

Is the *Seder* Table a “Round-Table” or a Lectern?

Rabbi Daniel Stein

The Seder experience occupies a unique role in the spectrum of annual life-cycle events. It is the paradigm of Jewish home schooling, where a rich legacy, adorned with generations of customs, is passed on from parent to child. Indeed, children and all participants in the Seder are provoked into participating in this exchange, to ask, learn, and discuss the awesome tale of our Exodus from Egypt. The narrator of the story is of course the text of the *Haggadah*, whose reading constitutes the accepted method of discharging our obligation of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*, the positive commandment to recount the story of the Exodus on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan. The text of the *Haggadah* has earned this distinction because it is saturated with overt lessons as well as a world of subterranean meaning. In this context, we will focus on the formal reading of the *Haggadah*; more specifically on who is eligible to be the raconteur for others present. The following are some of the questions we will deal with in addressing this subject.

- Can one fulfill the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim* through a silent reading of the *Haggadah* or must the words be expressed audibly?
- Must all participants at the Seder recite the *Haggadah* for themselves, or can they suffice with listening to others? And, are women and men interchangeable in this regard?
- Can an adult’s obligation to recite the *Haggadah* be fulfilled through listening to a child? Should a distinction be made between the Four Questions and other parts of the *Haggadah*?

I Think, I Can?

The mitzvah to recall the Exodus annually on the Seder night has its source in the following pasuk:

*And thou shalt relate to thy son on that day saying:
This is done because of that which the Lord did to me
when I came out of Egypt.*

Exodus. 13:8

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה
ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים

שמות יג:ח

This obligation is distinct from the daily obligation to recall the Exodus, recorded in the preceding pasuk:

and Moshe told the people remember the day that you exited Egypt.

Exodus 13, 3

ויאמר משה אל העם זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים

שמות י"ג:ג

This second mitzvah mandates not only mentioning the Exodus during daytime, but at night as well, as elaborated in the Mishnah (cited by the Haggadah):

We mention the Exodus from Egypt at night. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "I am nearly seventy years old and I did not merit mentioning the Exodus from Egypt at night until Ben Zomah derived from the verse, 'that you shall remember the day you went out from Egypt all the days of your life,' the days of your life implies the days, all the days of your life includes the nights as well."

Mishnah Berachos 12b

מזכירין יציאת מצרים בלילות, אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה, ולא זכיתי שתאמר יציאת מצרים בלילות עד שדרשה בן זומא, שנאמר למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך, ימי חיך הימים, כל ימי חיך הלילות.

משנה ברכות יב:

Recent commentaries have discussed at length the relationship between these two mitvos. If one is obligated to recall the Exodus from Egypt every night, what is unique about the independent mitzvah on the night of the Seder? Many suggestions have been made as to the possible differences between these two mitzvos. Rabbi Yosef Teomim of Levov (d. 1792), the author of *Pri Megadim*, suggests that the nightly mitzvah of remembering the Exodus can be fulfilled through concentrated thought alone, whereas the local mitzvah to remember the Exodus on the Seder night can only be fulfilled through speech³. He writes the following:

One can ask, since there is a positive commandment to mention the Exodus from Egypt everyday, during the day and at night etc., why was it necessary to state, "and thou shalt relate to thy son on that day saying"? One can suggest that the daily mitzvah to mention the Exodus can be fulfilled through thought (mentioning in the heart), but on the night of Pesach one must mention the Exodus through speech, as the pasuk says, "and thou shalt

יש להקשות שכיון שמצות עשה להזכיר יציאת מצרים בכל יום, ביום ובלילה וכו' למה הוצרך לכתוב והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר, והרי בכל יום הוא מחוייב להזכיר יציאת מצרים ביום ובלילה. וי"ל דס"ל להרמב"ם שהפסוק למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך דמיירי בשאר ימות השנה, די בזכירה בלב, אבל בליל פסח צריך שיגיד בפה ויוציא בשפתיו כדכתיב והגדת

³ The assertion of the *Pri Megadim* is indeed found in earlier sources. The *Besomim Rosh* (Sec. 173), a work of dubious authorship, states based on the Gemara in *Megillah* (18a), that the word "remembering" (used by the Torah when describing the daily obligation to remember the Exodus) implies a remembering in the heart, not through speech. It would therefore follow that the daily obligation to remember the Exodus from Egypt can be fulfilled through thought. However when describing the obligation on Pesach night the Torah uses the language, "and you shall tell," clearly implying a verbal communication.

relate to thy son”, and the plain meaning of relating is through speech.

