



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Haggadah- A Perfect Title

The book we use to guide us all through the Seder is referred to as the “*Haggadah*.” Why has this booklet merited this title? The term “*vehigadita l’vinha*” – to tell your children is referenced in the response we are to provide to the son who does not know how to ask (*She’eino Yodeiah Lishol*). Yet, the verb “*amira*” to “tell”, is referenced in our response to the other three sons¹. Since the term *amira* is utilized in connection with three of the four sons, perhaps it would have been more appropriate to refer to the Seder guidebook as - Ha’amirah

1 *To the haham, it states atah emor lo; to the rasha, hak’hei et shinav v’amar lo; the tam, v’amarta eilav; only with respect to the she’eino yodeiah lishol, it states v’higadeta l’vinha.*

rather than Haggadah. We will offer a few suggestions as to why the term Haggadah is a most appropriate title for the guidebook Seder night.

V’higadeta L’vincha

Rav Yerachmiel Kram in his Haggadah Talmudo B’yado explains that the only pasuk that refers directly to the night of the Seder is *v’higadeta l’vinhah*. All the other *pesukim* are more general. They are questions of the sons that are asked throughout the year. By *she’eino yodeiah lishol*, it’s connected to the Seder – *v’higadeta l’vinchah bayom hahu leimor*. It relates to a specific day – **bayom hahu** – referencing Seder night. Teaching us that even if a child does not ask, we are obligated to transmit to him our history – essentially *sipur yetziyat mitzrayim*.

That is why we call it Haggadah, because of the phrase “*v’higadeta l’vincha*” that describes our obligation specifically this evening.

Still, we may ask why is that word most appropriate? Maybe we can glean an answer based on Rashi in a totally different context. Rashi asks in Parashat Yitro (Shemot 19:3), what’s the difference between *amirah* and Haggadah? *Amirah*, explains Rashi, is soft-spoken. In contrast, Haggadah



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is a more serious and intense tone, going into depth. As the *pasuk* states: *ko tomar l'beit Yaakov, v'taged livnei Yisrael*. Moshe is directed to instruct the men and women, yet the term used when instructing the women (Beit Yaakov) is *tomar*, which connotes softer language. When instructing the men (Bnei Yisrael) the term used is *taged* (from Haggadah) which is a harsher language. This does not mean to have a negative connotation. Rather, the Haggadah is meant to be a serious, intense, and lasting experience, not just superficial or soft. That is why Haggadah is most suited for this description.

Revelation

An additional thought with respect to the term "Haggadah". The Gra believed that to best comprehend a word, one should study the first time that the word appears in the Torah. The word "*Haggadah*" first appears after Adam and Hava eat from the forbidden tree. Hashem asks Adam-

...ויאמר מי הגיד לך כי עירם אתה...

And [God] said [to Adam], who revealed to you that you are unclothed... (Bereshit 3:11)

The term "*higid*" to reveal, is first used to highlight something that was previously unknown. Only after eating the forbidden fruit did Adam have a **revelation** that he was unclothed. This underscores our obligation on Seder night. We are to inquire and explore our history and our customs this night. We are to gain a deeper understanding and comprehend new ideas that were previously unknown to us. It behooves us to prepare and encourage others present at the Seder to be *mechadesh* – to raise new insights that are engaging and meaningful at the Seder. That is the

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true meaning of “Haggadah”.

Testimony

Another explanation as to the use of the word Haggadah is offered by Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (cited in Haggadat Leil Shel Achdut, Rav Aharon Goldscheider). The Torah itself uses the term Haggadah with respect to the requirement to transmit to our children the historical events surrounding the Exodus from Egypt, as is stated: “*v’higadeta l’vinchah*”. Rav Soloveitchik suggests that perhaps it is related to another area in the Torah where a similar term is used -*haggadat eidut* (testifying). What is *haggadat eidut*? It is when I tell over something that I witnessed or experienced. When a person provides testimony in court, it is based on his personal experience, and not on hearsay. Haggadah means I saw it, I felt it, I witnessed it! On this night we are to feel as if we participated in the Exodus - *b’chol dor v’dor, chayav adam lirot et atzmo, k’ilu hu yatzah miMitzrayim*. We have to feel as if we’ve gone free. That is what we are to experience at the Seder. We should be transmitting the story as if we experienced it first-hand, similar to the requirement of *haggadat eidut*, requiring the provision of eyewitness testimony.

Sippur- Inscribe

There’s another word, another element, we can focus on as well. In the Haggadah the term *l’sapper* is used in connection with the transmission of the story of the Exodus.

וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח – all that expound upon telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, are praiseworthy.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik suggests that there is a special meaning to this word as well. *Sippur* is derived from the word *sofer*, and *sefer*. What does a scribe do? He writes on a parchment, on a *klaf*, something that’s meant to last. Whenever we’re *mesaper*, we’re *sofrim*, we’re scribes, and we’re writing it into the hearts of all who will be attending our Seder. When a *sofer* writes a *sefer*, he creates something that has permanence, something that will serve future generations, even beyond the time that the *mesaper*, or *sofer* is physically present. At the Seder, every parent and grandparent, is creating a *sefer* by being *mesaper* (*transmitting the story*). We are each a scribe. We are engraving the messages of tradition on the hearts and in the minds of each child. If we can succeed in telling our story *through the Haggadah* - feeling as if we experienced it, we can be that *sofer*, that scribe, that will create something that will last for generations. Moshe was called the Great Scribe, because he inscribed the Torah on the hearts of all of Am Yisrael.

May we be able to properly comprehend the significance of the evening, share insightful thoughts, and successfully transmit the tradition so that we can engrave a love and appreciation of Torah into the hearts of our children. ■

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