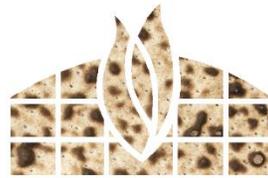


# A Seder Reader

Thought provoking sources to inspire more Seder discussions

Rabbi Chaim Poupko



אהבת תורה

CONGREGATION  
AHAVATH TORAH

## My Father on Passover Eve

*Yehuda Amichai (1924 – 2000) Israeli poet, considered by many, both in Israel and internationally, as Israel's greatest modern poet*

Last evening I gave you the parable  
Of my father, who on the eve of Passover eve  
Would slice bread carefully  
Into precise cubes and put them  
On the window sill so he would be able  
To find them with his heavy eye's  
In the light of a candle dancing a mitzvah dance.  
So his blessing on the burning of leavened bread  
Would not be in vain.

To live like this:  
Stage directors of ourselves,  
Cheating directors  
With perfect faith, almost,  
And we shall not be  
In vain.

## אָבִי בְּעֶרֶב פֶּסַח

יהודה עמיחי

בְּעֶרֶב הָאַחֲרוֹן הַמְּשַׁלְתִּי לְךָ  
אֶת מִשַּׁל אָבִי, אֲשֶׁר בְּעֶרֶב עֶרֶב פֶּסַח  
הָיָה חוֹתֵךְ לֶחֶם בְּהַקְפָּדָה  
לְקַבִּיּוֹת מְדִיקוֹת וְשֵׁם  
אוֹתָן עַל אֲדָן הַחֲלוֹן כְּדִי שְׂיוֹכֵל  
לְמַצָּא אוֹתָן בְּעֵינָיו הַכְּבִדוֹת  
לְאוֹר הַנֵּר הַרוֹקֵד רִיקוּדֵי מְצוּהָ.  
וְלֹא תֵהִי בְרַפְתּוֹ בְּעוֹר חֲמֵץ שְׁלוֹ  
לְבַטְלָהּ.

כִּךְ לְחִיּוֹת:  
בְּמַאִים שֶׁל עֲצָמֹנוּ,  
בְּמַאִים רַמְאִים  
בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, כְּמַעַט,  
וְלֹא נְהִיָּה  
לְבַטְלָהּ.

## Sod Yesharim

Rabbi Gershon Chanoch Henech Leiner (1839 - 1890), 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Rebbe of Izhbitz-Radzyn dynasty

**As for the one who does not know how to ask, you must initiate him.** This can be explained as (his father) Rabbi Yaakov Leiner zt"l said, that one he learns words of Torah in finds nothing difficult to understand – this is a good sign that they haven't really engaged the words of the Torah. Since the thought-process of the Torah is truly the opposite than the thought-process found in this world, therefore how can things (in the Torah) seem so straight forward and not generate any question. Rather, it is surely because they have not engaged them.

However, one who has difficulties with the words of the Torah and then toils to answer them - this is real Torah study. And so anyone who doesn't know how to ask and doesn't find anything difficult, this is surely someone who has engaged the words of Torah.

סוד כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה ישרים

ושאינו יודע לשאול את פתח לו. היינו, כמו שאמר אאמו"ר הגה"ק זללה"ה, אשר מי שלומד דברי תורה ואינו קשה לו בהם שום קושיא זהו סימן מובהק שלא נגע עדיין בדברי תורה<sup>ט</sup>. כי מאחר שהשכל של דברי תורה הוא באמת להיפך מהשכל של זה העולם, וא"כ מהיכן ישר בעיניו כ"כ ולא קשה לו שום קושיא. אלא בטח לפי שלא נגע עדיין בהם. אולם מי שקשה לו בדב"ת ומייגע את עצמו אח"כ לתרץ, זאת הוא דברי תורה. ולכן מי שאינו יודע לשאול ואינו קשה לו כלום, זה בטח לא נגע עדיין בדברי תורה. לזה:

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## The Four Parents

*from Playground, a humorous commentary by Lemony Snicket in the New American Haggadah*