Introduction to the Laws of Shema

לבנך, וסתם הגדה היא בפה.
פתיחה להל' קריאת שמע אות ד'

Rabbi Yehudah Leib Gunzburg (d. 1785), the author of *Shaagas Aryeh*, disagrees with the basic premise of the *Pri Megadim* that the daily mitzvah of remembering the Exodus from Egypt can be fulfilled through thought. He claims that the daily remembering must also be expressed verbally⁴. The *Shaagas Aryeh*'s position has forced many commentaries to propose other distinctions between these two mitzvos of recalling the Exodus. Minimally, however, all agree that at the Seder one must speak the words of the *Haggadah*, and a silent reading will not suffice.

Lend Me Your Ears

Regarding mitzvos that require speech, halachah articulates a principle called “*shome'a ke'oneh*”, “listeners are like speakers”. If one hears someone else enunciate a blessing or prayer, the listener has vicariously fulfilled his own obligation of reciting that blessing or prayer. This rule is derived by the Gemara in the following way:

It has also been stated, Rav Chanan bar Rava said, it is a mitzvah to respond with the beginning of the chapters, the reader says: “Please, Hashem bring salvation, now!” And the people respond: “Please, Hashem bring salvation, now!” etc. The reader says: “Blessed is he who comes,” and the people respond: “in the name of Hashem.” From here [i.e. from the fact that the listeners need not repeat “blessed is he who comes,”] it can be inferred that listening is like responding. They asked Rav Chiya bar Abba: If one listened to someone (recite a text that he is obligated to recite himself), but did not respond after hearing it, what is the law? (Has he discharged his obligation or not?) He answered them ... One who listened and did not respond has discharged his obligation.

Sukkah 38b

אתמר נמי אמר רב חנן בר רבא מצוה לענות ראשי פרקים הוא אומר אנא ה' הושיעה נא והן אומרים אנא ה' הושיעה נא וכו', הוא אומר ברוך הבא והן אומרים בשם ה', מכאן לשומע כעונה. בעו מיניה מרבי חייא בר אבא שמע ולא ענה מהו, אמר להו חכימיא וספריא ורישי עמא ודרשיא אמרו שמע ולא ענה יצא.

סוכה לה:

Shome'a ke'oneh has limitations as well. For example, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveichik (d. 1892), the author of *Beis Ha'leivi*, claims that *shome'a ke'oneh* does not apply to the priests' mitzvah to bless the nation (*birkas kohanim*); each priest must enunciate the blessing himself⁵. The *Beis Ha'leivi*'s great-grandson, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (d. 1993), the Rav z"l, explained his opposition as stemming from a limitation of *shome'a ke'oneh*. The halachah requires that the priestly blessings be said by in a loud voice, audible to both parties. This implies that *birkas kohanim* entails establishing a relationship between the “blessed” and the “blesser.” Even

⁴ This is echoed by Rabbi Samuel Strashun, the author of the *Rashash* (glosses on the Gemara), in his commentary to the aforementioned mishnah in Berachos, where he reads this halachah into the language of the mishnah itself.

⁵ *Beis Haleivi*, Commentary on the Torah, (Topics in *Hilchos Chanukah*).

though, *shome'a ke'oneh* can fulfill a formal requirement of speech which is incumbent on the listener, it can not create a connection between silent parties⁶.

The mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*, like *birkas kohanim*, might also entail forging a connection between two parties. The mitzvah's source is a verse describing an exchange between father and son. The Rambam quotes the following statement from Chazal:

This is the language of the Mechilta: the implication of the verse, "when your son shall ask you" is that only if one is asked must he relate the story of the Exodus, but if he is not asked he does not have to. Hence the verse, "and thou shalt relate to thy son on that day saying", even though you have not been asked. Perhaps this should be limited to one who has a son, but if he is alone or with another (who is not his son) how do we know he is still obligated to retell the story? This is to be derived from the verse "and Moshe told the people remember the day that you exited Egypt" (Ex. 13, 3), this teaches us that one is obligated to mention the story, just as we learned, and you shall remember the Shabbos to make it holy.

