

הַגָּדָה שֶׁל פֶּסַח / Haggadah Shel Pesach

[Editor's note: During the two years that the Rav zt"l gave his lectures on *tefillah*, he devoted three *shiurim* in the weeks before Pesach to explanations on the *Haggadah*. This section is an adaptation of those *shiurim*.]

From my earliest youth, I remember that the children would ask each other on the first morning of Pesach, “How long did your *Seder* last?” This was true in my youth, and it is still the case today.

If the children were to ask me this now, I would answer them, “I made sure to eat the *afikoman* before *chatzos* (midnight).” According to some *poskim*, even the recitation of *Hallel* should be completed before *chatzos*. I must point out that the present-day practice in which all the children read from their prepared sheets which they received in school is not exactly in accordance with the mitzvah of וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, and you shall tell to your children, etc. (*Shemos* 13:8) The children have started a new mitzvah of וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְאָבִיךָ וּלְאִמְךָ, you shall teach your father and mother, which makes it extremely difficult to reach the mitzvah of *achilas matzah* — and certainly the *afikoman* — before *chatzos*.

Rather than discourage the children from actively participating, they should keep their remarks brief, so the father, or other leader of the *Seder*, can read the text of the *Haggadah* and explain the *nissim* of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. However, the children should be encouraged to say their *divrei Torah* during the meal if there is time or, otherwise, during the daytime meals of Yom Tov.

The *Haggadah shel leil Pesach* is probably the most popular *sefer*, after the *siddur*, in the Jewish home. There are at least a thousand commentaries on the *Haggadah*, each with different explanations and interpretations. It is not the purpose of this *shiur* to add another one, but rather to share a few thoughts on various parts of the *Haggadah*.

On *Seder* night, it is a *mitzvas asei d'Oraisa* to retell to one's children the events surrounding *yetzias Mitzrayim*. If one has the *zechus* to have children or grandchildren, it is a mitzvah for the father or grandfather to hand down to them the details of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. The saying of so-called “*gute vertlach*,” good, short pieces of *Torah*, is very nice, but if these are not details of the narrative of *yetzias Mitzrayim* — or its meaning and message — they are not a part of this mitzvah. On *Seder* night, the children are encouraged to ask any question relevant to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and the father has a special