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# ON PESACH & EDUCATING CHILDREN

Law & Haggadah

*With Rabbi Mordechai Z. Hecht*

~ Pesach 5778 ~



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❧ Pesach 5778 ❧

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## ≈ INTRODUCTION ≈

Pesach is an apparent paradox of the greatest order. It's a holiday where we celebrate freedom from slavery and bondage and yet it entails the most preparation and hard work, never mind the associated expenses. Yet, when one thinks about it for even just a moment we clearly see how it is one of the most important holidays to transmit values and traditions to our dear children.

The word *Haggadah* is based on the verse: "*V'hagadita L'vincha* - you shall teach it to your children" (*Shemos 13,8*). This verse refers to the mitzvah which rests upon the parents to educate our children on the story of the Exodus, the laws and customs surrounding the holiday of Pesach, and Jewish traditions in general.

Furthermore, this verse is also the basis for the daily mitzvah of recalling our leaving Egypt. Not only did our ancestors leave Egypt but we too, each and every day leave the proverbial bondage and limitations presented to us by the physical world we live in, all in order to ultimately bring us to the land of Israel and to usher in an era when we are able to perform all the mitzvos of the Torah.

There's another famous verse we use with regard to educating children:

**"Chanoch L'Naar Al "Pi" Darkoi** - my friend once shared with me, homiletically speaking, that what we place in "their mouth - "pi", will set the trajectory for their future lives, as we say in English, "you are what you eat."

### ≈ **Generationally Educating our children**

The Gemora explains the verse:

"For Hashem knows that - Avraham Avinu- would command his sons and his *Home* - his wife - [educating his

family] that they keep the way of Hashem, that in this merit Avraham earned the love of Hashem...”

No effort made in this area is sufficient in proportion to the demands of our times. The future of the young generation depends upon this, “for if there are no baby goats - there are no adult goats- the baby goats need to become adult goats in the coming years.”

*(Based on Teachings of the Rebbe on Chinuch: p. 233. Toras Menachem vol. 15, p271. See Vayikra Rabbah 11;7)*

Ironically, this parable fits all too well with the Holiday of Pesach when some have the custom of singing the traditional song at the end of the Seder, “*Chad Gadya* - one Goat”.

Not only are our kids or future adults, the values and traditions we instill within them now as children will serve them and their children and grandchildren for generations to come. What they see by the Seder will be what they pass over to the next generation and perhaps even more than anything else. The enormous opportunity and power we have as parents is not to be missed. Let us reflect on this tremendous merit and responsibility and attempt to guide and educate them accordingly, with joy and inspiration. So, even if the toil is great the returns will be greater and all worth it.

Practically speaking, we live in a world of chaos. Seemingly many things that happen in the world and throughout history show up as quite chaotic. It is particularly at the Seder table, where we have a beautiful pre-established “order” with so much meaning and depth that we have an awesome chance to set order in the minds and hearts of our children. As a friend of mine once shared with me a thought from the Imrei Emes of Vizhnits, 2 words he loved in the Hebrew language, “*Hakol B’Seder*”. Which has a double nuance 1) “All is good” and 2) “All is from the Seder”. The way we conduct ourselves at the seder is from where we set the trajectory of our children’s lives. Let us take this to heart.

## ∞ Disclosure

As in all Halachic matters, issues that pertain to Jewish Law, one should always contact competent Halachic authorities. One should not draw any conclusions of their own or make any assumptions, particularly with regard to Pesach which includes numerous Biblical commandments, positive and prohibitive ones.

In conclusion, if this booklet helps even 1 more child get the proper and complete education, deserving of every Jewish child, it is all worth the hours put into researching and publishing it.

Warmest wishes, for a beautiful and meaningful Pesach for you and your Children,

Rabbi Mordechai Zev Hecht,  
Ben Rav Sholem DovBer  
Ben HaRav Yakov Yehudah Hecht ZT"l

## ≈ THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF PESACH FOR CHILDREN ≈

### 1. Baking & Distributing Shmurah Matzah

The Rebbe writes to someone in a letter (*Igros Kodesh* 19,p.319) "...specifically regarding *shemurah matzah*, as you surely know as well my father in law, the Rebbe related that a number of students underwent obvious change in essence through being involved in the baking of *shemurah matzah*".

On many other occasions the Rebbe expressed great emphasis and personal satisfaction upon receiving news that people distributed *shemurah matzah*, even to young children in kindergarten.

(*Igros Kodesh* vol.12,p.450)

*Shemurah Matzah* is referred to in the Holy Zohar (as "bread of healing and bread of faith", giving it to others, even a piece, as the Rebbe would often do, is literally sharing these beneficial components. So giving it to other is fulfilling multiple biblical commandments, both a mitzvah associated with Pesach and Love your fellow Jew as yourself.

### 2. Fast of the First Born

In commemorating the fact that the Jewish first born were separated from death during the plague of the first-born, which occurred on Erev Pesach, it is incumbent upon all first born males for their father (or mother), to fast. It is customary for the father to fast for the child until his Bar Mitzvah.

In order to avoid fasting for the entire day one may, and it has now become a widespread custom, to partake in a seudas mitzvah such as *bris milah*, *pidyon haben*, or a *siyum*-a torah completion & meal.

(*Shulchan Aruch* 470,1/ *Rama* 470,2/  
*Mishna Berurah* 470,9,10,18/  
*See Aruch HaShulchan* 407,4,5)

### 3. Siyum & Children

As mentioned above a first born may rely on a siyum in order to eat all day erev Pesach.