Some scholars believe there are four kinds of parents as well. The Wise Parent is an utter bore. "Listen closely, because you are younger than I am," says the Wise Parent, "and I will go on and on about Jewish history, based on some foggy memories of my own religious upbringing, as well as an article in a Jewish journal I have recently skimmed." The Wise Parent must be faced with a small smile of dim interest. The Wicked Parent tries to cram the story of our liberation into a set of narrow opinions about the world. "The Lord led us out of Egypt," the Wicked Parent says, "which is why I support a bloodthirsty foreign policy and am tired of certain types of people causing problems." The Wicked Parent should be told in a firm voice, "With a strong hand God rescued the Jews from bondage, but it was my own clumsy hand that spilled hot soup in your lap." The Simple Parent does not grasp the concept of freedom. "There will be no macaroons until you eat all of your brisket," says the Simple Parent, at a dinner honoring the liberation of oppressed peoples. "Also, stop slouching at the table." In answer to such statements, the Wise Child will roll his eyes in the direction of the ceiling and declare, "Let my people go!" The Parent Who Is Unable to Inquire has had too much wine, and should be excused from the table.

## אָמַר לוֹ כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח / Shall Instruct Him in the Laws of the Pesach offering

*Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits (1908 – 1992), major 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish thinker and Talmudic scholar*

From his book *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism*, page 138, found in a new Haggadah based on Rabbi Berkovits' thought published by Reuven Mohl this year

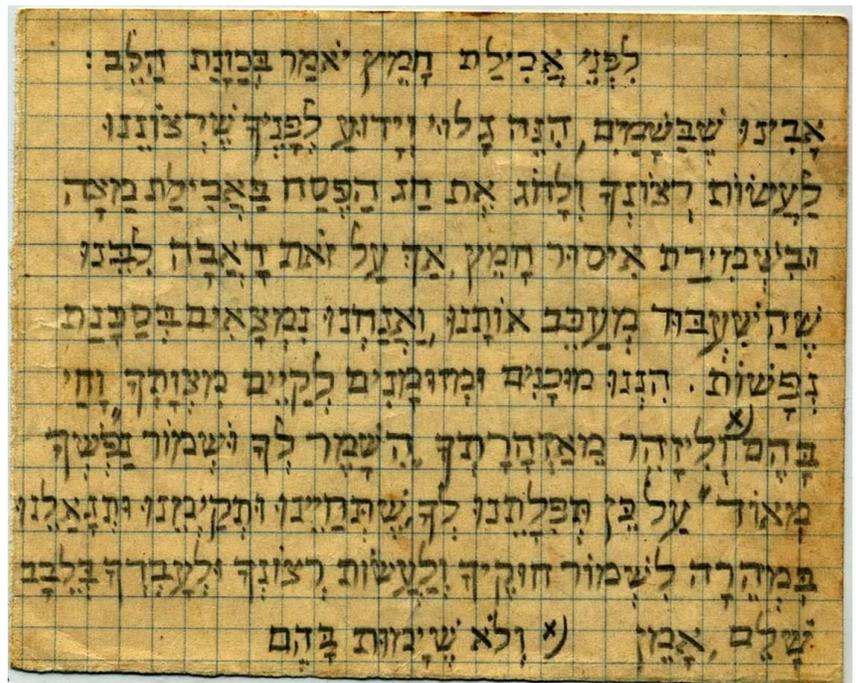
Ever since the Christian apostle, Paul, subjected the concept of the law to his devastating criticism and opposed to it the idea of faith, faith and law have become related to each other antithetically. It is assumed that he who lives by his faith is in no need of the law, and he who lives by the law is lacking in inwardness of faith. The Western Jew, who is on all sides surrounded by the traditions of Western civilization, is continually exposed to the impact of this antithesis and often accepts its validity almost subconsciously. From the Jewish point of view, however, this manner of confrontation between faith and law is the result of a misunderstanding of the function of the law and, with it, of the very purpose of Judaism. The law is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. The law shows a way and teaches a deed, "the way that they should go and the deed that they should do." According to the Talmud, the teaching of the law is of decisive importance because it leads to the deed. The Torah is the guide to the Jewish way, it prepares man for the Jewish deed. The emphasis on the law is due to the emphasis on the *Ma'aseh*. It is for this reason that the law in Judaism is known by the term Halakha, which, because of its derivation from the root *haloch*, to walk, is best rendered as the discipline for going along one's way as a Jew. The confrontation is not between faith and law but between faith and deed. The question is not what importance one attaches to the law in relationship to faith, but what significance one ascribes to the deed as compared to faith.

