

NCSY Israel presents

# TORAH 4 TEENS BY TEENS

Haggadah Companion  
Pesach 2021



# Table of Contents

<b>A Message from NCSY Israel's Regional Directors</b> .....	3
Rabbi Michael Kahn & Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg	
<b>קדש</b> .....	4
Deena Kalker	
<b>יחץ</b> .....	5
Emily Kaufman	
<b>הא לחמא עניא</b> .....	6
Yael Marcus	
<b>עבדים היינו</b> .....	7
Ataya NessAiver	
<b>ואפילו כלנו חכמים</b> .....	8
Zach Tobin	
<b>פסח מצה ומרור</b> .....	9
Shlomo Rayman	
<b>שפוך חמתך</b> .....	10
Leora Schechter	
<b>הלל</b> .....	11
Shir Yannay	
<b>אחד מי יודע</b> .....	12
Tani Feinberg	

## A Message from NCSY Israel's Regional Directors

**W**hat is the overall theme of the Haggadah? If we look closely at the word "Haggadah," there is much more than meets the eye. The word "הגדה" has the numerical value of 17. This number is significant because it is not only the same numerical value of "טוב" which means good, but it also represents the age of Yosef when he was sold and brought down into Egypt. Out of all the possible words one would have thought to associate a brother being sold into slavery by his fellow brethren, "good" would probably not be one of them. What is the connection to Yosef's sale to Egypt and the word טוב? Rabbi Benjamin Blech comments in his Haggadah "Redemption, Then and Now" that the numerical allusion is to remind us of the terrible act that started the story which we are about to engage in on Seder night. We need to remember that the tragedy of Yosef's sale at the age of seventeen led to the miracle of our redemption and the Revelation at Sinai. No matter how blind any event may appear at the time, the dark of night is always followed by the dawn.

Just over a year ago marked the time when NCSY Israel had to unfortunately close its doors to in-person programming due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The inspirational Shabbatonim, the personal meaningful discussions, and high energy mega events all came to a pause. What would be with NCSY Israel? How does a social group for teens continue to be impactful and relevant when it cannot operate the way it had for the past five years? As difficult and challenging as it might have been, we somehow found a way to not only continue and survive but thrive. Events shifted to a virtual model at first with creative and engaging programming, allowing teens to connect with one another from all over the country, and for some events, around the world. With the initiation of our chapter programming last year, we were set up to ultimately move to local in-person programming when the situation improved, and we are now returning to our unparalleled mega events surrounding Pesach.

What is the overall theme of the Haggadah? The Mishnah in Pesachim 10:4 tells us that when we tell over the story of leaving Egypt we must **begin with shame and end with praise**. We begin by detailing the hard and bitter times and then conclude in praise. One year ago, we tasted the bitterness of this pandemic. Our system was shocked and we were forced to rethink and recreate ourselves. We are now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and we are celebrating the sweetness as we come out of this transformative time. When we look back at this past year we will only have one word to describe it and that word is "טוב". We are thankful to Hashem for the challenges we faced as it brought out the best in our region from our staff to our teens. We look forward to the new world NCSY Israel will be greeting as we continue to inspire the Jewish future **in Israel**.

Wishing you a chag sameach!



*Michael Kahn*  
Rabbi Michael Kahn



*Yosef Ginsberg*  
Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg

## The 4 Cups and the 4 Expressions of Redemption

Deena Kalker  
12th Grade, Efrat

Why is telling the story of Passover such a big mitzvah? There are many stories that happened to the Jewish people over the years, many things that shaped us as a nation, and yet we don't have such a commandment to retell the story of Avraham Avinu or the burning of the Temple for example.

This is perhaps because while we can relate to and find something to learn from every story from our past, the story of what happened to us in Egypt and post Egypt is so applicable and relatable to us every single day. How is this so? I'm assuming none of us have ever actually been enslaved in Egypt, so how is this story relatable to our everyday lives?