Some guidelines for a siyum may include:

- 1) The meal that accompanies the conclusion of a tractate of Gemora.
- 2) The meal that accompanies the conclusion of one of the *Sedarim* [although cute, not to be confused with the *Seder* of Pesach] - 6 orders of Mishna. These are universally considered a seudas mitzvah. It is preferable to arrange such a siyum.
 

*(S" A, Rama 551,10)*
- 3) Additionally, one may prepare a meal for the completion of at least 3 tractates of Mishnayos with a commentary.
 

*(Reb Simcha Bunim Cohen, in the name of Reb Aharon Felder, in the name of Reb Moshe Feinstein ZT" L)*
- 4) ...additionally, one may make a Siyum and Seudas Mitzvah on the completion of one of the books of Tanach with a Commentary, which creates feelings of Joy (*Igros Moshe, CM, 1, 157*). When necessary, in all of the above cases children may make the siyum upon completion of the section of Torah and have adults included.
- 5) The Rebbe writes, based on many early authorities, in *Shaar Halacha U'Minhag* that one may make a siyum on Mishechtas of Talmud Yerushalmi [which are much shorter], *Misechtos Kallos* - minor tractates, and *Avos D'Rebbe Nosson* [which can be found in the back of *Misechta Avodah Zarah*] as well.
 

*(SH"U 2, p.112. See all sources there.)*

### 4. Not Eating Matzah Erev Pesach

Children are often hungry, as adults are erev Pesach, yet one is prohibited from eating Matzah erev Pesach in order to maintain the speciality of it for the seder itself. This refers

to matzah suitable to be used at the seder. Egg matzah, according to some, and similar matzahs which are not permissible for the average person, may be eaten until the end of the 6th hour and even beyond if necessary. Children may follow the lenient views. [Additionally, many have the custom not to eat matzah already from Purim or Rosh Chodesh Nissan].

*(See below Sec 14 regarding children eating Gebrochts/  
S" A 471,2, See Rema/  
Noda B'Yehudah as brought in Shaarei Teshuvah, 444,1)*

## 5. The Seder

The seder, also translated as 'the Order'. Precisely this it should be - nice and orderly- and in order to do this you need to be prepared accordingly. At the seder on each night of the first 2 nights of Pesach one is obligated to perform (6) biblical mitzvos. The six that we bring here (1-6). Additionally we bring you various other rabbinical mitzvos, customs and practices surrounding the seder and the Passover Holiday.

## 6. Relate the Story of the Exodus from Egypt

The Torah commands every Jewish parent to relate to his children the story of our exodus from Egypt on the night of Pesach. This is the essence of the Seder observance. It is therefore important that parents involve their children accordingly. Children of all ages particularly 5 or 6 years of age are included, each on their own level of comprehension. The *Mah Nishtanah* is one central way we do this at the seder. They ask, and we answer, accordingly. Parents also recite the Mah Neshtana [we all ask..] Parents should not add to the established Haggadah and be very careful not to drag out the seder so that the kids don't fall asleep.

*(See Exodus 13,8/Mishna Berurah 472,50/  
Aruch Hashulchan 472,15/SH"U 2,p.129)*

## 7. Eat Matzah

One is obligated to eat 2 k'zaysim matzah on each of the first 2 nights of Pesach. This applies to children of chinuch age as well. If it is difficult, 1 k'zayis is sufficient. Adults should try to eat these K'zaysim in *Kday Achilas Pras* - preferably in 2-4 minutes, children may be lenient, in accordance with the maximum opinion of up to 6-9 minutes.

(S"A, 475,1)

## 8. Eat Marror:

Even Children, parents are obligated to educate them to eat a k'zayis of bitter herbs. Obviously since it's difficult for children to eat a k'zayis of 'bitter' herbs such as horseradish, romaine lettuce or French endives may suffice. Similarly, children should eat the *Korech* sandwich as well.

(See A"R S"A 472,25)

## 9. Drink 4 cups of wine

*"Children who have reached the age of chinuch and understand the holiness of Yomtov, should be given 4 cups to drink, the first which is used to make kiddush, and to drink the 2nd cup over which we recite the Haggadah, and for the 3rd cup over which we recite the Birchas Hamazon - grace after meals, and for the 4th cup over which we recite the Hallel- praises to Hashem for our freedom."*

A child's cup just as an adult's cup, must be large enough to hold a *reviis* of grape juice (or wine)[minimum 2.9 oz]. Adults are obligated to drink the greater portion of a *reviis* of the four cups, if not the whole cup each time. Children, however must only drink *Molei Lugmav* - a cheekful.

*(Alter Rebbe's S"A: 472,25/Otzar HaHalchos 173,15. The A"R makes no mention of wine vs. grape juice with children. However the A"R did already say in 483,1 that the 4 cups may be recited over wine or chamar medina - special drink of the region, which surely includes grape juice. He also mentioned that if wine is unhealthy or will cause one to become intoxicated and unable to continue the seder, one should strongly consider and accommodate that reality).*

Even though essentially the Father - the one leading the seder can share his wine with the other participants, it is *Mitzvah Min Hamuvchar*- preferable, that each participant has his or her own cup to drink the 4 cups from at the seder.

Additionally, it is wise to empower a child by giving them as much possible so as to feel a part of the seder like all the adults. Each child should have their own Haggadah (with pictures).

*(Hisvadyus 5748, 3,p.111, fn.258/Likutei Sichos 32,26)*

If the *Tinokos* - little kids can't wait you may give them something small to eat before the conclusion of the first 2 cups & *Shulchan Orech*- the meal. According to some opinions you may even give them matzah to eat.