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## Holocaust Prayer before eating Chametz on Pesach

*by a Rabbi Aaron Issachar Davids in Bergen Belsen 1943*

The night of Passover, a group of Jews thought they should not to eat bread that night. The Rabbi explained to them, that their requirement was to do what they can to remain alive. In order to convince them, the Rabbi took a piece of bread made the blessing over bread and ate it in front of them. Before he put the bread in his mouth, he said this prayer that he had written together with other Rabbis from Holland.



### Translation

Before eating leavened bread, say [this] with a heartfelt intent:

Our Father in heaven, behold it is revealed and known before you that our will [is] to do your will and celebrate the holiday of Passover with the eating of unleavened bread (Matzah) and with guarding from leavened bread

(Chametz). However on this [matter] our hearts are anguished: that the subjugation prevents us and we are found in a life-threatening [situation]. Behold [here] we are prepared and ready to fulfill Your commandment “and live in them (\*)” (Lev. 18:5) and to guard Your warning “guard yourself and guard your soul well (Deut. 4:9)”. Therefore, our prayer to You, [is] that You give us life, and maintain us, and redeem us speedily [in order] to keep Your statutes and to do Your Will and to serve You with complete hearts. Amen.  
(\* )and not that he die in them

*The asterisk refers to the halachik principle based on the pasuk in Vayikra 18, “And live in them” meaning that one should not die in them. That, aside from extreme cases requiring martyrdom, one must not fulfill a mitzvah at the expense of their life.*

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## Erev Pesach Letter of Yoni Netanyahu

written to his girlfriend Bruria

*IDF officer who commanded the elite commando unit Sayeret Matkal during Operation Entebbe, an operation to rescue hostages held at Entebbe Airport in Uganda in 1976. The mission was successful, with 102 of the 106 hostages rescued, but Netanyahu was killed in action—the only IDF fatality during the operation. Late brother of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.*

March 25, 1975

Bruria mine,

Tomorrow is Passover.

I’ve always thought it the most wonderful of all our holidays. It’s an ancient celebration of freedom—a thousands-of-years-old liberty. When I sail back over the seas of our history, I pass through long years of suffering, of oppression, of massacres, of ghettos, of banishments; of humiliation; many years that, in a historical perspective, seem devoid of any ray of light yet if isn’t so. For the fact that the idea of freedom remained, that the hope persisted, that the flame of liberty continued to burn through the observance of this ancient festival, is to me testimony of the eternity of the striving for freedom and the idea of freedom in Israel.

In this search through our past we come upon other periods—of tranquillity and liberty, when we were the People of the Land as well as the People of the Book. Yet even then Passover was celebrated with the same ardor, for freedom is precious and its remembrance, long.

And there were other periods—of transition from bondage to liberty, periods of rising and revolt—and it is of those that Passover reminds me most of all. When I say Passover—the Feast of Freedom—I think at once of the

Hasmonaeans and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt and the Exodus and Joshua’s conquest of the Land.

Of course then, too—as in our times—there were many shameful periods in our history, for which we can only blame ourselves, but that’s beside the point.

I also have a special feeling about Passover because of the Seder, which for me, as for all of us, stirs up personal memories of the past. I clearly remember one Seder in Talpiot, in Jerusalem, when I was six. Among the guests were white-bearded old men like Rabbi Binyamin and Professor Klausner, and my father was there too, and others I don’t remember, and there was a big table and much light, and I was in a completely perfect world, and I kept absorbing it and absorbing it. Storing up impressions of a great and beautiful world with myself in it—taking it in, as it were, to sort it all out in adulthood—yet today I know it wasn’t in order to sort it out, but to treasure it that I took it all in.

Last year I celebrated Seder with my men in a big tent near a tel in the Syrian enclave that was being shelled, and that too was a wonderful Seder in its way.

My yearning for the past mingles with my longing for you, and because of you I find myself in my past, and find the time and the desire to reminisce in order to share my life with you. Yet by “past” I mean not only my own past, but the way in which I see myself as an inseparable part, a link in the chain of our existence and Israel’s independence.