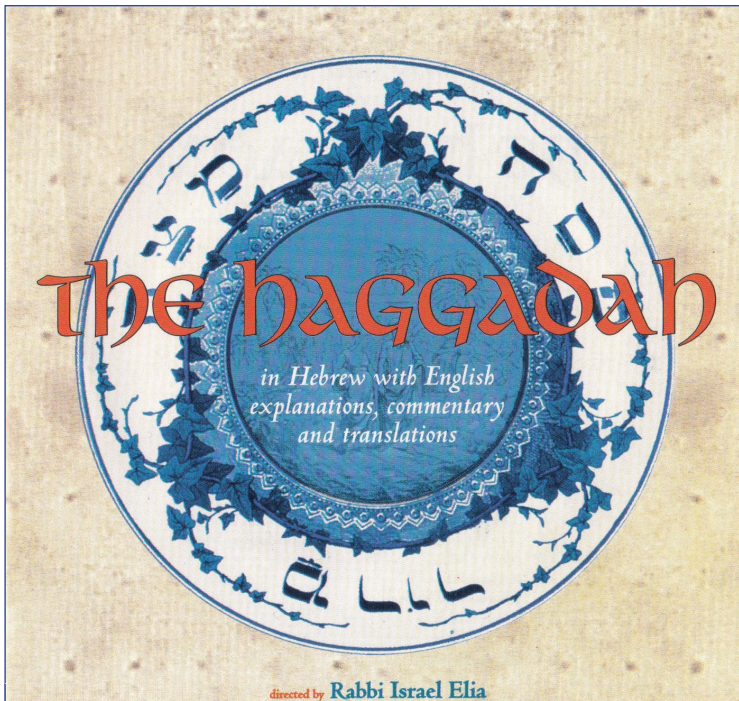


THE HAGGADAH PROJECT WAS INSPIRED AND INITIATED BY LUCIEN GUBBAY.



THE
HABURA

the
S&PHARDI
community קהילת שער השמים

*A companion to the
digital recordings
based on*

THE HAGGADAH

published by The Spanish and Portuguese Jews'
Congregation, London

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*And the Lord brought us
forth from Egypt with a mighty
hand and an outstretched
arm, and with great
terribleness, and with signs
and wonders ... He brought us
from slavery to freedom,
from sadness to joy, and from
darkness to a great light.*

PART 1

TRACK 2: INTRODUCTION

And the Lord brought us forth from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and wonders. He brought us from slavery to freedom, from sadness to joy, and from darkness to a great light.

It is during the week long festival of Passover that we Jews celebrate the first of the two great events that marked the birth of our nation.

Pesah, the festival of freedom, commemorates what happened over three thousand years ago, when God delivered the Children of Israel from a life of slavery in Egypt. He led them out of Egypt through the middle of the Red Sea - the birth channel of the nation - and on into the wilderness, towards the land promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The second pivotal event in Jewish history occurred at Sinai, when the former slaves received the stamp of their nationhood, the very purpose for which they had been freed. The giving of the Torah at Sinai is celebrated at Shavuot, seven weeks after Pesah, and the two events are of course inextricably linked.

Though it was at Passover that the towering figure of Moses first appears in Jewish history, it is no accident that his name is not even mentioned as we recite the story of the exodus from Egypt. No human hero is allowed to detract from God's central role in the drama of redemption for we are told:

The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm... not by means of an angel, not by means of a seraph or a messenger - but the Holy One himself, blessed be he - He himself in all his glory.

Passover, or the Festival of Unleavened Bread, has to be prepared for carefully and well in advance - for it is forbidden to eat, or even to own, leavened bread during the festival. All traces of bread and other fermented grain products must be scrupulously removed from the home before the start of the holiday - and this extends to kitchen utensils, crockery and everything else that was in contact with leaven during the year. This is done in obedience to the divine command:

For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread ... anyone who eats leavened bread shall be outlawed from Israel.

- which of course reminds us that the Children of Israel left Egypt in such haste that they had no time to prepare provisions for the journey, or even to bake bread before departing. We are told that they simply picked up the dough before it had risen and packed it with the baggage they carried on their shoulders.