*(ibid loc. 23,24)*

## 10. Eat the Afikomen

Children who have reached the age of Chinuch must be trained to eat the *Afikomen*.

It is customary for the Adults to eat two *kizaysim* of matzah for afikomen (unless it's difficult). Children, however are only required to eat 1 *kizayis*.

Knowing that it has become a widespread custom amongst many, we still do not steal the Afikomen. *[This practice stems from the Gemora and is a debate between Rashi, who says we shall hurry up because of the kids, and the Rambam who says we shall play a game of intercept with the Matzah to keep the kids awake. As to the applicable meaning of the Gemora various halachic codifiers differ in its implementation in practice]*. In fact, it has never been a Chabad custom (*Beis Harav*) to do so - as educating children to steal is contrary to good education. *(See Gemora Brochos 5b; "steal from a thief and feel the taste of stealing")*. [Finding other ways to keep the children up is a worthy idea. Offering the afikomen to a child who behaves nicest at the seder, may be an alternative. Additionally we find a custom to place the Afikomen away, to hide it and say: "*Tov Hadavar L'Shemira*

- this is good for protection" [Pesach is referred to as *Leil Shemurim* - night of protection] - which is based on the Zohar Parshas Pinchas, 251]

## 11. Recite Hallel

A child who understands the concept of praising Hashem for redeeming us from the Egyptian bondage should be trained to recite the Hallel at the Seder (as he does the 2nd cup *ibid*).

## 12. Reclining

All men are required to recline on their left sides while drinking the 4 cups of wine, as well as eating the matzah. Boys who perform these mitzvos should be taught to similarly to recline.

(*Shulchan Aruch* 489,1)

## 13. Drinking After Afikomen

"One should not separate himself from the masses." This principle applies to drinking after the eating of the Afikomen,(except of course for the 2 final cups) as it is a widespread practice and most preferred not to drink afterwards [some are lenient after *Chatzos* - midnight]. Similarly with regards to children they too should be educated to do so, but one may be lenient with children in this regard

(See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 491,1/*SH"U* p.127)

## 14. Gebrachts - Matzah Shruyah

We are all careful that the matzoh should not get wet, particularly with water. We should even be careful with the crumbs. Therefore when we do *Mayim Achronim* - before *bentching*, we should not wipe our lips with water as we usually do

(*SH"U* 2, p.126).

## 15. Counting the Omer

Beginning on the 2nd night of Pesach is the mitzvah of *Sefiras HaOmer* - the counting of the Omer. Parents are obligated to train children who have reached the age of chinuch (appx. 6 or 7) in this mitzvah and are to make a blessing. If a child forgot to count the omer the entire night, he counts during the daytime without bracha, then, on subsequent nights he may count with a brocha, otherwise he continues to count each night but without a brocha.

Therefore, if a boy was a minor and becomes Bar Mitzvah between Pesach and Shavuot, continues to count with a Brocha after his bar mitzvah, even though he started as minor being that his counting as a minor fulfills the concept of *temimmos* - complete weeks even with that transition from minor to Bar Mitzvah. If the child did not count accordingly till he became a Bar Mitzvah he may not begin counting with a blessing afterwards. Yet, the child who is now Bar Mitzvah should surely count without a Brocha because this is the proper way to fulfill the mitzvah at this point.

*(See Shulchan Aruch O"C Sec. 489, 7,8/ See Mishna Berurah there 33,35/  
See Shaarei Teshuvah 489, 20/ see Shus Pri Ha'aretz 3,10,7/  
Birkei Yosef & Shaarei Teshuvah 489,20/ Mishna Brurah 489,5 & 6)*

## 16. Potato starch & Customs

Pesach is that time of year where traditions are as broad as humanity itself. Some of the customs have made their way into halacha and are considered law and should and must be received as such. Others not so much. One should discuss these matters with their own personal learned rabbi to see what is best for them and their family. Even in Chabad circles this is the case.



~ PART II: ~

**“EDUCATING CHILDREN  
TO BE GRATEFUL”**

~ *Based on the Haggadah* ~

*Hakaras Hatov* - Gratefulness, a word that fills our everyday as human beings and Jews, starting with *Modeh Ani* in the wee morning, where we turn to G-d and thank G-d for our life itself, before and beyond any additives and acquired tangibles. All the way up till the moment we go to sleep at night and say the *Shema* before we retire, which includes a final little verse that reads: “into your hands I place my soul, G-d of truth...”

Judaism is filled with signs and practices of gratefulness, being thankful for every breath we breathe and then of course every tangible item we own. Every time we eat or drink even a glass of water, a candy the size of a dime, even a sunflower seed, there is a blessing, and it is our human way of saying - Thank You! Thank you for creating me, the item at hand and life itself.

Yet, we as humans are deeply challenged. Often we find it hard to see it this way. Often enough we want more and more - our thankfulness and gratefulness shoved aside and our lust and desire placed upfront and center.

Pesach, we set aside and even entirely remove the leaven, the proverbial ego - and we bring out the matzah, the proverbial humility, not just physically but spiritually as well. It is precisely here we can open the treasure house our sages ob”m have placed in the words - the golden gems - of the Haggadah. In this collection I will attempt to show how gratefulness is at the absolute core of our religion, faith and practice.



