

**A SEDER SUPPLEMENT: FOUR SHORT ESSAYS ON THE THEME OF "FOUR" AND FOUR QUOTES
RABBI ELIOT MALOMET SHABBAT HAGADOL EREV PESACH APRIL 12, 2025 14 NISSAN 5785**

1. ON FOURS IN THE HAGGADAH

There are so many **FOURS** in the Haggadah. **Four Questions. Four Children. Four Cups of Wine.** The actual telling of the story of Passover is subdivided in the Haggadah into **Four Tellings**. Each telling begins with a question or a set of questions, and ends with a praise, a song, or a blessing.

	Begins with:	Ends with:
First Telling	<i>Mah Nishtanah</i>	<i>Barukh Hamakom, Barukh Hu.</i>
Second Telling	<i>The Four Children and their questions</i>	<i>Blessed is the One who keeps his promises and Ve-Hi She'amda.</i>
Third Telling	<i>Tze U-Lmad-Go out and Learn</i>	<i>Dayyenu</i>
Fourth Telling	<i>Rabban Gamliel's foods</i>	<i>Short Hallel and blessing over wine.</i>

"Fours" are important because:

1. Four items are easy to remember.
2. Four provides the possibility of easy comparisons and contrasts.
3. Four connects to our spatial sense of order, we locate ourselves with a compass set to four directions.
4. While stories and jokes are often told based on threes, a fourth element allows the opportunity for a final emphasis that is still within a listener's grasp.

PLEASE NOTE:

Adjoining this supplement is a set of four color-coded sheets with four separate quotes from the Haggadah. Each quote (orange) comes with a set of four questions, (yellow) and each of the four questions is answered in four parts (green, purple, blue and red). Feel free to cut these sheets into cards and distribute them at the Seder Table. Choose a leader to ask the questions and go around the table to talk about the answers. **Go four it!**

2. FOUR CALLS FROM THE HAGGADAH

Four Calls that emanate from the Haggadah. They are:

1. כָּל דֹּכְפִין יֵיתִי וַיֵּכֶל, כָּל דָּרִיד יֵיתִי וַיִּפְסַח.
Let all who are hungry come and eat, let all who need to have a Passover Seder, come and make Passover.

This is a call for **Jewish Peoplehood**. Originally, this call was issued at the Seder to invite those who had nowhere to go. Today, we make our Seder arrangements well before the holiday. Mindful of this, we also participate in efforts like Maot Hittim, to make sure people have what they need for the Seder and the rest of the holiday. But *kol dikhfin* is not only a call to take care of one another, it is a call to strengthen our sense of responsibility for one another. Passover is an intimate holiday of Jewish peoplehood during which we re-

identify with our story and leap into solidarity with Jews throughout the world.

2. יֵצֵא וְלָמַד-Go Out and Learn.

This is a call for **Jewish Learning**. It is an expression that occurs several times in the Talmud and Midrash, and while it usually means **learn from this particular instance** in its broadest sense it means that **you have to go out and make an effort to learn**. The Seder and Passover in general challenge us to become literate Jews. To know our language, Hebrew. Our story. Our history. Our civilization.

3. וְנֵאמָר לְפָנָיו שִׁירָה חֲדָשָׁה: הִלְלוּ יָהּ. -And so we shall sing a new song before Him. HALLELUYA!

This is a call for **Jewish Joy**. Admittedly, a call for collective joy as a people is problematic as we mark a year and half of captivity for 59 hostages, 24 who are still presumed to be alive. We feel for their families as well as the families of those who have fallen or have been killed by terrorists since we gathered at last year's Seder. With Israel at war, and with renewed civil unrest there, and with no shortage of concerns at home in America, and a plethora of worries for the future of the world, it can seem self-serving and callous to rejoice. And yet, even in the darkest depths of our history we have found the courage **to sing a new song**, to be grateful for what we have. Finding the capacity to rejoice while experiencing worry and pain opens a gateway to comfort and healing.

4. לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם הַבְּנוּיָה. -Next year in Jerusalem.

This is a call for **Jewish Hope**. For some it expresses a yearning for the Messiah and the miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people from the **four** corners of the earth. For others it is a call for the continued renewal of Jewish peoplehood in the Land of Israel, a process that began over a hundred years ago and continues to this very day. Hoping for a future in Jerusalem is not only **Jewish hope**, but it is a **universal hope**. A world in which we, the most persecuted and despised people are free and safe, is a world that will potentially celebrate the unique role and mission of every people. The irony of this Jewish hope is that it can only be fulfilled in an era of universal harmony.

In a season of spring and renewal, may we be attentive to the Haggadah's four calls, Peoplehood, Learning, Joy, and Hope.

3. FOUR THINGS THAT PEOPLE SAY TO HELP THEM COPE

People often recite mottos or proverbs to help them cope in adversity. I can think of **four** such proverbs that emerge from our tradition. Each of these begins with the word **גַּם-Gam**

1. וְזֶה הוּא הַבֶּל -this too is vanity.