The festival starts in the home with a ceremonial meal called the Haggadah (meaning narration), or the Seder (meaning order or arrangement). The table is carefully prepared before the holiday begins. Its focus is a special tray, dish or basket, on which are placed the following seven items:

First comes Matzah, the flat unleavened bread of a downtrodden people and the central symbol of the Haggadah. Three unbroken cakes of matzah, one above the other, each wrapped separately in a cloth, are placed on the tray.

Next in order is Maror, the bitter herbs that recall the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. This is usually Cos or Romaine lettuce, though chicory or horseradish may be used instead.

The third item is Haroset, a sweet paste made from dates, apples, raisins, nuts, wine and spices. It symbolises the mortar used by our ancestors to build Pharaoh's treasure cities.

Next comes Karpas, which is parsley or a similar green vegetable.

The fifth item on the tray is Zeroa - a roasted shankbone to remind us of the sacrificial lamb killed and eaten by our ancestors just before their departure from Egypt. In later times a lamb was also offered as a Passover sacrifice in the Temple.

Next in order is Betsa, a roasted egg in memory of the other festival sacrifice offered in the Temple. The egg is both a symbol of mourning for the destroyed Temple and a symbol of spring and the renewal of life.

And the last item on the Passover dish is Salt Water, to recall the many bitter tears shed by the slaves in Egypt. Salt, incidentally, was included with all sacrifices offered in the Temple.

The significance of each of these seven items will be further explained during the service.

Wine, preferably red wine, must also be provided in sufficient quantity to enable all at table to drink four cups or glasses each.

An Ashkenazi custom, now adopted by many Sephardim, is to have another cup of wine on the table, reserved for Elijah the prophet, who will return to earth one day to herald the coming of the Messiah.

The Haggadah is of ancient origin, the earliest part of its text being over eighteen hundred years old. The words vary slightly from one community to another as do some of the customs. The version used here is that published by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of London.

The story of the Exodus from Egypt is repeated each year in obedience to the divine command:

That everyone in all generations should feel as if he or she personally had come out of Egypt.

for we are told that it was not only our ancestors whom God redeemed from Egypt: he redeemed each one of us as well.

The Haggadah is recited for the benefit of all at the table, the young and the old, the ignorant and the wise. Large parts of it are said, or at least repeated, in our own everyday language so that we may all understand its message.

The recitation is studded with symbols and visual aids, to stir our collective memory and encourage our participation. The intention is to enable us all to experience at least some of the thoughts and feelings of our ancestors when, some three thousand years ago, God brought them from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light, from sorrow to great joy.

TRACK 3: KIDDUSH

The proceedings start with the Kiddush appropriate to the day of the week on which the festival falls. All stand. Holding a glass of wine in his right hand, the head of the house blesses God for creating the fruit of the vine. We then bless God for choosing us from among all peoples, sanctifying us with his commandments and giving us, in love, this Feast of Unleavened Bread in memory of the departure from Egypt.

We drink the first glass of wine, leaning back in our chairs. In the ancient world, important people did not sit on chairs at banquets but reclined at their ease on couches where the food was served to them on low tables. We lean back in our chairs tonight to show how even the poorest of the former slaves celebrate their freedom. We lean towards our left side so as to leave the right arm free to take wine and food.

TRACK 4: WASH THE HANDS

We wash our hands but do not say a blessing as this is not for the main meal but just for a tiny appetizer, smaller than the size of an olive.

The head of the house takes some parsley - the karpas - and after dipping it in salt water, gives a little to everyone at table who all recite the blessing before eating it. The reason for this custom is obscure. It may be a vestige of an ancient hors d'oeuvre? Or perhaps it is just there to make the meal special and provoke the question asked later in the evening: *why on this night do we dip our food twice?*

The head of the house breaks the middle cake of matzah into two unequal pieces to symbolise the parting of the Red Sea when the Children of Israel went through unharmed. The smaller piece is left in its place on the table and the larger piece put aside for the Aficomín - yet another symbol of the Passover Lamb, which can no longer be sacrificed since the destruction of the Temple. In many communities the Aficomín is hidden for the children to find at the end of the meal.

There are several pleasing customs connected with this stage of the evening. In one of them, combining the practices of Gibraltar and Tunis, the children dress up as travellers. Matzah, wrapped in a cloth or scarf, is placed on their shoulders, around their necks, and they hold staffs in their hands. The children knock loudly on the door. They are admitted and questioned closely as they enter the room:

Who are you? ... We are the Children of Israel.