## ∞ Gratefulness

Jews are so grateful for the fact that G-d has taken us out of slavery and bondage from Egypt and all slavery throughout history that we are actually obligated to recognize this idea each and every day and of course by the seder itself by showing our gratitude as *the Mishna in pesachim Chapter 10, Mishna 10 states:*

*"...Therefore, we are obligated to give thanks, and praise and to sing and extol and exalt and to uplift and to beautify and to bless the one who has done these miracles for our ancestors and for us...That G-d has given us our freedom, turned sadness to joy, mourning to holiday, darkness to light...and so we say: "Praised are you G-d".*

It's not always necessarily a particular act or a mitzvah "gratefulness" - rather it's a notion, a heartfelt motion, a feeling of the heart. It's a yearning and a draw towards a profound value that affects every mitzvah. It can be synonymous with love and passion and proximity to something great and precious, something we admire and respect and love and treasure..

It is precisely right at the outset of the Haggadah that we set the trajectory of the evening as we say:

***"Hay Lachma Anya - this is the bread of affliction..."***

We are sitting at the Seder, dressed to the nines, decorated with nicest utensils and vessels, we lean as kings and we drink wine and serve a feast fit for kings, yet, our bread is a "poor man's bread" - how are we to grapple with that reality? It makes no sense?

Rather, human beings are riddled, naturally, instinctively with negative traits and tendencies the only real way to be cured of these negative passions which cause so much strife in the world is to ponder the futility of material wealth-without-purpose and to internalize the awareness that all-comes-from-Hashem, our health and material well-being as well as all our talents and positions in life. This way, regardless of one's situation in life, we will realize that all has been assigned to us

by G-d, to fulfill our mission in life, and we will indeed be satisfied with our lot.

One would think, that in light of all their own challenges in life a flood of compassion and concern should have surfaced for those who are even less fortunate than we are. Yet, we see that in reality, this may not be the case. Indifference to the plight of others is still rampant among us. The reason for this is "*Hashta Hacha* - only because we are in Exile - Golus," rather, had the *Shechina* - the Divine Presence been revealed and Moshiach be present, things would be different. Brotherly love and gladness of heart, withstanding all, would be at hand. Our prayer and wish is, like we say each day in our prayers *Haraynee Mikabel* - I take upon myself to love my fellow Jew, here too, we begin with a prayer and a commitment to love and comradery and dedication to humanity and goodness of society - graciously and gratefully. (Based on *Vayaged Moshe-Darash Moshe*, 11)

Yet, truth be told, we surely know how to be even better, although we can and must be *milamed zechus*- always find the good for people and see only the good in our fellow man, we can all afford a few moments to educate ourselves how to be *even better*, more grateful human beings and Jews, *even* in the diaspora and the exile, *even Hashta Hacha*. Because, in our own unique way - tonight at the seder table - with great humility - seeing the poorness and weakness in materialism-without-purpose indeed - seeing it as a poor man's entity - for as kings we see greatness in truly great things - we are free - like in the messianic age - we too can find greatness in and through the process of humility - so here goes.

### ∞ No longer in Egypt

One of the groundbreaking statements of the Haggadah is:

**"If G-d did not take us out of Mitzrayim...  
we and our children would still be..."**

The obvious question that comes to everyone's mind is why are we focusing literally on "IF's" some 3000 years later? The fact and reality is that we were let go and we are no longer in Egypt, so what's the Author's point here?

There's a stark reality that must be noted, one that is historical and factual for all generations past present and future. There were 3 considered options for the Jews in Egypt: 1) Pharaoh 2) War 3) G-d. With regard to 1) Pharaoh, he would never have let us go! 2) Even if the Jewish people would have rallied all their able fighting bodies they would not have been able to defeat the Egyptian army, both insufficient in numbers and more so in spirit, and considering how many were born slaves, 'it would be a flock of sheep against the Lion'. Rather what we are left with is the 3rd. If G-d would not have redeemed us...stop there - G-d got us into Egypt and it was G-d and G-d alone who redeemed us.

Now that we are free, now that our ancestors and legacy are free, free to serve whom we chose, free to serve Hashem as proud and able bodies, we are to be infinitely grateful.

Even if somehow man would've fought their way out of Egypt successfully, then it would've been a physical freedom but our spiritual freedom may still perhaps be bound. But, now that Hashem alone freed us, the master of the universe, the giver of the Torah, the quantifier and qualifier of our souls, shows us that we the Jewish people are indeed free and not bound to any other nationality or way of life, rather we are to Hashem alone.

Gratefulness - quite frankly means that we appreciate that G-d came and saved us because he chose us and loves us, for this we are indeed forever grateful.

*(Abarbanel/ Maasei Hashem/ Malbim/ Hashir ViHashevoach)*

## ∞ **Blunt his Teeth**

One of the most exciting parts of the seder has to be, the part where we *strike back* at the wicked son:

*"Hakeh es Shinav - blunt his teeth"*

Seemingly, the violent reaction seems to be a bit extreme?! What of the verse that states, *“the words of the wise are heard through gentleness (Koheles 9;17)”*. Wouldn't gentle affection be more effective than such unremitting harshness? Are we really saying blunt his teeth? Is this literal or a figure of speech, a sort of coined phrase if you like?

In answering this question we find some great Torah masters like the literal sense of this statement:

“Sometimes, unfortunately, we find ourselves in a situation where we must act with force in order to counter the dangerous statements made by malicious or irresponsible individuals, who endanger the health - physical or spiritual - of others. [After all this would be in accordance essentially with code of Jewish law, Laws of Talmud Torah - which “essentially” permits hitting a child in the stream of education etc.]

