

Passover 2 5783 - Rabbi Sacks Z'L - The Missing 5th
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Chag Sameach.

The Passover Seder is brought to you by the number *four*. Of which there are *four* fours: One, the four questions. Two, the four sons. Three, the four cups of wine. Four, the four expressions of redemption, four verbs in a key Torah verse.

Here it is: *G-d says to the Israelites: "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians and free you from their slavery. I will deliver you with a demonstration of my power and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to me as a nation."*

These four verbs are the source for the four cups of wine.

And number five of four, the Seder lasts *forever!*

On a more serious note, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory wrote a wonderful essay saying there are actually *five* groups of four. I'll recap his article in full before adding my own thoughts.

Rabbi Sacks notices that there is an *additional* group of four in the Passover Hagada. In the Maggid portion, which is the storytelling piece, there are four verses from the Torah that are expanded upon by the rabbis. These four verses will sound familiar: "*An Aramean tried to destroy my father, and the Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us, and we cried to the L-rd, the G-d of our fathers, and the L-rd brought us out of Egypt.*"

So now we see *five* groups of four. One was missing.

Let's look a little closer at each of these groups.

First, the cups of wine. In early editions of the Talmud, there is a passage that confused all the commentators. It says that Rabbi Tarfon says: over the *fifth* cup of wine, we recite the great Hallel. This is very odd because we all know there are four cups to be drunk. Both versions of the Talmud discuss drinking four cups of wine, so why would the sage talk about a fifth? Jewish law settled this dilemma by having us *pour a fifth cup but refrain from drinking it*. We all do this today. We know this as Elijah's cup. We all really know there are five cups of wine, four plus one.

Second, the four expressions of redemption in G-d's promise to Moses, which I read earlier. The amazing thing is that if we keep reading the verse, we immediately encounter a *fifth* verb, a fifth expression of redemption: "G-d says, and I will *bring you* to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." So there are really five verbs in G-d's promise, four plus one.

Next, the four biblical verses we expound in the Hagada beginning with, "An Aramean tried to destroy my father." If you look at the verse in the Torah, amazingly the same passage *continues with a fifth verse*. "He brought us to this place, the land of Israel, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey." We do not recite this verse at the Seder table, but present in the Torah are five verses in this important passage, four plus one.

To this point, we have three missing fifths: the 5th cup, the fifth expression of redemption, and the fifth verse in the passage Arami Oved Avi. They speak of one theme: all three refer to G-d not simply taking the Jews out of Egypt but also *bringing them into the land of Israel*. Recall that the Hagada was compiled *during the exile*, when the Jews were not living at home in Israel. As Rabbi Sacks writes, "*how could they celebrate arriving in the land of Israel when they were in exile? How could they drink the last cup of redemption? It was a symbol of incompleteness.*"

The rabbis acknowledged the number five all along, but one was lacking because Jewish life in exile was lacking.

So far we have discussed three groupings of four plus one. Here's the fourth, about the four questions. Originally there was a *fifth* question in the Mah Nishtana. The Mishna itself teaches explicitly that a child should ask: "on all other nights we eat meat that is cooked, boiled, or roasted. Why this night only roasted meat?" This pertains to the time when the Temple was standing and the Seder dinner included eating the Paschal lamb, which was always roasted. After the Temple was destroyed, this practice of eating the Paschal lamb was dropped, so it makes sense that this question itself was dropped in favor of another, this time about a current practice - reclining.

And for number five, the fifth child. There is nothing in the literature that speaks to this, but the late Lubavitcher Rebbe suggested there is a fifth child- the child who is not there at the Seder, the child who is lost to assimilation. I think this is Rabbi Sacks' least strong point because it is a recent commentary, not based on an early primary text. While the others are rock solid and compelling. But I think many of us acknowledge the validity of a child missing from the Seder table.

Rabbi Sacks concludes: *“So beneath the surface of the Hagada we find, not four fours, but five fives. In each case there is a missing 5th- a cup, an expression of deliverance, a verse, a question, and a child. Each points to something incomplete in our present situation. Something is missing from our celebration. We have not yet reached our destination. The missing fifths remind us of work still to be done, a journey not yet complete.”*

I will add my own take here, that these subtle illusions to five are subtle allusions to the Torah - the *five* books of Moses. The five references to the Torah highlight the deep connection between Passover’s freedom and the Torah.

Were the Jews to walk out of Egypt, they would have been *physically* free. But only with the Torah, the nation's constitution, were they *spiritually* liberated. Later in Exodus, the Torah says that Moses came down from Mt. Sinai carrying the Ten Commandments. It says, “The tablets were G-d's creation, the writing G-d's autograph, incised upon the tablets” (Ex. 32:16). The word “incised” or “engraved” is *Harut - Chet Raysh Vav Taf*. The early Rabbis made a play-on-word for this verse, suggesting in Pirkei Avot (6:2): Don't read *“incised (Harut)” but, rather as though the verse says “freedom (Herut - spelled with the same consonants but different vowels).” With this interpretation, the Torah teaches that there was freedom upon the tablets. For no person is free unless they are involved in the study of the law.”*

Rabbi Burt Visotsky of JTS explains, “By playfully suggesting the change of one vowel of the Hebrew, *Harut* to *Herut*, the Rabbis explain that the essence of freedom, paradoxically, lies in the rule of law. The Torah teaches that the law is the guarantor of freedom, and that freedom is the guarantor of the rule of law.”

Without the Torah, which represents Israel’s worship of G-d, there would be no Jewish identity, no Jewish values, no lasting Jewish People. This is precisely why Moses insisted from the very start that Pharaoh let the Israelites go, in order to worship G-d. *“VYaAvduni / so they may worship Me.”* Crossing the Red Sea was not merely the finish line of slavery. Rather, it was the starting line for the Jewish People with an enduring identity and Constitution.

Chag Sameach.