Where have you come from? ... We have come from the Land of Egypt.

*Where are you going? ... We are going to the Land of Israel.
What was it like in Egypt? ... Don't even ask! It was terrible!
What are you carrying on your shoulders? ... We are carrying matzah.
Why Matzah? ... And so on.*

TRACK 5: "THIS IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION"

The glasses are then filled with wine and the reading of the Haggadah proper starts with a prayer in Aramaic, once the spoken language of the people.

Sephardim open the door here while the head of the house invites all who are hungry to enter and join in the feast. He holds up the plate of matzah and says:

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt ...

TRACK 6: THE FOUR QUESTIONS

The Seder tray is then removed from the table and the youngest person present, whether a child or an adult, asks four questions.

Why is this night different from all other nights? For on all other nights we need not dip the herbs we eat even once; but tonight we dip them twice. On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; but tonight we eat only unleavened bread. On

all other nights we eat herbs of any kind; but tonight we eat only bitter herbs. On all other nights we eat and drink either upright or leaning; but tonight we all lean.

The Seder dish is placed on the table for the answer to the questions.

It is because we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord our God brought us forth with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; and if the Holy One, blessed be he, had not brought out our fathers from Egypt, we, our children and our children's children would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, even if we were all wise, all learned, all well versed in the Torah, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the coming forth from Egypt; and the more we recount the coming forth from Egypt, the more deserving we are of praise.

TRACK 7: THE FOUR SONS

The next two paragraphs are quotations from the Mishnah, telling how even one of the greatest of our Sages, Rabbi Akiva of the second century, spent the whole night until dawn discussing the story of the coming out from Egypt.

We proceed with the story of the four sons. This is deeply symbolic and can be understood on many levels apart from its obvious literal meaning. One of the more attractive explanations is that the sons represent the four states of our own personal development - from the ignorance of childhood, through the rebelliousness of youth to the wisdom of maturity.

TRACK 8: RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Next follows what might be described as a potted history of the religious progress of the Jewish people - from the worship of idols to the redemption from Egypt and the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

TRACK 9: "THIS SAME PROMISE"

The head of the house lifts up his glass of wine and declares his confidence in God's promise of support. He puts down the glass and continues with a selection of quotations that illustrate the story of slavery and redemption.

TRACK 10: THE TEN PLAGUES

We now come to the ten plagues. As the name of each plague is recited, the master of the house spills a drop of wine from his glass into a special bowl. At the end he also spills a drop for each of the three words made up by Rabbi Judah from the first letters of each plague. The bowl containing the drops of wine is removed from the room, and the wine is either poured down the drain or disposed of outside the house. In some communities, even more symbolic, the bowl itself is shattered.

The next passage is a typical one, showing how our ancient rabbis played with the words of the texts, spinning all kinds of additional meaning from them - and even from the actual letters that make up the words.

TRACK 11: DAYENU

We now come to Dayenu, a song expressing our gratitude for the many wonders performed by God on our behalf.

How numerous have been God's mercies towards us ...

TRACK 12: A PERSON'S DUTY AT PASSOVER

Rabban Gamliel, an eminent sage of the second century, said that a man must explain three things at Passover - the Passover Lamb, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. These are now explained in turn. Please note that the instruction in the printed Haggadah we are following is wrong here. We do **NOT** point to the shankbone as, since the destruction of the Temple, we cannot offer any sacrifices.

TRACK 13: THANKS AND PRAISE

The head of the house lifts his glass of wine and proclaims our thanks to God for his many miracles including bringing us from slavery to freedom. He puts down his glass. Then, having told the story of the redemption from Egypt, we sing the first part of the Hallel - the special psalms of rejoicing once recited by the Levites in the Temple. The second glass of wine is drunk.

TRACK 14: WASH HANDS FOR THE MEAL

Hands are washed for the meal to come and we say blessings on bread, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs before eating them.

Hillel, whose instructions are followed here, was active in the first century, at the time when part of our present Haggadah was first committed to writing.

We are now ready for the meal. It is customary to eat hard boiled eggs with salt water before starting. Additional wine to the four glasses specified in the Haggadah may be drunk during dinner if required.