*(Reb Moshe-Haggadah Shel Pesach Beis Vaynshtock)*

Furthermore, seemingly, since he is really begging for an argument, do not answer him, lest you be drawn into his web. Rather, *“blunt his teeth”* so that he will be too stunned to corrupt others with his wicked ways. Of such a person, Shlomo HaMelech said, *“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also become like him”*. Sometimes you must put a child, a wicked one, in his proper place.

### ∞ Shein - Tooth

All of the above may be true, however, today, with the love in my heart and the gratefulness in my soul, and the true understanding of the delicateness of the souls of our generation and times - I am not having it. For we all know well the classic Mishna in Ethics which states: *“The stern one is not a teacher, a bashful student is not a student”* - one must ask, and a teacher should answer.

Similarly we find in the Talmud of *Kedushin p.40*:

*“Rabbi Tarfon says: nothing beneficial comes through anger; in the end he is left with nothing but the anger itself. And a good person*

*is given the fruit of his actions to taste. And with regard to any person who does not engage in the study of Bible, nor the study of Mishna, nor the desired mode of behavior, one should vow to not derive benefit from him, and one should have no contact with him, as it is stated: "Nor sit in the seat of the scornful" (Psalms 1:1). The seat of this person is certainly the seat of the scornful, as he is engaged in nothing but idle matters."*

As much as the scornful-one is not to be contacted..., one is also never to get angry. I can't think of a greater display of anger than 'hitting', so this is sort of a check-mate.

Rather, I truly believe the true teacher the true "Maggid" - the leader of the seder table - in the Haggadah doesn't hit - or even blunt teeth, rather what we're saying here is something entirely different and what that just might be is as follows.

The Gemara in Bava Kama teaches us that one of the three categories of damages done by an animal is called "shein" (lit: tooth). This category of damages is identified as being motivated by a desire for enjoyment and pleasure (*hana'ah l'hezeikah*). If "teeth" represents the desire for pleasure and enjoyment, "blunting the teeth" of the wicked son can be understood as: teaching him to control this pursuit of self-indulgence. If his selfishness and desire for self-gratification can be tempered (blunted!), he will be open to the true purpose of the redemption - to enhance our ability to serve G-d. Looking at what the wicked sons says: "What is this service to you?" What appears to be bothering him is the "service". The wicked son, if he is self-centered, can't understand the concept of "service." So his redemption would not serve its intended purpose.

In other words, you the one who purports that this whole seder is not for you etc. even though you are physically present and somewhat participating, but still bothered by the "service" of G-d, this is perhaps only because of [chametz in your bloodstream] of your physical indulgence. You stuff your mouth, and chew over ideas which feed your body and mind all sorts of physical indulgences. Our response is: De-fang him. Remove the sharpness and bitterness from his bite. Smooth out

his rough edges, heal his wounds and allow the goodness in his soul to surface.

“If only you would blunt your teeth”, if you would just change your diet, lessen your materialistic intake - you would see things differently.”

How many Jews, fellow friends do we know that love Jewish culture, the music, the love and friendliness aspect of it all, gefilteh fish and cholent, touring Israel etc. etc. Rather they are simply bothered by the dogma of it all. The seeming restrictiveness of it all?!

So yes, we hit the wicked child alright, “we hit back” at the *Hanah L’Hezekah* - the part of him that is out for the lust and lure of our world, but with ideas and inspiration and another way of seeing life. Not with our physical hands and not in his physical teeth.

Educating our children and students towards redirecting our self-centered aspirations to a life of giving and serving, with faith, is an imperative in today’s consumer culture.

*(Based on Haggadah Ki Yishalcha Bincha)*

## ∞ Shein- Teaching

Furthermore, we can support this idea by adding a most interesting explanation on this: The word *Shinav* - is the same root letters as in the words of *Shoneh* - meaning teaching, like in *Mishna* . Blunt the way your seeing the world, replace it with the way the Torah teaches and sees the world - and you will see how all the teaching of our holy Torah apply to you as well. One who doesn’t study Torah is bound to remove himself from our inner circle. Faith needs to be fed with knowledge. Not only in theory but in practice, joyfully and graciously. Start by asking, and don’t stop biting and chewing, but digest only that which is good for you and beneficial for you now and long term. By ingesting harmful and toxic ideas you inevitably cause long term harm

*(See Kiddushin 40 ibid)*



Here is another perspective in educating our children in the spirit of gratefulness from an old Haggadah I found online:

### ∞ **The wicked son and his temptations**

*“Regarding the expression, “blunt his teeth” I heard the following explanation from my grandfather and teacher, Rabbi Avraham Naftali Sheier, of blessed memory, who heard it from his father, the master, Rabbi Tebele Sheier, of blessed memory:*

*When the wicked child says, “What is this service to you” he shows his insolent rejection of and contempt for the commandments. For he calls the eating of matzah and maror avodah, “service,” in the sense of a burden when he says, “What is this avodah to you.” But he doesn’t do the same regarding the Pesach offering, since it consumed in such a stately manor (grilled food was the preferred manner of cuisine for royalty), and its aroma is tempting. As a result he desires to partake of the Pesach offering. When one denies a person such good food and he sees others eating it while they refuse to share it, one “blunts his teeth” as a way of aggravating him. [What a great explanation].*

