

Pesach *Divrei Torah* Project Nachum Amsel

I am in the process of putting out a *Hagaddah* called "Making Seder of the Seder" that asks "obvious" questions with deeper answers that I provide. Perhaps if these questions (below) were posed to students and they did research to try to find the answers (or discuss them with other students and teachers) this would lead to real *Divrei Torah* at the Seder that the students were invested in. Teachers who want to use this methodology may share the questions with parents before Pesach, as well, and get them involved in the process. Since the questions are issues that most adults have asked themselves over the years, these *Divrei Torah* should be of interest to adults, as well, at the family Seder.

Since I am putting out this *Hagaddah* myself, if anyone is interested in purchasing the *Hagaddah*, they should contact me at namsel@netvision.net.il. If anyone is interested in my answers to these specific questions, they should be in touch with me as well.

1. The meaning of the word "Seder" is order. But the seemingly illogical sequence and rituals of the Hagaddah seem like disorder and אי סדר. Why call it a Seder when the entire evening seems to be anything but an orderly process?
2. Why in Kiddush do we sanctify time? We understand the sanctification of place (such as the Temple) and the Jewish people (ממלכת כוהנים וגוי קדוש), but why time? And how is this connected to Pesach?
3. In Kiddush, it says twice that G-d chose us from all the other nations. But once it is in singular form (אשר בחר בנו מכל עם) and once in plural (אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים). Why is it mentioned twice in the Kiddush and why the change?
4. What is the significance of calling the green vegetable *Karpas* (it does not mean vegetable in Greek)? The only appearance of this word in Tanach is in reference to Purim!
5. **הא לחמא עניא** Why is it the only paragraph in the Hagaddah in Aramaic? Why invite people only now to come and join us to eat – after we have begun the Seder and after we have already sat down? Why repeat the similar phrases **כל דכפין** and **כל דצריך** in the paragraph – they seem superfluous? Why does this paragraph specifically mention that next year we will be free and next year in Jerusalem? What's the connection to the first part about inviting people to eat with us?
6. **מה נשתנה** – These cannot possibly be the questions that little children would ask their parents on Pesach night (how could they possibly know what will take place during the continuation of the Seder all night – tonight only Matzah, tonight only Maror)? How could they know we will dip twice when we only just dipped once? Why then did the Rabbis choose these 4 questions? And why aren't these questions ever specifically answered in the Hagaddah?

7. Why specifically two dippings and not three or one? How does this parallel and symbolize the Pesach story?
8. עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים – Either we were slaves to Pharaoh or slaves in Egypt. Why write both and what is the difference?
9. ואלו לא הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אבותינו ממצרים, הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו משעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים. Does the Hagaddah mean to tell us that even after 3000 years, we would still be slaves today if not for G-d's intervention? What could this possibly mean?
10. כל המרבה הרי זה משובח – There is no other Mitzvah that we are allowed to add to. In fact, adding to any Mitzvah is a prohibition (בל תוסיף). Why is this Mitzvah different? Why and how is this praiseworthy?
11. Why is the story of the Rabbis in Bnai Berak in the Hagaddah at all – simply to teach us that we should continue to say the Hagaddah all night (which no one today follows anyway – unlike on Shavuot or Hoshana Rabbi night)? And why did these Rabbis go to specifically Bnai Berak? According to Jewish law, they should have gone to Lod.
12. What is the story about Rabbi Elazar doing in the Hagaddah? It has absolutely nothing to do with Pesach and יציאת מצרים at all, but, rather, saying Shema each evening. Why, then, did the Rabbis choose to put it in the Hagaddah?
13. Four Sons – Four sons or four generations?
14. יכול מראש חודש – Why would we ever think of celebrating Pesach on Rosh Chodesh, fifteen days earlier, when the Torah specifically tells us to make Pesach on the 15th of the month of Nisan?
15. מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו – Why is this fact in the Hagaddah at all? Why do we care that Abraham's ancestors worshipped idols? It has nothing to do with the Egyptian slavery or Pesach!
16. ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל – Why do we praise G-d for keeping his promises? EVERYONE should always keep what he or she promises, and need not be praised for it. What does it mean?
17. שהקדוש ברוך הוא חשב את הקץ – Why use the word קץ – it should say סוף. קץ usually implies destruction (Genesis 6: 13). Why use this strange word?
18. והיא שעמדה – What exactly is it that has kept the Jewish people together for all generations – the "והיא"? Why is it that even though this paragraph was written two thousand years ago, the statement that in every generation they want to destroy the Jews and antisemitism still exists through today? Why?
19. צא ולמד – What does it mean -- "צא"-go out? Go out of what? And how can it be that Lavan is worse than Pharaoh? Lavan gave his two daughters to his son-in-law Yaakov, as well as giving Yaakov work and a livelihood. They parted amicably. How can this be compared to Pharaoh who enslaved the Jewish people and killed Jewish