During the seder we have four cups of wine. These four cups of wine symbolize the four words of redemption that God said to Moses. God told Moses the order of redemption from Egypt, **והוצאתי, והצלתי, וגאלתי, ולקחתי** - I will take you out, I will rescue you, I will redeem you, I will take you to me. The first three steps of redemption were leaving, saving, and redeeming. This is the process. Only by the fourth step are we really going towards something better rather than away from something bad.

So too in our lives, when we are trying to get to a better place in our life whether that be in relationships with people, in connection to God or to any other thing, the first step is leaving the bad habits behind. Understanding that you can put aside all the things that were holding you back. Only then can you really step towards your goal. Oftentimes, we try to "have the best of both worlds" - we keep the thing holding us back while trying to move forward towards our goal. But until we let go of whatever is holding us back we won't be able to really achieve our goal.

The story of what happened to us in Egypt and post Egypt is so applicable and relatable to us every single day.

This may be a long and hard process, but if we learned anything from the Passover story it's that you can redeem yourself even from the lowest of lows.

## Breaking the Matzah

Emily Kaufman  
12th Grade, Efrat

NCSY provides us with a great social network of friends in a Torah environment. At times our lives become so mundane, we wake up, go to school, do our homework, study for an exam, and finally at the end of the day go to sleep. Next day is a repeat of the previous day and the same cycle of life continues.

I came across a short idea written by Rav Moshe Weinberger, Mashpia at Yeshiva University in the name of Rav Anshel Katz, the Veiner Rav. The Rav explains the symbolism behind breaking the middle round shmura Matza during Yachatz and points to a pasuk in Sefer Tehilim which states **יִתְהַלְכוּן רְשָׁעִים סָבִיב** which translates as people who act wrong walk in circles. The same cycle of our daily routine occurs day in and day out. Just like the slaves in Egypt that were running around in circles. The slaves were breaking their backs in the hardest of conditions without feeling a real purpose in life. Until finally Hashem breaks this circle and takes the Jewish people out of slavery and introduces them to a lifestyle of Torah and Mitzvot. This brings real meaning to the lives of Am Yisroel and they were no longer walking around in circles. Hence, we break the round middle Matzah at our Seder in a symbolic manner and as a prayer to Hashem to take us out of the daily routine and remove us from a life lacking real purpose.

Rabbi Simcha Willig, Rebbe at Yeshiva University, discusses the repetition of hearing the same tunes during the Seder, the same Divrei Torah, and the same stories year after year. The obligation to teach the next generation is through repetition, **"ושננתם"**. By reviewing things over and over again it gets embedded in our heads and aids our educational experiences. The Seder is no different. The repetition of songs, divrei Torah, rituals and customary foods aids us in passing on tradition to the next generations.

The same cycle of our daily routine occurs day in and day out. Just like the slaves in Egypt that were running around in circles.

Here we see that at times the repetition and consistency can help spread yiddishkeit and at the same time lead us to a life full of purpose. We must balance these two ideas to find and develop the meaning within our lives.

## Ha Lachma Anya

Yael Marcus  
12th Grade, Chashmonaim

In the beginning of Maggid, the part of the Seder that goes through the story of the Exodus from Egypt, a question arises. Why do we start Maggid with mentioning the Matzah in **הא לחמא עניא** but not the elements of Pesach and Marror?

The reason that some commentaries give, is that Matzah embodies the whole story of **יציאת מצרים**. On the one hand, Matzah symbolizes our redemption because we had Matzah when we left Egypt. Our dough didn't have enough time to rise because of our haste to leave Egypt which is how we ended up with Matzah. On the other hand, Matzah represents our enslavement in Egypt. Matzah is **לחם עוני**, poor man's bread, that we ate as slaves. We eat Matzah to remind us of the plight of our forefathers in Egypt and this allows us to better appreciate Hashem's salvation.