This rather pessimistic sentiment comes, unsurprisingly, from the book of Ecclesiastes. We can forgive a person for feeling that way, especially if life has been cruel to him or her.

While we all crave answers to life's unanswerable questions, the stark realization that things happen by chance and for no reason can understandably lead someone to the conclusion that life itself has no meaning. While we revere the honesty of the book and acknowledge the emotional pain of its author, we should encourage people to select a different motto.

2. גַּם זֶה יַעֲבֹר - This too will pass.

There are probably many sources for this proverb, but one that stands out is a folktale about King Solomon and his trusted servant Benaiah. As a challenge, Solomon instructed Benaiah to find him something that will bring sorrow to the happy, and happiness to the sorrowful. After traveling to the **four** corners of the earth, Benaiah returned with a ring. Solomon looked at it and saw the three Hebrew letters: **ג י ו - Gimmel, Zayin, Yod**, which immediately brought him sorrow. He understood from those letters **Gam Zeh Ya'avor- This too will pass**. Knowing that his own wisdom and wealth would eventually pass from this world, he was crestfallen. But in the story, he reminded himself that even that sadness would pass as well. And that realization gave him joy.

3. גַּם זֶה לְטוֹבָה - This too, is for the good.

The prominent source for this statement is a talmudic legend about a man whose nickname was Nahum Ish Gamzu.

And why did they call him Nahum of Gam Zu? The reason is that with regard to any matter that occurred to him he would say: This too is for the good [gam zu letova]. Once the Jews wished to send a gift to the house of the emperor. They said: Who should go and present this gift? Let Nahum of Gam Zu go as he is accustomed to miracles. They sent with him a chest full of jewels and pearls and he went and spent the night in a certain inn. During the night these residents of the inn arose and took all of the precious jewels and pearls from the chest and filled it with earth. The next day when he saw what had happened Nahum of Gam Zu said: This too is for the good... (Ta'anit 21a).

The story goes on with a chain of miraculous events that vindicate Nahum. Admittedly, it is always nice when we see **the glass half full**. And often, when we are in the midst of challenges and struggles, we cannot see the good that may emerge from them. However, even with a sunny disposition, there has to be room to acknowledge those who, in the midst of their suffering, are not able to look on the bright side of life. Often calamities do make way for something good. Drink the **half-full glass**, but stay sober.

4. גַּם כִּי אֶלֶף בְּגִיַּת צֶלְמָת לֹא אֵירָא רַע כִּי אֶתָּה עִמָּדִי - Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are with me.

As a reassuring statement that begins with the word **גַּם** there are not many better than this verse from the heart of the 23rd Psalm. This verse expresses the sentiment that sustains a person of faith. Sometimes we might be tempted to think that **life is meaningless**. At other times, we might simply be soothed by knowing that **this too will pass**. We will never

deny the power of optimism and hope, that **this too is for the good**, and yet we are also enjoined to engage life with sobriety. But for a person of faith, simply knowing that you are not alone, **that God is with us, even in the worst situations**, can be sustaining and comforting. It does not diminish the difficult realities of those circumstances, but it may in fact give us great comfort and lift us up.

4. IN EVERY GENERATION THEY TRY TO DESTROY US: FOUR SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR ELIE WIESEL AND HAMAS HOSTAGE ELI SHARABI

Since the end of January, 33 hostages have been released from captivity. The scenes of the so-called "release ceremonies" were horrifying. But more gruesome was the sight of the emaciated hostages, all suffering from various stages of malnutrition at the hands of their cruel captors. The scenes evoked the traumas of the Holocaust. Eli Sharabi was one of the hostages recently released. By the sheer coincidence of his first name, and by accident of his experience, and by the similar dignity with which he has borne witness to his ordeal, he evokes the memory of another famous Elie, Elie Wiesel. As we sit at our Seders, we remember and pray for the release of the hostages 555 days into their captivity. These similarities may prompt further consideration.

Elie Wiesel	Eli Sharabi
Born 1928, Sighet, Romania. Moved to USA.	Born 1973, Tel Aviv, Israel. Moved to Kibbutz Be'eri.
Lost most of his family during the Holocaust and was liberated on April 11, 1945 after over 340 days in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. He weighed only 28 kilos, after losing close to half his body weight.	Lost most of his family on October 7, 2023, and was liberated on February 8, 2025 after 491 days in various underground tunnels in Gaza. He weighed only 44 kilos, after losing close to half his body weight.
Elie spoke at the UN General Assembly on January 24, 2005 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, emphasizing the importance of bearing witness to prevent future atrocities.	Eli spoke to the UN Security Council 20 years later, on March 20, 2025, to recount the horrors of his captivity, to bear witness, and to beseech the UNSC members to do everything in their power to secure the release of the remaining hostages held captive by Hamas.
Threw the ceremonial first pitch at the 1986 World Series between the Mets and the Red Sox.	Gave an inspirational speech to the Israel National Soccer team to help it qualify for World Cup competition on the eve of this trip to New York to speak at the UN.

MAY GOD WATCH OVER THE HOSTAGES AND MAY THEY EXPERIENCE FREEDOM ON THIS FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM!