything we do because we have a relationship with Him. And because of that relationship, he will never leave our side no matter what. Why? Because we agreed to be as one: "Will two walk together unless they agreed to do so?"

### To Hashem — we are a family.

Think of it like a marriage, when Hashem made this deal he said I know this relationship is going to be unconditional and eternal just like family. There are situations that fall upon every relationship that are less than ideal. What makes or breaks them is when those involved in the relationship are ready to stand up and fight for their partner no matter what. And that's what Hashem does. Hashem is **עומד** for us throughout each and every generation, because to him we are family. And to us, the goal is to feel the same way about Him.



## Tzei U'Lemad

Gavriel Novick

Director of Regional Development, NCSY Israel

*"My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. The Lord freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and wonders." (Devarim 26:5-8)*

We have come to the essence of the Haggadah: the telling of our exodus from Egypt. To do so, the Haggadah understandably opens the Chumash which contains the full story. Yet we do not open directly to Sefer Shemot where the story takes place. Instead the verses that are quoted are from Sefer Devarim. Why is the story of our redemption from Egypt mentioned in Devarim and why do we choose those verses instead of the obvious choice of using Sefer Shemot?

Chapter 26 of Devarim is the beginning of Parshat Ki Tavo. "When you enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a heritage, and you possess it and settle in it, you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God will choose to establish His name" (Devarim 26:1-2). The Torah is speaking about the mitzvah of bikurim: the commandment to bring one's first fruits to Hashem. When one would donate these fruits the Torah instructs that he recite a declaration: "My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there..." When thanking God and acknowledging that all comes from Him, the giver of bikurim goes back to the beginning of the story of the Jewish people to recognize the deep level to which we are indebted to Him.

Why then, do we use the bikurim declaration in our Haggadah to depict the exodus? It is true that the verses in Sefer Shemot speak more

directly about the story. They depict each and every detail from the start of slavery to the introduction of Moshe to the ten plagues and the final splitting of the Red Sea. However, they depict a story, a narrative taking place in the lives of others. Perhaps the most significant difference between the verses in Devarim and those that are in Shemot is that the verses in Devarim are written in first person, as they are the quoted declaration of what a giver of bikurim would say. "My father was a fugitive Aramean... The Egyptians dealt harshly with us... We cried to the Lord... The Lord freed us" On the night of the seder each person needs to feel as if they themselves are a part of the story. "In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt" By using the verses from the context of bikurim we are able to connect more closely with the story, not as something that happened to others, but rather a story that happened to us.

### I wasn't there, so how could I possibly relate?

It is often hard to feel that connection to Jewish history. Many may think or even say 'I wasn't there so how can I possibly relate.' Yet Hashem has gifted every person with something magical, an imagination. Our imaginations allow us to dream things that we have never experienced. They enable us to feel part of a movie or show. On the seder night we are charged with harnessing this incredible resource to connect and envision ourselves within the exodus story; to use the text of the Haggadah and the pictures within our heads to not just relate but relive that momentous event. And just as within the context of bikurim, that story causes us to swell with thanksgiving and appreciation, so too at the seder, when we see ourselves as part of the exodus we immediately transition to Hallel; to thanking and praising Hashem for all that he has done not just for our forefathers, but for us.

## Pesach Shehayu Avoteinu Ochlim

Eliezer Kupietzky  
10th Grade, Ra'anana

In the past couple of months, the coronavirus went from being a localized Chinese problem to a worldwide pandemic forcing many people into a two-week quarantine. Many of my friends who went away for even a small period of time had to stay in an enclosed area with their family for two whole weeks. Although it may be fun to stay at home for two weeks, we all know, no family can last that long together in an enclosed space without someone getting hurt or going insane.

On the first Passover the Israelites ever celebrated, they were commanded to shecht a lamb and spread its blood on their door frames. After that they received a commandment that sounded kind of strange. "And you shall not go out, any man from the entrance of his house until morning." Basically, God put the Israelites in quarantine. It seems silly to not be out celebrating together, it's a national holiday, us against Egypt. We should have all been together as one. Why isolate ourselves from one another? Furthermore, the Korban Pesach must be eaten in a specific group, again putting an emphasis on the close circles. And lastly, Chazal debate whether the Korban Pesach is a "Korban Tzibur", a national sacrifice, because it has a set time, or a "Korban Yachid", a personal sacrifice, because it is brought by individuals. The Rambam concludes that it has aspects of both.