In addition, **הא לחמא עניא** mirrors how the Jewish people feel in exile: we were redeemed from Egypt but the redemption is not yet complete. The final redemption has not yet come. When we eat Matzah we can relate to the subservience, poverty, and exile that our forefathers went through in Egypt because we too experience this in our own exile. This is what we are portraying when we invite the poor to join us and eat at our Seder

during **הא לחמא עניא**. What we are trying to stress is that we are in exile which is why we can invite people during the Seder. In the times of the Temple only guests who were invited beforehand could have a share in the Pesach sacrifice. Furthermore, part of the reason that we were exiled was due to people being negligent of the poor. We hope that by inviting the poor to our Seder in **הא לחמא עניא**, helping them, and showing them kindness, we will be merited to experience the final redemption speedily in our days.

Pesach is not only about remembering the story of how Hashem redeemed us from Egypt and the transmission of this story from generation to generation by way of mesorah. It is also about the hope for the future redemption because we realize that the story of the redemption from Egypt is not yet complete. Throughout the Haggadah we see this hope. In **הא לחמא עניא** we say "this year we are here, next year may we be in the land of Israel! This year, slaves, next year- free men!" Towards the end of the Haggadah we say "next year in Jerusalem!"

This is the hope of the generations of thousands of years past, and this hope should be felt by Jews even today at our seders. May we all merit to witness the return of all Jews to Israel and the final redemption.

## Rational Faith as a Condition for Redemption

Ataya NessAiver

Gush Etzion Chapter Advisor, NCSY Israel

"I'm tired." "I can't continue." "There is too much pressure." "What will he say, she say, they say?" "They're going to hate me." "I'm too embarrassed." Thoughts like these whirl around our heads, day in day out, scarcely letting go, creating a vortex of shame, guilt, and tentative living. We desire power, love and full self-expression, but instead are met with fear and a life of frustration. And yet... somehow... we keep on going. We believe in a better life, in a better world, and deeply feel that somehow, somehow, it will happen. Things will change. If only we knew how.

"And so you find that our forefathers were only redeemed from Egypt on merit of their faith, as it says 'and the nation believed' (Exodus 4:31)" (Yalkut Shimoni 240). Four hundred years the Jewish people slaved away, pain and suffering their most loyal companions. Family life interrupted, self-expression consumed by the whip of taskmasters. They lived a reality of, what would colloquially be referred to as, "being stuck." They were stuck in the slave mentality, in the depression of a completely subjugated, dependent existence. Yet they still believed. Deep down, despite it all, they knew that confinement was **not** the way to live. They knew someday, somehow, their situation would improve. As such, when news of imminent redemption came around, stirring hopes and revealing a horizon they had never before seen - they were open to connecting, to **believing**. In that merit, through that power, their dreams turned into reality.

Eric Frohm, in his monumental book *The Art of Loving*, describes two forms of belief. Irrational and rational. The former, says Frohm, is a faith from the outside in. It is the wild hope of change, of dreams unfulfilled based off of nothing more than the desire to believe in those dreams. The latter, however, is a faith from the inside out. It is the belief that motivates the hypothesis of the scientist, the vision of the artist, and the trust in healthy relationships. It is the belief that comes from our deepest knowledge of reality and the life we live, from our intuition of what is possible, and it gives us the motivation to enact the changes necessary to achieve it. It is this belief, perhaps, that redeemed the Jews from Egypt. It was their deep

intuition that their present state was transient, and that change could and would occur.

Egypt, in Hebrew **מצרים**, sources its name from the word **צר**, or "tightness," "pain," and "boundaries." As much as the physical **location** constrained the life of its Jewish inhabitants two thousand years ago, its **conceptual** parallel constrains us daily as we suffer the multitudes of limiting stories and voices in our heads. It is the pain we have felt, the beliefs we have erroneously placed our faith in, that tell us we can not and should not, all based upon previously imbibed and false perceptions of reality. It is that whirlwind of internal judgments, of anger at the past and fear of the future, that constrain our full expression of life in the moment. That is Egypt. That is the harrowing, slave labor of our daily lives. Perhaps our "get out of jail free card," therefore, is much the same as our ancient predecessors - Belief. Rational Belief. The hope that wells from the essence of our being that change can, and will come. The spring of salvation, the holy, clean waters of redemption well forth from within, beginning the process of change if we are but open to receive. Perhaps all is dark, and the black whole of life seems *ad infinitum*, but deep down, somehow, there is a light. There is a hope, neigh, **knowledge**, that Reality is always larger than our personal pain, and somehow, we will make it to that "land flowing with milk and honey." We will find peace, joy, energy, if we only allow ourselves to embody our own belief that it is possible. "From the straights I called to G-d, he answered me, with the breadth of G-d." We all yearn for the "breadth of G-d", the petri dish, the space for true love, self-empowerment, and all things beautiful in life, and we all sense from within, that somehow it can be actualized. If we only knew how.

