

a **CALL** *to*
ACTION

SHABBOS HAGADOL, THE SEDER NIGHT
THE 14TH, 18TH OF NISSAN

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar



a CALL to ACTION

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Foreword

We are pleased to bring you a newly revised edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. This selection is a preview of a book that we are in the process of bringing to publication. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction pertaining to our bolstered ability and paralleled obligations, surrounding the month of Nissan.

HaMaaseh Hu Halkar is a compilation of *Hora'os* (directives) culled from the Rebbe's talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources ("*Muga*" and "*Bilti Muga*"). The text was translated into English by **Rabbi Yaakov Paley** and edited by **Rochel Chana Riven**.

At this time, when Moshiach's arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate "the superiority of deed" above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of
HaMaaseh Hu Halkar
Nissan, 5768

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Shabbos HaGadol

The Shabbos before Pesach

INTRODUCTION

The Shabbos immediately prior to Pesach is called Shabbos HaGadol (“the Great Shabbos”), to commemorate a great miracle that took place on our behalf:

In anticipation of their Exodus from Egypt, the Jews were commanded to select a lamb for a Pesach sacrifice. They were to bring the animal into their homes on the 10th of Nissan in readiness for the final plague – the death of the Egyptians’ firstborn sons – that would occur on the 15th and result in their liberation.

Since the Egyptians worshiped sheep, they wanted to know why [all the Jews were busying themselves with the object of the Egyptians’ idolatry]. Far from being intimidated, the Jews answered them openly and with great conviction, displaying absolute faith in the upcoming plague and subsequent redemption.

Miraculously, no Jew was harmed for obeying G-d’s command. In fact, the firstborn of Egypt were so influenced by this display of conviction that they led a revolt against Pharaoh, fighting to free the Jews and avert the plague. Many Egyptians were killed in the civil war that ensued.

This event is indicated in the verse, “He smote the Egyptians with their [very own] firstborn” (*Tehillim* 136:10).

So even before the actual Exodus took place, and while the Jews were yet enduring the final phase of their exile, the redemption had already begun – and the very forces of exile (i.e., the firstborn, considered the “strength” of

Egypt, were passionately fighting for the Jews' redemption.¹

REVIEW THE HAGGADAH WITH CHILDREN

- The obligations of Pesach place specific focus on children.² This also extends to Shabbos HaGadol, the Shabbos before Pesach, as it is written, "It is customary to have the children read through the *Haggadah* on Shabbos HaGadol, in order to familiarize them with the text, thus enabling them, when the time comes, to understand the procedure of the *Seder* night, ask the Four Questions, etc."³

I have not actually seen this done [in Chabad]. Nevertheless, such a case could well be included in our Sages' teaching,⁴ that "not seeing is not a proof that it did not occur...."⁵

INCREASE PESACH PREPARATIONS

- On Shabbos HaGadol, the "Great Shabbos," we should increase in all matters pertaining to Pesach – doing so in a manner of "greatness" (*gadlus*):

1. See the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 430:1. See also below, fn. 6.

2. **Keep the kids up**

It is because of this directive to transmit the story of the Exodus to the children that the Sages instituted a number of measures designed to prevent them from falling asleep at the *Seder* (Shabbos HaGadol, 5748, fn. 67; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 515-516).

Review the Haggadah

On the days between Shabbos HaGadol and Pesach, we should again increase in, and complete, all that is necessary to prepare ourselves for Pesach.

Even on Shabbos HaGadol, while it is still Shabbos, we should begin with those preparations that are permissible on Shabbos, such as prepping our children for the *Seder* night. We should make sure they know the Four Questions and the rest of the *Seder* procedure, enabling us to fulfill the Torah's command, "You shall tell your child [the story of the Exodus]" on the night of Pesach (*Parshas Metzora*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 15).

3. [Sources given in the *sichah* (*ibid.*) are: ראב"ה סימן תכ"ה, גליון מהר"ל דף י' סע"ב, רמב"ם סימן תכ"ה.]

4. *Mishnah Ediyos* 2:2. [When something usually performed out of the public eye is not witnessed, we cannot claim that it did not happen.]

5. *Parshas Metzora*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 15.