*The author of the Haggadah hints at this when he says that the wicked child, “removed himself from the community.” The rasha did this by showing contempt for the commandments. However, he still desires to partake of the Passover offering for it certainly looks and smells delicious. He wants to taste it like the rest of the gathering who are doing so in fulfillment of the commandments of the Holy One. Therefore, “blunt his teeth” (deny him a portion). Instead, when the matzah and the maror are before you, say to him, “It because of this (the matzah and the maror) that G-d did this for me. I am fulfilling the commandment of eating bitter herbs for the sake of what G-d did for me when I went out of Egypt. “If you had been in Egypt, you would not have been redeemed” and would have disappeared during the three days of darkness like all of your fellows who were killed at that time.*

*I found a textual proof for the interpretation of my grandfather and teacher, Rabbi Tebele Sheier in Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1;12:*

*“Rabbi Abahu said, “While Moses and the people of Israel were still eating the Passover offering in Egypt, the Holy One had already struck the Egyptians, as is written, “And it*

*was about the middle of the night..." (Exodus 12). This is the meaning of the following verse according to Rabbi Abahu: "While the king was inclining on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance." (Song of Songs 1:12) The fragrance is a reference to aroma of the Passover offering that came to mask the smell of Egyptian blood.*

*The sages explain that, "the smiting of the Egyptians by their first born," (Psalms 136) refers to the killing of the elders by the first born of Egypt. When the elders refused to let the Israelites go free in order to save their first born children, the first born attacked them. So the smell of blood came from the death of the elders as well as the first born who died in any case during the tenth plague. The smell of death was so great in Egypt that God made the smell of the Passover offering as good as the aroma of the Garden of Eden. As a result, the Israelites were "dying" to eat the Passover offering. They said to Moses, "Give us a bit of what you are eating!" Moses answered: G-d has said to me, 'the foreigner may not eat it!' They then removed the non-Israelites from their midst. They were still "dying" to try the Passover offering, so they said to Moses, "Give us a bit of what you are eating!" Moses answered: God has said to me, Your slaves must be circumcised and then you may eat of the Passover offering. They immediately circumcised their servants. They were still ravenous for the Passover offering. They said to Moses, "Give us a bit of what you are eating!" Moses answered: G-d has said to me quite succinctly, "The uncircumcised may not eat of it." Immediately the Israelites all took their knives and were ready to circumcise themselves. Who actually performed the circumcision? Rabbi Berechiah said, Moses, Aaron and Joshua. One performed the circumcision, one drew out the drop of blood, and one poured the cup of wine.*

*Thus, the blood of the Passover offering and the blood of circumcision mixed together. The Holy One took each of them and kissed each one as it is written. Now I passed by you and saw you wallowing in blood, and I said to you, 'you shall live by your blood,' yea, I said to you, You shall live by your blood. This is a reference to the blood of the Passover and the blood of circumcision.*

*In the end even though they were all dying to eat the Passover offering, they could not have any until they fulfilled all the other commandments. The Passover was only given to those whose teeth were blunted by having to wait. [We're telling the Rasha bite your teeth, hold on, the tasty part is coming, if you could only hold on ]*  
 (Maarechet Heidenheim 1898/Sefaria.com)

What we need to understand is that the wicked son's issue is *merely* his lust and want for more, spontaneously. We need to train and educate this child to learn how to conquer the lust, perform the mitzvos, and we regain the child. Had the wicked son only been able to be grateful for what he already has or to earn his take in due time, the results would be very different. It is often that children ask for things often enough cry for things or even pout and pant for things, we the educator must learn to be in control and see the big picture of this particular child's approach. Often enough it's not the child or student but the parent or educator that needs to practice heir or her skill in dealing *wisely* with this kind of child or challenge.

We can go as far as saying that each one of the 4 sons has something to contribute to the other, how much more so the parents and the teachers. Educating and training a child may cause him to grind and blunt his teeth, but so let it be, for in the long run the child will benefit from it.

### ∞ The wicked son in Numerology

There is another esoteric way of approaching this as well:

This idea is right there in the words of the Haggadah. In the Hebrew language, every letter has a numerical value, called *gematria*. Therefore every word has a number, the sum of its letters. We can learn hidden messages by looking at the numbers behind Hebrew words.

A wicked person is called a *rasha* in Hebrew. The word for a pure person is *tzaddik*. The numerical value of *rasha* is 570. The numerical value of *tzaddik* is 204. The difference between them is 366.

Beneath every *rasha* is a hidden *tzaddik*. We just need to remove the layers of evil and we will find his goodness. Numerically, we have to remove 366 to get 204 from 570.

So we must blunt his teeth. "His teeth" in Hebrew is *shinav*. Its numerical value...366. De-fang the *rasha*, and you will find his inner *tzaddik*.

*(Based upon an article on chabad.org)*

Gratefulness; you lust with your teeth the wrong things. Re-educate the way you see things and you will naturally as a Jew come to love and cherish and be grateful for the awesome heritage that is quintessentially you.

### ∞ Keep Talking to your children

*"Vchol HaMarbeh L'Saper B'Yetzias Mitzrayim Harei Zeh Meshubach -  
One who increases to tell over the story of the Exodus is Praise worthy"*

What is the author teaching us here?

- 1) One can easily conclude that with any mitzvah the more the merrier, why mention this particularly with the mitzvah of telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt?
- 2) On the other hand we can ask, why talk more than you have to? On the contrary we have an ancient tradition not to double up and not to lengthen what can be short, simple and sweet. Why with the story of the Exodus we say to elaborate?
- 3) Furthermore, aren't we so very concerned with the children falling asleep, elaborating would seemingly be counterproductive to completing the (6 primary) mitzvos of the seder night with all the kinderlach on board?