Perhaps this Pesach, this seder night, we can allow ourselves to experience the pain, our constraining habits and patterns, the bitterness of the maror. Yet through those very tears perhaps we can come to terms with an even deeper truth: We. Can. Change.

## Teaching and Learning Yetziat Metzrayim

Zach Tobin  
10th Grade, Raanana

As kids, we learn that Pesach is a time for remembering **יציאת מצרים** and feeling like we were the ones leaving Egypt. If someone would ask me "Hey, what's the big point of Pesach?" I would answer without even thinking about it- "The point of Pesach is to remember our ancestors leaving Egypt, leaving their torture behind them, trying to start a new life." I personally think that's just the go-to answer that someone will give when asked that question. But is that really the meaning or point of Pesach?

There is a common question of why we need a special holiday to remember something that we are commanded to remember every day. We remember **יציאת מצרים** when we daven and when we say birkat hamazon. We say it so many times during the day, why do we need a whole fancy dinner and a weird book and a holiday with a specific date to remember it?

After looking into this topic, I learned about a big mitzvah of the seder, "**והגדת לבנך**", tell your son (teach your son). From this, we learn that one of the big mitzvot of Pesach is not only to

remember but it is of teaching and learning. Hence the name of the book is "the Haggadah" or "the saying," the being active, the teaching and the learning and not just the passive remembering.

One of the big mitzvot of Pesach is not only to remember but it is of teaching and learning.

Yes, we say it every day, we remember it every day, but how often do we actually sit down, go into detail about what we say every day. Why do we say it? What does it mean? If we didn't have Pesach there is no guarantee that we would all know the meaning behind it. And even if we know the story word by word and we know all the details, someone else may not. Without Pesach, we wouldn't get the mitzvah of understanding the meaning of it and we wouldn't get the mitzvah of learning it. May we all have a fun, meaningful, happy Pesach this year.



## Seder Night: The Original Latte and Learning

Shlomo Rayman

Educational Director & Bet Shemesh Chapter Director, NCSY Israel

NCSY's most successful educational formula is to combine Torah with food, with events like Latte and Learning, Torah and Toppings, Crepes and Conversation, and my personal favorite Shakshuka and Shmooze.

The truth is, this idea preceded NCSY by many years and has deep roots in the Jewish tradition. (The combining food and learning part, not the over-used alliterations.) On Pesach night we have the Seder which is a hybrid of Torah learning (**סיפור יציאת מצרים** - telling over the Exodus) and eating Matzah, Maror, and soon the Korban Pesach as well. Had NCSY been around back then the Seder would probably be named something like Supper and Sippur, or Learning with Meaning.

But the Seder is slightly different than an NCSY Event. Everyone knows that if you want people to get involved with the learning, you have to start with the food. Counterintuitively, on Pesach we begin with maggid; sharing and exploring ideas while our stomachs are growling for food. Why don't we eat first, fulfill our physical needs and tell the story of yetziat mitzrayim afterwards? Wouldn't that be more productive and enjoyable?

There are two mitzvot at the Seder that are not preceded by a blessing, maggid and hallel. Every other full hallel is preceded by a bracha, so why not this one? The truth is, there are a couple of unique and out-of-the-ordinary things about hallel on Pesach night. It is the only hallel that is said sitting down. The only hallel said at night. The only hallel said during a meal. We even split the hallel in half, starting before the meal and continuing after! Rav Hai Goan explains that this is because this is not a formal ritual of reading hallel, rather a spontaneous natural expression of thanks and song to Hashem for taking us out of Egypt! Why is this hallel different than all other hallels?