We should add – expending far greater energy than we have until now – in our Pesach preparations, our study of the Pesach laws, and our donations to *Maos Chitim* (supplying Pesach requirements to the needy).⁶

SHABBOS OF GREAT JOY

- On Shabbos HaGadol, we should experience *great joy* – as was clearly the case during the original Shabbos HaGadol; i.e., in Egypt, when the “great miracle” that was the “start of the redemption and its many miracles,” transpired.

[We should emulate] the Jews of that time [who] were in a state of *great joy*.⁷

6. The Shabbos that enables Pesach

It is now the last Shabbos before Pesach, known as “Shabbos HaGadol.” We should therefore infuse a measure of “greatness” into all aspects of Pesach, for, [since the blessings for each week are elicited on the preceding Shabbos,] it is on this Shabbos that all aspects of Pesach are blessed.

In other words: In addition to our having been preoccupied with Pesach preparations thirty days in advance, and having steadily increased these activities from Rosh Chodesh Nissan onward ... still, when Shabbos HaGadol arrives, we should again increase – and do so in a manner of “greatness,” [i.e., magnitude].

... This way, we will cause a “great miracle” to occur for us as well, in the spirit of the verse, “He smote Egypt with their firstborn.” That is to say, G-d will cause the contemporary “Egyptian firstborn”; i.e., the evil forces’ bastion of might, to itself demand and wage battle in order to secure the Redemption of the Jewish people from this final exile (Shabbos HaGadol, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 515-516).

7. Day of great joy

One of the fundamental aspects of Shabbos observance is experiencing joy, as our Sages state: “The verse ‘And in the days of your rejoicing...’ refers to the day of Shabbos.”

How much more so on Shabbos HaGadol, the *Great Shabbos*! We should certainly experience great joy (*Parshas Metzora*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 15).

The 14th of Nissan

Birthday of the Rambam

BRIEF HISTORY

Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) was born in Cordova, Spain, on the 14th of Nissan, 4895 (1135). In addition to his fame as an outstanding Jewish leader and sage, esteemed by rulers and a top physician in his days, *Rambam* authored many important and unparalleled Torah works.⁸

In 5744 (1984), the Rebbe initiated a daily study cycle of *Rambam's Mishneh Torah*, which enables the reader to have a basic knowledge of all the Torah's laws (or *Sefer HaMitzvos*, outlining all of the Torah's commandments). The goal of this project is to bring the entire Torah within the reach of each Jew.

PROMOTE DAILY STUDY OF RAMBAM

- On *Rambam's* birthday, we should first and foremost seize the opportunity to promote the daily study cycles of *Rambam*.
- These cycles are gradated according to ability: [Preferably, one should study] three chapters of *Mishneh Torah* a day; or, [if that is not feasible, he should study] one chapter a day; or [if this too is not possible, there is the daily study of] *Sefer HaMitzvos*.⁹

SPREAD JUDAISM EVERYWHERE

- We should utilize this auspicious day, when *Rambam's mazal* (the supernal source of his soul) is most effective to generate a great “clamor” (in a holy sense, that is). Our goal should be to further

8. [They include: *Mishneh Torah* (which codified all of Jewish law), *The Thirteen Principles of Faith*, *Pirush HaMishnayos* (Commentary to the Mishnah), *Sefer HaMitzvos* (Listing the 613 Commandments with their Scriptural sources), *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide to the Perplexed).]

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44. See also Night of 13 Nissan, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 48.

increase all aspects of Judaism – Torah and *mitzvos* – in each location. In addition to promoting the study of all other Torah works, we should place particular emphasis on the study of *Rambam*.¹⁰

LARGE FARBRENGEN CLOSE TO EREV PESACH

- We should hold a *farbrengen* in an atmosphere charged with the joy that stems from Judaism – Torah, and *mitzvos*. The *farbrengen* should draw the participation of many men, women and children.¹¹
- Clearly, *erev* Pesach is not a conducive time for large gatherings. We should therefore hold the *farbrengen* in proximity to *erev* Pesach.¹¹
- However, since the *farbrengen* will not be held on the date of the birthday itself, we should put a far greater effort into promoting it.¹²

10. *Parshas Tzav*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 518.