- 4) Additionally, what does it mean, *Meshubach*-praiseworthy. If I did not elaborate and just kept it short and just briefly told the story it wouldn't be praiseworthy?. What does praiseworthy mean in this context?

So let us begin to explain this awesome statement of the Author of the Haggadah with the following:

- 1) One would be inclined to believe that brevity and short & sweet would be preferred. This statement comes to teach us on the contrary that in this matter particularly we should actually elaborate. Because, elaborating is what one does when experiencing a miracle. Take for example a miracle happens to someone, and you just retell the riveting miraculous tale by keeping it very short and sweet, is anyone really gonna give it much attention and will it impact the listeners, we all know that it won't. If we are under the impression, as we already mentioned that every single one of us has to see it as though he went through Egypt and was freed from this exile and bondage, we all have awesome riveting tales to tell over, and the more details the more we really get the greatness of the story. The more details the greater the narrative of the awesome miracle that is our past and present history of freedom. Can we ever truly say enough words expressing our gratefulness?!
- 2) The Talmud in Brochos actually states that one who repeats any daily prayer such as Shema (or Modim) it is considered *Megunah*-repugnant. One would therefore be inclined to deduce the same here, rather the Author makes it abundantly clear that this Talmudic idea does not apply here. It is not *Megunah* but rather is *Meshubach* - praiseworthy.
- 3) Truth be told, even though we do need to and should elaborate, we are required to do so after the main

mitzvos of the seder are performed. Once we complete the seder, then we should talk about the whole story. Like Maaseh of Rebbe Eliezer etc., they went passed midnight till the wee hours of the morning talking. Particularly after midnight, after the time the seder needs to be completed, especially if we want to assure that the kids remain awake until the completion of the seder..

- 4) One would presume that if one is free, then that's all that matters. There are no levels in freedom. All you need is to recognize that we are no longer in slavery and bondage in Egypt and we are good to go. This in fact is not the case for the Author wants to show us that there are many grades and levels to freedom. If one can study torah only few minutes a day verses someone who can do so for 2 hours a day, verses someone who can sit and study torah all day long and G-d provides for him and his family, clearly we see freedom is not flat but rather it is diverse and profound. If we can turn around and speak for hours about miracles, past and present, to the extent where we can do so for hours, then our freedoms are broader and deeper and greater than we may have ever imagined and even expected.
- 5) "One who tells the story of the Exodus of Egypt is praiseworthy". The reason for this because, if someone is grateful and appreciative for all the good that G-d has done for them and goes on to tell the story in graphic detail, dramatically emphasizing the facts, this has an impact both on him and the listeners.

*(Based on Abudraham/ Ki Yisaahlcha Binchah / Yalkut Shimoni)*

We sit around the Seder table, with all the wonderful foods, wines and dishes, everyone dressed in their best Holiday garb, all after preparing for weeks - gratefulness is the most elementary attribute that must be present at the seder table - if we lack this gratefulness we lack the bare bones of the

seder table. If we live with resentment and pain, and we want more and can not be grateful, are we really free?!

### ∞ Gratefulness in every detail, always.

My favorite part of the haggadah is Dayeinu. The part where we show gratitude in it's most complete form.

*“Dayeinu - it would've been enough”*

Wait! What?!

Seriously?! how can we say it would've been enough?! Take for example the Torah, “if G-d would take us out of Egypt, bring us to Mt. Sinai and would not give us the Torah Dayeinu- it would've been enough”. How could we possibly say this, isn't the whole purpose of the redemption for us to become a nation at Sinai, receive the Torah and enter the Holy Land? Otherwise why even bother, would it be enough for us to just die in the dessert or end up as nomads?

We will attempt to answer this awesome question in 3 ways all leading us to an even greater level of appreciation of our freedom and relationship with G-d.

### ∞ 1) Figure of Speech:

The Malbim explains this based on the verse in Tehillim, which we actually recite Shabbos in shul in the prayer of Nishmas Kol Chai: *“Eilu Phinu Molei Shira Kayom - if the sea were ink, and the dry land paper we would not have enough words to express our love and gratitude for G-d nor expound on his greatness... So does this mean we don't thank G-d. Does this mean we don't bother to begin to write and tell about His greatness?! Rather, we do. Of course we do. Rather, this statement is a figure-of-speech, a power-of-expression in the words of our sages to open our minds and our imaginations to the extent and degree of how awesome G-d is. Similarly in the Haggadah, in order for the Author to express the individual greatness of each one of these awesome events and miracles, and to our express our profound “gratitude and thanks” and to*

“praise” Hashem for all his “goodness” - we write and state each one of the stanzas of the Dayeinu as we do.

## ∞ 2) In Context:

The Shalah HaKodosh writes that everything along the way of the Exodus was awesome. Each step and stage was miraculous. Each stanza of the Dayeinu expresses this awesomeness and truthfully each item in it's own right was huge, so huge that when you see that on top of all of that G-d did yet even more, how much more so the hugeness. Take for example the promise that G-d made that we will leave Egypt with *Rechush Gadol* - richness, not only did we go free and leave with the wealth of Mitzrayim which we regained in the plague of darkness amongst many other resources, when the Egyptian army drowned in the sea, their Jewels and gems washed up on the seashore for the Jews to collect, making them even richer. So yes, in each one of the items of the Dayeinu prayer in a certain way, each to their own, it would have sufficed. But G-d didn't settle for less, but rather literally and proverbially went for the Gold. For this we say literally it would have sufficed in each category of miracle, but in the end G-d did even more - and for this we are endlessly grateful.