The Haggadah tells us **בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים**. In

every generation one must see himself as if he personally left Egypt. It is not enough to just remember that it happened, but one must act as if it happened to him! Therefore we eat the matzah that they ate, feel a little of the bitterness they felt and even bring the korban they brought. We are reenacting the Pesach story. For even though it happened thousands of years ago, it is not an irrelevant historical oddity, rather a living tradition, a defining moment for our nation, affecting each and every one of us to this day. We are not just descendants of the chosen nation, but are chosen and cherished ourselves

Since we are really in the mindset that Hashem just freed us from Egypt, we are bursting with song! This type of hallel doesn't have a bracha. Did Bnei Yisrael make a bracha on Az Yashir after crossing the Red Sea? Of course not. Brachot are for religious imperatives and rituals. On Seder night we sing not because we are commanded to, but because we feel so much gratitude and thanks to Hashem for redeeming us, for all He has done for us throughout the generations, and for all He has done for us personally.

I think this approach can also explain why **סיפור יציאת מצרים** proceeds the meal and why it isn't preceded by a bracha. We aren't sharing it as a history lesson, or as an obligatory ritual. We are acting as if we just left Egypt! We're bursting with the desire to share the story with everyone we can find! We're so eager to share the story of our redemption, we reminisce before we even think of the food! On Seder night we are transported throughout our history, joining thousands of thousands of years of Jews singing and discussing Hashem's miracles long into the night.

Just as we have merited to see ourselves as part of geulat mitzrayim, may we merit to see and take part in the complete geulah, singing hallel and sharing stories on the rooftops of Jerusalem.

## The Forgotten Fifth Cup

Leora Schechter

Jerusalem Chapter Advisor, NCSY Israel

Yes, there is a fifth. Have you heard of the "4 stages of redemption" or the "לשונות גאולה 4"? When Hashem tells Moshe how He's going to redeem the Jews from Egypt, He mentions four stages of the redemption [Shemot 6, 6-8]:

1. והוצאתי - I will withdraw
2. והצילתי - I will save
3. וגאלתי - I will redeem
4. ולקחתי - I will take

Well if you open a Tanach you'll see there is a fifth!

5. והבאתי - and I will bring you to the land...

The story doesn't end with leaving Egypt. It ends with Israel. Coming home. So what happened to this fifth stage in the Haggadah?

This patterns repeats itself elsewhere in the Haggadah as well. In Maggid we quote 4 pesukim about the redemption from Sefer Devarim:

1. ארמי אבד אבי וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהישם לגוי גדול עצום ורב
2. וירעו אתנו המצרים ויענונו ויתנו עלינו עבדה קשה
3. ונצעק אליה' אלקי אבותינו וישמע ה' אתקלנו וירא אתענינו ואתעמלנו ואתלחצנו
4. ויוצאנו ה' ממצרים ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה ובמרא גדל ובאתות ובמפתים

But wait, there's a fifth pasuk!

5. ויבאנו אליהמקום הזה ויתן לנו אתהארץ הזאת ארץ זבת חלב ודבש

And He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Once again we find ourselves speaking about Israel. So what's the deal? Where did the fifth cup go? Where's the Zionism? The happy ending where we come home to Israel?

Maybe the answer is that the Haggadah was written while in Galut - when there was no "Israel." It was too painful to sing: "thanks for bringing us to Israel!" in times when Israel was so far away, in ruins. So the fifth cup was saved for better days. That's why that cup for Elijah (the herald of the redemption) is a hint of the "fifth" cup, the Zionist cup.

Our great great grandparents dreamed of a day when their people could come home to Israel, and finally add the fifth pasuk. Maybe they were dreaming of today. Perhaps today we can add the fifth pasuk at our seder table: ויבאנו אליהמקום הזה ויתן לנו אתהארץ הזאת ארץ זבת חלב ודבש. And He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

## Isn't it Enough?

Shir Yannay  
Modiin Chapter Advisor, NCSY Israel

By now, we have been sitting and reading the Haggadah for several hours. Telling the story of **יציאת מצרים** (the Exodus), praising and glorifying Hashem for the miracles He has done for us. So why, in addition to that, should the Hallel be said as well? Is not everything we have said so far enough praise and glorification?