Birthday of a Leader of Jewry

Earlier, [see above in the section on 25 Adar entitled, “Birthdays,”] we discussed the Birthday Customs that we propose each Jew observe on his or her own birthday. They include making positive resolutions to increase in all areas of Judaism – Torah and *mitzvos* – amid a joyful *farbrengen*, and so on. We should certainly conduct ourselves thus (and with even greater energy) on the birthdays of *tzaddikim* and leaders of Jewry.

Needless to say, this includes the birthday of *Rambam* (on *erev* Pesach), the day when his *mazal* is at the peak of its strength.

We should therefore utilize this auspicious occasion ... through holding great gatherings at a time which best fits local conditions and the like; either on *erev* Pesach itself or on an adjoining date (*ibid.*, pp. 517-518).

11. 11 Nissan, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 38.

12. *Ibid.*

Wrong date requires extra boost

... In a manner similar to the reading of the *Megillah* on Purim, the law stipulates that, “When reading the *Megillah* on the correct date, even an individual can read it on his own and thus fulfill his obligation. However, when reading it on a different date, [as explained in the laws of Purim,] then it requires a *minyan* of ten Jews” (*ibid.*, fn. 23).

INTRODUCTION

In commemoration of the fact that G-d spared the Jewish firstborn when he smote the firstborn of the Egyptians, all firstborn Jewish men and boys fast on *erev* Pesach.

It is customary to arrange a *Siyum*, a ceremony where a tractate of *Talmud* is publicly completed, attended by firstborn men and boys. The ceremony is considered a *seudas mitzvah*, at which one should eat, and they are then exempt from fasting the rest of the day.

NO KNOWLEDGE NEEDED

- Young children (either biologically young or those who are “young” in their Torah knowledge) should also participate in the *Siyum*, despite their inability to comprehend the material.¹³

LAST MINUTE MAOS CHITIM

- Just before Pesach, we should again increase and complete our efforts at providing the needy with all that they require, and doing so with alacrity.¹⁴

13. *Parshas Matos-Masei*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 80.

14. 11 Nissan, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 50.

The Seder Night

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The many Chabad customs pertaining to Pesach and the *Seder* nights have been published in detail in the Rebbe's *Haggadah* and numerous subsequent publications.

Below are a few additional instructions that the Rebbe introduced or emphasized in the years 5748-5751 (1988-1991).

GIVE EVERY CHILD HIS OR HER OWN HAGGADAH

- Every child (and indeed, every adult as well) should have his or her own *tzedakah* box, *Siddur*, *Chumash* and similar holy books, including a *Pesach Haggadah*.¹⁵ This will generate greater excitement and enthusiasm to actually put these articles to use.¹⁶

NEW SIDTUR BEFORE YOM TOV

- Ideally, children should receive a brand new *Siddur* and the like before the festival. If, [for the sake of increasing their *yom tov* joy,] we are instructed¹⁷ to buy them nosh and the like – items containing no essential holiness – we should certainly buy

15. With pictures

... To end [this *farbrengen*] with a new “decree”: In the past, we have discussed the necessity of every child owning a personal *Siddur*, *Chumash*, and *tzedakah* box. Since it is now thirty days before Pesach, it would be very desirable to prepare *Haggados* for each child. Obviously, they should be attractively made, with pictures, etc., in order to attract the children. In this way, they will not only know the Four Questions, but will be able to answer them....

May it be G-d's will that even before the time comes for them to ask and answer these questions on Pesach, that our biggest question will be answered – the inexplicable continuation of the exile – with the arrival of Moshiach and the complete Redemption (Purim, 5747; *Sichos In English*, vol. 35).

16. *Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei*, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 480.

17. [See the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* 529:7.]

them articles of great spiritual value.¹⁸

PUBLIC SEDARIM ON BOTH NIGHTS

- In some places where a community *Seder* has been scheduled, the organizers have planned to hold a *Seder* on only one of the first two nights of Pesach due to lack of funds or similar reasons. It is most urgent, and certainly worthwhile, that [they alter their plans, so that] a community *Seder* is held on *both* nights of Pesach, even if it means dividing their [already limited] funds between the two nights.¹⁹

RECITE THE HAGGADAH JOYFULLY

- It is customary²⁰ to recite the main body of the *Haggadah* – the section entitled “Maggid,” which begins with the Four Questions – in a happy tune.²¹

POUR ELIJAHU’S CUP BEFORE BENTCHING

- In the past,²² “Eliyahu’s Cup” (*Kos Shel Eliyahu*) was poured

18. *Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei* 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 480.