babies for no reason? How can the Hagaddah possibly say that Lavan was worse than Pharaoh?

20. Ten Plagues -- Why did Rabbis insist that there were many more than 10 plagues? What is the difference? What is the practical implication of such a discussion? Why was Rabbi Judah "forced" to group the Ten Plagues into three groups and a three word acronym? What was the "advantage" and the message?
21. Why refer to each unique aspect and quality of Dayenu as "מעלות" ? It could have and should have said rather מידות-qualities or ניסים-miracles. Why specifically this word? What does it signify?
22. We understand that we are grateful for each step in the process and that is why we say דיינו-it would have been sufficient. But two of these 15 statements do not seem to make any sense! How can we say וְלֹא קָרַע לָנוּ אֶת הַיָּם, וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת מְמוֹנָם, וְלֹא קָרַע לָנוּ אֶת הַיָּם? Would it really have been sufficient if G-d had allowed the Jews to receive the gold and silver of the Egyptians but then not saved them by splitting the Sea? Why would this have been sufficient? Similarly, we say וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה דְיֵינוּ. How could it have been sufficient for G-d to bring us to Mount Sinai and then NOT to give the Jewish people the Torah?
23. רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הָיָה אוֹמֵר, כָּל שֶׁלֹּא אָמַר שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים אֱלוֹ בִּפְסוּחַ לֹא יֵצֵא יְדֵי חוּבְתוֹ, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן פְּסוּחַ. -- Generally, to fulfill a Mitzvah, a Jew must **do** something. Here it is logical that we should have to **eat** these three items to fulfill the Mitzvah. Why, then, does Rabban Gamliel write that we must **recite** these three things in order to fulfill the Mitzvah and not do something or eat them?
24. Why does it say הספיק בציקם של אבותינו להחמיץ – using the reflexive tense (הספיק) instead of the more natural ספק in making the Matzah? What is the significance?
25. Every other time Hallel is recited throughout the year it is said in one unit – except in the Hagaddah. Why is it that the first two paragraphs of Hallel are recited before the meal and the rest of Hallel after the meal? Why did the Rabbis want to split Hallel in this manner? What is the deeper meaning of such a split in the Order-Seder of the Hagaddah?
26. Why is the last "step" in the Hagaddah called "נרצה-It is Accepted"? What is accepted and why? Why use this strange language? What does it signify?
27. Why is Hallel only recited during the day – except on Pesach night?
28. אחד מי יודע – Why reduce Judaism to these 13 items represented by numbers? Is this simply a song for children? If so, why is this in the Hagaddah and why specifically at this point? If not, what is the deeper meaning of this song? Is there any significance why these 13 items were specifically chosen?
29. חד גדיא – This cat and mouse tale ends the Hagaddah. What does it symbolize and why is it in the Hagaddah at all? Is it meant for children, adults or both? And why end the Hagaddah on this note?