On Purim too a great miracle happened to us and we experienced salvation from extermination. But we do not say Hallel, we fulfill our obligation by reading the Megillah. So why on Pesach must we read the Haggadah and also say Hallel?

The reason for this lies in the event size. No matter how great it was, the miracle of Purim, is not as special as the Passover miracle. In Egypt Hashem performed miracles for the people of Israel that were supernatural compared to the miracle we experience in Shushan where Ahasuerus, as a king lacking of abilities and skills simply gave in to his wife's request to save the Jewish people.

In **יציאת מצרים** the people of Israel became a nation. The miracle of **יציאת מצרים** transformed Am Israel from a humiliated and broken nation to a powerful nation that others feared. All the nations of the world heard about the miracle of **יציאת מצרים**. The event of **יציאת מצרים** has characterized the Jewish people ever since and therefore it is important to praise, glorify and express gratitude accordingly even if it often seems long and unnecessary.

It reminds me of a story about a Jew who died after 120 years and at the entrance to heaven he was greeted by an angel doing a VIP tour of the area. During the tour they come to a long corridor with lots of doors. And the curious Jew opens the first door and to his surprise he sees a huge room with thousands of angels running from place to place and thousands of pages scattered around the room, the Jew closes the door. He opens the next door and the same sight is repeated. There is a huge room and thousands of pages scattered throughout the room. The Jew wonders about the situation but continues to the next room and the room after it and so on until he reaches the end of the corridor and in each room he sees the same sight: thousands of angels running all over and thousands of pages scattered throughout the room. The Jew could no longer wait and asked his angel tour guide to explain the strange situation. The angel replied "These are all the requests that come to Hashem". The Jew looked at the doors and suddenly noticed the names attached to them: "Room #1-Health", "Room #2-Success", "Room #3-Livelihood" and so on and suddenly the door at the end of the corridor, nameless, caught his eye, the Jew opened the door and in front of him sat an angel, in a small and modest room, with a tiny pile of pages. The Jew became enthusiastic and asked: "And what is the role of this angel? What requests is he responsible for?". The angel simply answered "This is the angel who is responsible for the thank you letters."

## Why Know One?

Tani Feinberg  
12th Grade, Bet Shemesh

At the end of the Seder night, we sing the song "אחד מי יודע" - "Who knows one." This song has always been fun to sing in my family since we take turns singing the different parts. But I've never really stopped to think about what the purpose of the song is, probably because we always say it so late into the Seder. But what is the point of it? Is it just some nice song to sing after the Seder, or is there more to it?

One of the interpretations I've heard for this song is that it's supposed to be some form of test that we take at the end of the Seder. When we're in school, after we finish learning about a topic, we usually have to take a test on what was taught to us. This is supposed to help us make sure that we understood the topic well, and we learned it properly. As students, it's our job to study for the test and make sure we know the material thoroughly, so we can do well on the test.

During the Seder, we read about the story of Pesach and parts of the history of the Jewish people. Throughout the Haggadah, we learn all about the greatness of 'ה. We read about what the Jews went through in Mitzrayim, and

how 'ה saved us. At the very end of the Seder, the song אחד מי יודע is there to test us. Did we really understand everything that was in the Haggadah? Did we learn Who is the "One" in this world?

I've found this idea to be particularly relevant to our lives currently, especially with all that we've gone through since last Pesach. Covid-19 has changed our lives completely. It has made the past year difficult for everyone all over the world. Now we ask ourselves, what have we learned from it all? What have we learned from everything we've gone through?

One thing we can take from this experience is how much we took for granted in the past. We see how valuable in-person schooling is. We understand how crucial proper hygiene is. We appreciate how important it is to see friends and family. There are so many aspects of our lives that are so much more important now, more than they ever were in the past. So, B'Ezrat Hashem, we will soon see the end to the current state that the world is in now, and we will have all passed this Corona test.

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passionate Judaism through Torah and Tradition.**

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