19. ... But certainly they will not need to resort to this, since G-d will surely bless those organizing the *Seder*, providing them with all that they require, and even more (*Parshas Tzav*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 443-444).

20. **Do everything joyfully**

On Pesach, all of one’s affairs ... are specifically accomplished with joy (19 Nissan, 5749, during an address to children of Tzivos Hashem; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 443-444).

21. **Ingredients of intoxicating joy**

... Further, [our Sages state that] “joy comes only with wine,” which in this case refers to the joy that comes with drinking the cup of wine used to recite Kiddush [at the beginning of the *Seder*], and then drinking another three cups [throughout the *Seder*].

So in addition to the mandated rejoicing on every festival – for as the Torah states, they are “festivals for rejoicing” (*moadim lesimcha*) – [we also have the combined effects of the heightened joy of Pesach and the joy of the four cups]. Taken together, these factors create an exceedingly *great* joy (*ibid.*).

22. [In his *Haggadah*, the Rebbe makes reference to the conduct of the Previous Rebbe during the Pesach *Sedarim* of the year 5703 (1943). The Rebbeim of Chabad would personally pour Eliyahu’s Cup and later return it to the bottle. Notably, in the year 5703, the Previous Rebbe poured the wine back *before Birchas HaMazon*.]

before *Birchas HaMazon* only on specific occasions.²³ Lately, however, it has become customary to *always* pour this cup before *Birchas HaMazon*.²⁴

POUR IT BACK WITH SONG

- At the conclusion of the *Seder*, after declaring, “*LeShanah HaBaah B’Yerushalayim*” (“Next year in Jerusalem!”), we then return the wine from Eliyahu’s Cup back into the wine bottle.²⁵ While this is being done, all present should sing the Alter Rebbe’s melody, *Keili Atah*.²⁶

23. [Unlike the common custom quoted in the Rebbe’s *Haggadah*, whereby Eliyahu’s Cup is only poured *after Birchas HaMazon*.]

24. *Parshas Metzora*, 5749, subnote to fn. 78; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 8.

Symbolizing extreme proximity to the Redemption

[As the Rebbe explains (*ibid.*), the first two cups of the *Seder* represent our redemption from Egypt while the last two cups represent our future Redemption through Moshiach.

Although Eliyahu’s Cup represents the future Redemption, when the world will reach a state of perfection, it is nevertheless poured *before* reciting “Pour out Your wrath...” (a declaration which indicates that there is still a need to refine the world). This is done to indicate that even before the culmination of the exile, and while it is still in its final phase, we can nevertheless sample a “taste” of the imminent Redemption.]

25. **Intense G-dliness flows into our world**

The fifth cup, Eliyahu’s Cup, represents the supreme spiritual level alluded to in the verse, “The fifth portion [of grain] belongs to Pharaoh” (*Bereishis* 47:24). [To explain: There are five soul levels, the fifth and highest being the *Yechidah*, or essence, of the soul. The four lower levels reflect the four levels of G-dly manifestation, while the fifth, the *Yechidah*, represents G-d’s Essence. Evil, too, has five levels, and Pharaoh represents its fifth: the essence of evil. On this night, we pour five cups to symbolize our liberation from the five levels of evil and our “acquisition” of the levels of G-dliness.]

Pouring the wine from the fifth cup into a wine bottle symbolizes that even the most superior G-dly level is elicited and encloded within the “vessels,” [i.e., the parameters of our physical world], represented here by the bottle that contains the wine (*ibid.*, p. 8).

26. *Ibid.*, fn. 79.

Limitless light into finite physicality

Pesach [literally means and also represents] the theme of “skipping over”; i.e., an exodus from every limit, restriction and boundary, [i.e., *mitzarim*, a word closely related to *Mitzrayim*, “Egypt”].

Nevertheless, this transcendent mode of conduct is specifically revealed within the

NO GEBRACHTS, EVEN FOR CHILDREN

- For the first seven days of Pesach, we are exceedingly careful to avoid all *gebrachts*: *matzos* that have become wet. We go so far as to: a) cover the *matzos* that are on the table so that no water will fall on them; and at the same time, b) we cover the water so that no crumbs of *matzah* will fall into it.²⁷
- Children should also observe these stringent practices; it is a matter of proper training so that they, too, will be taught to refrain from *gebrachts*.²⁸

“vessels” (framework) of the very limitations it defies. [Therefore, we celebrate the unrestrained G-dly revelations of the night of Pesach specifically] through observing the many precise details of the *Leil HaSeder* [“Night of the ‘*Seder*,’” meaning “order”]: exactly three *matzos*, four cups of wine, and so on.