After dinner, the children search for the hidden piece of matzah, the Aficomín, and are rewarded with prizes when it is found. The head of the house takes the half of the middle cake of matzah, set aside for the Aficomín, and gives a piece to everyone at table. It is eaten leaning, to commemorate the Passover Lamb. Nothing further may be eaten after the Aficomín, as nothing further was eaten after the sacrificial lamb so as to leave that as the last taste lingering in the mouth.

PART 2

TRACK 2: GRACE AFTER MEALS

God is thanked for feeding us and the whole world with his goodness, grace, loving-kindness, plenty and mercy. We also thank God for giving us the Land of Israel, the Covenant, the Torah and for redeeming us from Egypt.

TRACK 3: PRAISES AND SUPPLICATIONS

Then comes a series of praises of God, on the throne of his glory, on heaven and on earth, amidst all generations to all eternity. This is followed by a string of supplications:

May the All-Merciful provide for us with honour, not with contempt, lawfully and not by forbidden means, with ease and not with trouble, in plenty and not in scarcity ... May he heal us with a perfect healing - of the body and of the spirit. May he spread his peace over us and plant his Law and the love of him in our hearts that we sin not. May the All-Merciful fulfill the desires of our hearts for good.

TRACK 4: THE YOUNG LIONS

The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing ...

We then recite the blessing and drink the third cup of wine, leaning.

TRACK 5: HALLEL

We fill the fourth cup of wine and, on behalf of those of our people and of other peoples in the world who are still oppressed, we call on God to pour out his wrath on those who defy his divine will.

We now continue with the rest of the Hallel that we started singing before dinner. The Hallel is the special selection of psalms of rejoicing once sung by the Levites in the holy Temple.

First comes psalm 115, which includes the words:

To you that fear the Lord and trust in the Lord, he is your help and your shield.

Then comes psalm 116:

I love the Lord for he hears my voice, my pleas; for he turns his ear to me whenever

I call ... The Lord protects the simple. I was brought low and he saved me.

TRACK 6: PSALM 117

O praise the Lord, all you nations ... Praise the Lord.

Then psalm 118

O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good; for his mercy endures for ever ...

I called on the Lord in my distress: the Lord answered me and brought me relief.

The Lord is for me; I will not fear; what can man do to me?

Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter them and praise the Lord.

This is the gateway to the Lord: the righteous shall enter through it.

I will give thanks to you for you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our sight.

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it.

And then the words used to greet the bride as she enters the synagogue on her wedding day:

Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

TRACK 7: PSALM 136

O give thanks to the Lord of heaven; for his mercy endures for ever.

TRACK 8: NISHMAT

The breath of all living creatures shall bless your name, O Lord our God, and the spirit of all flesh shall continually glorify and extol you, O our king ...

From everlasting to everlasting you are God; and beside you we have no king, redeemer or saviour to have mercy on us in time of trouble and distress. From Egypt, O Lord our God, you did redeem us and from the house of bondage you did release us ...

For every mouth shall give thanks to you, every tongue shall praise you, every eye shall wait for you. To you every knee shall bend and all that is lofty shall bow down. All hearts shall fear you and every fibre of our beings shall sing praises to your name.

TRACK 9: CONCLUDING PASSAGE

... All your works, O Lord our God shall praise you ...

TRACK 10: THE LAST BLESSING

We drink the last of the four cups of wine leaning, and say the last blessing of the evening.

... Make us joyful, O Lord our God, on this Festival of Unleavened Bread, on this good day of holy convocation. For you, O Lord are good and do good to all ...

And that final blessing marks the formal end of the evening. We have told the story of the coming out from Egypt, have eaten, said the Grace After Meals and concluded by singing the songs of the Hallel in praise of our Creator.

For some of us, the evening ends here. For others it goes on and on until the small hours of the morning with the singing of traditional songs and the telling of stories relating to the festival.

הגדה

THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE
JEWS' CONGREGATION, LONDON

THE HAGGADAH

*in Hebrew with
English explanations, commentary
and translations*

Hebrew Recital *directed by* Israel Elia

with the voices of Eliezer Abinun,
Halfon Bennaroch, Pini Dunner,
Israel Elia, Daniel Elia, Joyce Gubbay,
Abraham Levy, Ezra Misry,
Nathan Saatchi, Daisy Saatchi
and Pinchas Toledano

*English instructions, commentary and translation
compiled and read by* Lucien Gubbay

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