



Seder: A Sensory Experience

The Sounds and Songs of the Seder

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Mah Nishtana: Why are we singing?

1. Passover Haggadah (Sefaria Edition)

What differentiates this night from all [other] nights? On all [other] nights we eat chamets and matsa; this night, only matsa? On all [other] nights we eat other vegetables; tonight (only) marror. On all [other] nights, we don't dip [our food], even one time; tonight [we dip it] twice. On [all] other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining; tonight we all recline.

2. Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (18th century Poland), Derech Pikudecha 21:2

It is commendable to do strange things so that the child will wonder and ask “mah nishtana” [how different], and then the father will respond to him and tell the story. This idea is alluded to in the Torah [when it states in] Exodus 13:14, and it will be when your child will ask you...

3. Rabbi Jacob ben Moses Moellin (14th century Germany), Maharil: Customs of the Haggadah

Mah Nishtana: The Mahari Segal states one should chant it with a pleasant melody in order to praise the master of all.

4. Crowther G. Using science songs to enhance learning: an interdisciplinary approach. CBE Life Sci Educ. 2012;11(1):26–30. doi:10.1187/cbe.11-08-0068

Some students prefer to learn through distinct sensory modalities; for example, one common taxonomy characterizes people as visual, read–write, auditory, kinesthetic, or mixed-modality learners (Baykan and Nacar, 2007 blue right-pointing triangle). Songs accompanied by visuals and/or movement (e.g., dancing) therefore have the potential to reach students through multiple modalities simultaneously. The concept of music as a “whole-brain” experience is also underpinned by neurological studies showing that many different regions of the brain can be recruited in processing musical stimuli (Janata, 2009 blue right-pointing triangle).

Why is this Hallel different than all other Hallels?

5. Idiosyncrasies of Hallel on Seder Night

- Interruptions
- Additions
- Night Time
- Recited While Sitting

6. Hallel on Seder Night

- **End of Maggid (Exodus Story): 1st 2 paragraphs-** Psalms 113,114
- Interruptions
 - o Blessing to Conclude Maggid
 - o Ritual Hand Washing
 - o Eating of: Matzah, Maror, Matzah and Maror together (Koreich), Festive Meal, Afikomen
 - o Birkat Hamazon (Grace After Meals)
- **Conclusion of “Typical Hallel”: Concluding 6 paragraphs-** Psalms 115-118
- **“The Great Hallel”: Psalm 136,**
- **Blessing of the Song (Nishmat)**

Should we recite a blessing before Hallel on Seder Night?

7. Tosafot on Berachot 14a

On the night of Passover, there are those who recite a blessing two times: in the beginning of Hallel “To read Hallel”, and [before the 2nd part] they recite the blessing “to finish.

However, R' Yehuda said that this is unbelievable. If we recite a blessing before Hallel, how can we eat in the middle?

8. Rashba (Rabbi Shlomo ibn Aderet 13th century France) on Berachot

And so R' Hai Gaon answered in a responsa that we don't recite a blessing as [on Seder night] we don't read Hallel as "readers" but rather as "singers of praise".

9. Passover Haggadah (Sefaria Edition)

Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, lavish, bless, raise high, and acclaim He who made all these miracles for our ancestors and for us: He brought us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to [celebration of] a festival, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption. And let us say a new song before Him, Halleluyah!

10. Rabbi Moshe Nachmanides (12th century France), Pesachim 118a

How could it be that [Hallel on Seder night] doesn't require a blessing? There is no Hallel [as great] as that on the Passover sacrifice which is a time of redemption!

[Regarding the meal in the middle], it's not considered a separation because that is the way the service was instituted and is the order of the day.

11. Rabbi Jacob ben Moses Moellin (14th century Germany), Maharil: Customs of the Haggadah

The Mahari Segal stated that the reason we divide Hallel on Seder night in this way is because until [Psalms 114] "into a spring of water" discusses the miracles that have already happened such as the Exodus and the splitting of the sea. From [Psalms] "Not to us" and onward it discusses the miracles are destined to occur such as in the times of the Messiah speedily in our days, the war with Gog and Magog and the Resurrection of the Dead.

12. Talmud, Pesachim 118a (William Davidson Edition)

The Gemara answers: The reason is because the regular hallel contains these five matters: The remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Red Sea, the giving of the Torah, the resurrection of the dead, and the pangs of the Messiah. Since it mentions these key concepts, this hallel is also considered important. The Gemara elaborates: The exodus from Egypt, as it is written: "When Israel came forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language" (Psalms 114:1). And the splitting of the Red Sea, as it is written: "The sea saw it and fled; the Jordan turned backward" (Psalms 114:3). The giving of the Torah, as it is written: "The mountains skipped like rams" (Psalms 114:4), which is similar to the description of the giving of the Torah found elsewhere in the books of the Prophets. The resurrection of the dead, as it is written: "I will walk before the Lord in the lands of the living" (Psalms 116:9), which follows the verse: "For you have delivered my soul from death." After mentioning death, the psalm describes the resurrection in the lands of the living. The pangs of the Messiah, as it is written: "Not to us, God, not to us, but to Your name give glory" (Psalms 115:1). And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The verse "Not to us, God, not to us" and the entire psalm, including the verse "Why should the nations say, where now is their God?" (Psalms 115:2), is referring to the era of the enslavement of the kingdoms and the redemption of the Jewish people from their dominion. Some say that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The verse "Not to us, God, not to us" is referring to the war of Gog and Magog, the catastrophes and wars that will befall the Jewish people in the end of days from which they will be delivered.

13. Talmud, Pesachim 118a (William Davidson Edition)

The Gemara asks: And why is this section called the great hallel? Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Because this passage states that the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits in the heights of the universe and dispenses food to every creature.

Chad Gadya

	מים יחזקאל Rabbi Ezekiel Katzenellenbogen Israel Through the Exiles	אפוד בד Rabbi Benjamin Rabinowitz Spiritual Ruin and Repair
חד גדיא דזבין אבא בתרי זוזי 1 Kid my Father bought 2 coins	The Temple (the location) David purchased by collecting 2 gold coins from each Tribe	Adam was totally pure until he sinned and Hashem equalized the Good and Evil Inclinations
שונרא Cat	Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (referred to as שונרא רע)	Jews in dessert question G-d like a Cat (Horayot 13a).
כלבא Dog	Cyrus King of Persia (See Rosh Hashana) 4a-Cyrus suckled from a Dog .	Amalek the Dog attacks the Jews (See Rashi Exodus 17: 8)
חוטרא Staff	Kingdom of Greece Based on "Midrash"- Almond Staff (Jeremiah 1: 11)- Greece which rule with a Staff	Moshe fends off Amalek with his Staff
נורא Fire	Hasmoneans Kohanim lit Fire of the Menorah	Sin of Golden Calf made from the Fire
מיא Water	Roman Empire "Mighty Waters (Psalms 91) refers to Edom	Moshe burns Golden Calf and mixes ashes with Water . (Exodus 32: 20)
תורא Bull	Yishmael Ox (Yalkut Shimoni 15: 9)	Jeroboam ben Nebat constructs idolatrous Calves (See Kings 1: 12)
שוחט Slaughterer	Moshiach ben Yosef Yosef says: "Prepare meat for the Slaughter " (Genesis 43: 17)	Ezra inspires Teshuva movement and Slaughters temptation for idolatry (Sanhdenrin 64a)
מלאך המות Angel of Death	Angel of Death Will Kill Moshiach ben Yosef (Sukkah 52a)	Many Jews don't return with Ezra resulting in the second temple's destruction.
הקדוש ברוך הוא The Holy One Blessed Be He	The Holy One Blessed Be He Hashem kills the Yetzer Hara (Sukkah 52a)	The Holy One Blessed Be He Hashem kills the Yetzer Hara and eternally fixes the world.