We learn from these conditions the importance the Torah places on family connections even

within the context of this national holiday. Pesach is the birth of our nation and as such, it is important to know that the first social circle in a nation is one's close family. Many of us can be the funniest most helpful and generous with our friends but the true challenge, and with it the true reward, is being that way with our family. We too, as teenagers, can perform the mitzvah of "vehigadeta lebincha" between a child and a parent, not by telling our kids but by being there and listening to what our parents have to teach us, playing our part in the beautiful family celebration.

Pesach is the birth of our nation and as such, it is important to know that the first social circle in a nation is one's close family.

So although these past couple of months have been intense, and even perhaps lonely, we can also look at the bright side. The fact that for the first time in a long time, families have been forced to spend not one day but two whole weeks together. Hopefully their connection to and love for one another has grown and inspired them to celebrate Pesach with a new understanding of what it means to be part of a family and, in turn, a nation.



### Pesach, Al Shum Mah?

Lia Manning

Gush Etzion Chapter Director, NCSY Israel

Once a year, for a whole week, we commemorate a very formative event for our nation and tell our families the story of how G-d took the Jews out of Egypt. Pesach takes its name from the verb 'Pasach', when Hashem actively skipped over Bnei Israel's houses that they had signaled with blood on the night of the plague of the firstborn. I find there are a few odd things about this.

Firstly, when we speak about the miracle of Pesach, we rarely speak about the specificity of the last plague. Rather, we like to focus on the going out of Egypt itself, the splitting of the sea, and the fact that we were in such a rush that we didn't have time to bake bread and ended up with Matzah instead. Why then does the name come from this seemingly insignificant episode?

Secondly, why is it that the only event in the whole story of Yetziat Mizriam that the Jews actively participated in is taken as the symbol of G-d's miracles? It seems counterintuitive to overlook the other nine plagues and the whole of Kiriath Yam Suf when naming the Chag that represents Hashem's greatness.

Thirdly, in order to underline the greatness of Hashem's miracles we don't even mention Moshe's name once in the whole Haggadah. Then why did G-d need us to paint our doorposts in blood for Him to save us?

This reminds me of a similar philosophical question back in Bereshit. Did Hashem really need to test Avraham at the Akeda? If He is omniscient and omnipotent, He should have known that Avraham would pass the test. The answer is that the test wasn't for Hashem but for Avraham. Even if Hakadosh Baruch Hu knew that Avraham would pass the test, Avraham didn't. With each experience he became a different person, the person G-d knew he would be all along.

The same is true for the Jewish people. Hashem knew all along that He would take us out of Egypt and we would become His people. But Bnei Israel didn't know that. They

had to go through a process to be worthy of being taken out. A major step in any process is will and acknowledgement. When the Jews brought the first Korban Pesach in history, individually, one in each family, and then declared with blood on their doorposts, not only to themselves but to their slave-masters that they were going to be God's people, that is when they became the nation worthy of being taken out of slavery.

Therefore, it is not that Hashem needed us for His miracles. We needed to be part of His miracles. This is proven to us by the way in which He took us out and what we focus on in the Haggadah.

I think there is a very powerful lesson to be learned from the Pesach story. Sometimes, when facing challenges in life, we wish we could just fast forward to the outcome. We think 'whatever is going to happen will happen anyway, why be miserable in the process?'. We might ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu 'You know if I will pass this test or not, why don't You just skip this one and go straight to the answer at the end?'. The problem with this mindset is that it ignores everything we go through in the process. That is where the magic happens. We need those experiences in our memory to become the people that Hashem set us out to be. Without those challenges we are simply undeserving of going on to the next stage. It is not a punishment; we are just not in that place yet.

Sometimes, when facing challenges in life, we wish we could just fast forward to the outcome.

This Pesach, may we all be Zoche to see ourselves as having been taken out of Egypt, and use the Seder night as our own process to become more spiritually elevated people deserving of a closer connection to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.



**NCSY Israel is the premier organization in Israel, dedicated to connect, inspire, and empower teen olim to the Land of Israel by encouraging passionate Judaism through Torah and Tradition.**

**NCSY Israel is proud to serve as the youth movement branch of the OU Israel Center.**

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