The third approach is perhaps the most profound:

## ∞ 3) Our actual connection and relationship with G-d:

In the *Medrash Yalkut Shemoni* it is brought that each item of the Dayeinu happened because of Hashem. Hashem himself performed many of the plagues in nature and above nature. He wiped out the First born Egyptian and saved us. He took us out of Egypt, not through any ministering angels but Him alone.

G-d Himself was there for us, saving us, protecting us, showing us his love and empathy and affection. So in each stage we were connected to Hashem. So, yes, if G-d would have taken us out of Egypt and not taken us to Sinai, and not given us the Torah - Dayeinu, it would be enough and why

would it be enough because either way we were connected to and had Hashem present. He was always there standing right by us, performing everything for us.

Often in life we say to our loved ones our children and our students that our relationships are dependant on some grandiose item and return, if and when a certain event will happen then all will be great. Dayeinu is teaching us, "it's always great"! Right here and now, with whatever we have, regardless of promises or conditions or prerequisites or desires, as long as we are together and connected to you G-d- *Dayeinu* - it is truly enough.

How much more so when we have ALL of those things we can ever wish for as enumerated in the Dayeinu in it's entirety for sure we stand in deep gratitude and gratefulness.

As we sit around the Seder table and drink wine and eat meat and all sorts of delicacies in the comfort and presence of our family and friends who are with us, we should ask ourselves how grateful are we?! How much do we appreciate 1) "everything" 2) "everyone" 3) "our spiritual connection and our blessings from above" - so that we can truly turn around and say, Dayeinu - it is sufficient and Thank you Hashem for all of it and for you, and until you bring us back with Eliyahu Hanavi to Jerusalem and reestablish our nation "as in days of old" - we wait and anticipate and pray for the ultimate and truest completion of Dayeinu. Speedily Today. Amen.

### ∞ Joy Fosters Gratefulness

"Man was born to toil" (*Job 5,7*). This is actually an ancient Jewish adage expounded upon at length in the Talmud. For the hustlers and workaholics amongst us this really makes sense and explains it all. But for those of us who only want a *shorter* work week, and *more vacation days* this adage can come across as somewhat - *oppressive*.

Oppressive or not, the real question is: "are we happy"? Are workaholics more happy than those who work less, or is it

vice versa: more vacation = more happiness. Or is it neither?! Is happiness something totally independent of our work or toil in life and completely dependant on our *attitude*?

There is Maimonidean law in his laws of the *Chagigah* - Holiday celebration offerings (which applied in Temple times) This law seems benign at first but when you stop and analyze it a moment, he is actually telling us something absolutely monumental, so deep and obligating - "No one talks about it". In Laws of Chagigah Chapter 3, law 6 he writes:: "One who missed offering the *Chagigah* - "Celebratory & Joy offerings" on the holiday is not obligated to bring it after the holiday..." This is in stark contrast to Maimonides laws of the Pesach offering (which have 16 Biblical commandments associated with it) in the Temple, where he rules if you miss the Passover offering, you (may) must make it up 30 days later on *Pesach Sheini* - the second Passover.

So we're thinking to ourselves: "not a problem", today there is no Temple and there are no offerings, not until Moshiach comes and the Temple is rebuilt anyway, so we're good. Shewww! But truth be told that's sort of correct but not really. Because although we don't bring an actual offering, we do essentially have prayers in place of the offerings and various actions we must take, including eating meat and drinking wine each day of the holiday, corresponding to this mitzvah in the Torah. So, the mitzvah of rejoicing in the holiday still stands, Temple or no Temple.

Perhaps, what Maimonides is actually saying is: if you fail to celebrate and rejoice in the Holiday, be happy about it physically and practically, you can NOT make up for it, you actually miss out on a major part of the Holiday (which has 6 Biblical commandments associated with it).

Maimonides continues in this law #6:"...it is about this kind of sin and the like which we say: 'it is a sin which can not be rectified' (Koheles 1;15)." The commentaries here expound on this and explain that which the Talmud states: "*Rabbi Shimon*

*Ben Menasia said: what is a sin that one can not repair, one who lies with a Ervah - e.g. a married women, begets a child, the child is a mamzer (lit. bastard child)". Because the child is a product of the sin, until that child passes on, the product of the sin remains, the repentance can not be had (Like a thief who says sorry, but doesn't or can't return the lost item, it's insufficient).*

WAIT!?! WHAT?! is Maimonides saying that celebrating the holiday of Passover but failing to truly celebrate and rejoice in it is a *carnal sin*?! My friends it seems so. Even if we can be happy tomorrow or next week or next year because of some pending awesome cause, we must BE HAPPY today, right now, regardless - is what Maimonides is actually saying. Maybe now we can understand why "no one wants to talk about it," It's hard to do.

My holy brothers and sisters, Passover can be HUGE and I mean painful and daunting for some, all the preparations all the hard work getting ready for this holiday, but we MUSTN'T allow it to bring us down, on the contrary we must find a way to make it FUN and JOYFUL not only for our peace of mind and our blood pressure, but because it's actually a Biblical commandment to BE HAPPY all holiday long - which when we do this we earn awesome blessings from the cosmos in return! And perhaps most importantly because if we want our children to truly embrace this holiday and enjoy it, we must find our inner happiness in it and relay those good feelings and joyful sentiments onto them so they too rejoice and appreciate all that we have and act gratefully towards Hashem.

Warmest wishes  
for a beautiful, meaningful, celebratory, and grateful  
and most joyous Pesach.

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