This even applies to the fifth cup, Eliyahu’s Cup: On the one hand, it represents a [G-dly] level beyond the entire system of restriction presented by all of Creation, [both physical and spiritual] ... which is why we do not drink the wine in this cup but merely gaze at it... On the other hand, we pour the wine back into the wine bottle at the conclusion of the *Seder* ... which indicates that even this level is being drawn into, [i.e., contained and expressed within the framework, or] “vessels,” [of this physical world] (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Why do we sing as we pour the wine back into its bottle?

Regarding pouring the wine from Eliyahu’s Cup back into the wine bottle: As explained earlier, it alludes to the elicitation of “The fifth portion which belongs to Pharaoh” and its containment in physical “vessels.”

This is accomplished in a manner of song and melody – amidst joy – for we are taught that “joy breaks through all restricting boundaries.”

Why the melody of Keili Atah?

Further, the tune sung while the wine is being returned to the bottle is set to the words [from *Tehillim* 118:28], *Keili Atah*, “You are my G-d...” This indicates that *Atah* (“You”); i.e., the Essence of G-d Himself, becomes *Keili* (“my G-d”). [In other words, the loftiest levels of G-dliness are now absorbed within the person, to the extent that they become part of himself.]

Why wait until now to return the wine?

[As the Rebbe explains, we pour the wine back into the bottle at the end of the *Seder*, after reciting “Next year in Jerusalem!” since the concept of bringing this lofty level into the “vessels” of this world is predominantly an accomplishment of the future Redemption] (*ibid.*, p. 13, fn. 126).

27. Last Day of Pesach, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 171.

28. Nights of Pesach, 5748, fn. 258; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 111.

The 18th of Nissan

Birthday of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

INTRODUCTION

The Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, was born in Homel, Russia, on the 18th of Nissan, 5638 (1878). He served as the Rav of Yekatrineslav (today, Dnepropetrovsk) for many years and was widely respected for his great piety, modesty and phenomenal mastery of all areas of Torah, including, and particularly, *Kabbalah*.

His staunch and fearless position to maintain uncompromised Torah observance, despite great opposition from the Communist regime, eventually resulted in harsh imprisonment and bitter exile for him.

On a Pesach-related note, Reb Levi Yitzchak achieved the seemingly impossible goal of persuading the highest echelons of government to forgo their plans of allowing only government-produced *matzos*. Instead, he received permission to secure kosher *matzos* of the maximum standard for the entire Russia, the supervision of which he personally controlled.

JOYFUL FARBRENGEN

- It is fitting to hold a joyous *farbrengen* on this day, the birthday of the Rebbe's father.²⁹

29. Significance of Chai Nissan

... On the 18th of Nissan (*Chai Nissan*), there is an augmentation of spiritual vitality (*chayus*) in all aspects of Nissan, whose central theme is the festival of Pesach.

Further, the 18th of Nissan carries an additional factor, of particular significance to myself, [i.e., the Rebbe,] being the firstborn son of my father, master and teacher, of blessed memory, who was born on the 18th of Nissan....

Of late, we have generated a great commotion (Yiddish: *tumul*) in an effort to have

מוקדש
לכ"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לזכות
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' צבי מרדכי בן שרה
וזוגתו שלומית בת שושנה
בניהם ובנותיהם:
יוסף יצחק, משה, מנחם מענדל, חנה וחי'
מושקא
שיחיו גודמאן



יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

each Jew celebrate his or her birthday by holding a *farbrenge*n and so on.

We should *certainly* do so on the birthday of a Jew who sacrificed his life for [the sake of maintaining] Torah and *mitzvos* [across Russia]. Moreover, he did so at great personal cost, to the extent that he remained in ... harsh exile until his dying day. And even following his passing, his body nevertheless remained buried in his place of exile, [Alma Ata, Russia]. However, now is not the appropriate time to dwell upon matters that do not generate great joy... (Nights of Pesach, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 90).