**Rambam, Sefer Ha'mitzvos
Positive Commandment 157**

ולשון מכילתא [דרשב"י במדרש הגדול] מכלל שנאמר כי ישאלך בנך יכול אם ישאלך אתה מגיד לו ואם לאו אין אתה מגיד לו תלמוד לומר והגדת לבנך אע"פ שאינו שואלך, אין לי אלא בזמן שיש לו בן בינו לבין עצמו בינו לבין אחרים מניין תלמוד לומר ויאמר משה אל העם זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים. כלומר שהוא צוה לזכרו כמו אמרו זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.

רמב"ם ספר המצוות מ"ע קנ"ז

The original source for *sippur yitzias Metzrayim* implies that if one is alone, lacking an audience, there is no obligation to tell the story of the Exodus. However, the *Mechilta* cites an additional verse obligating us to recall the story even in solitude.

Rabbi Yosef Babad (d. 1874), the author of *Minchas Chinuch*, suggests an original interpretation of the *Mechilta*⁷. He suggests that the *Mechilta*, even at its conclusion, did not redefine the mitzvah of *sippur yetziat mitzrayim* to include those who are alone, but rather informed us that such an act would be subsumed within a different mitzvah. In other words, the unique mitzvah to retell the story of the Exodus on Pesach night is in fact limited to one who has an audience. However, even without an audience, one can fulfill (on the Seder night) the mitzvah applicable every night of the year to mention the Exodus (which has no such stipulation).

Hence, the *sippur yitzias Metzrayim* of Pesach night is not a requirement of speech alone, but a requirement to recall the Exodus via a dialogue between "father" and "son". It stands to reason as

⁶ Rabbi Herschel Schachter, *Be'ikvei Ha'tzon* (pg. 95). The same explanation of the opinion of the *Beis Ha'leivi* is found in other sources as well, see Rabbi Aryeh Peromchik, *Emek Berachah* (pg. 17), *Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi'beis Ha'leivi* (pg.107), and Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky, *Kehillos Yaakov* (*Berachos* Sec. 11 Part 5). Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, *Chazon Ish* (*Orach Chaim* Sec. 29 Part 3) and Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, *Meshiv Davar* (Vol. 1 Sec 47) disagree with the basic premise of the *Beis Ha'leivi*, and they contend that *shome'ah ke'oneh* is operant within the mitzvah of *Birkas Kohanim* as well. Indeed Rabbi Betzalel of Vilna, *Reishis Bikkurim* (Sec. 4) records that the custom in Triest, Italy was that one priest would recite the blessing on behalf of all of the kohanim present.

⁷ *Minchas Chinuch* (Mitzvah 21 Part 1).

well, that this obligation can not be accomplished through *shome'a ke'oneh*. *Shome'a ke'oneh* can only discharge personal obligations but can not create a conversation.

This argument led Rabbi Yishmael ben Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen (d. 1811), the author of *Shevach Pesach*, to assert that the Haggadah must be recited independently by all those obligated in the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*⁸. After all, everyone is obligated to create a dialogue, and creating a dialogue requires speech.

Even though his argument is compelling, most poskim do not accept the position of the *Shevach Pesach*. They base their counterargument on the following passage of Gemara:

Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: A blind person is exempt from reciting the Haggadah for it is written here regarding the mitzvah of recounting the Exodus, "(and you shall tell your son on that day saying) it is because of this (that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt)." And it is written there (in the passage of the rebellious son, ie. the ben sorer u'moreh) "this son of ours is wayward." Just as there the term "this" excludes blind [parents], here, too, (regarding the mitzvah of relating the Exodus) the term "this" excludes the blind. Is it so that the blind are exempt from recounting the Exodus? But Mereimar said, "I once asked the Rabbis of Rav Yosef's academy, 'who recited the Haggadah in Rav Yosef's house?' They replied 'Rav Yosef.' I also asked, 'who recited the Haggadah at Rav Sheishess' house?' They said 'Rav Sheishess.'" ... Is this analogy [between recounting the Exodus and the rebellious son] correct?! It is understandable that there (in the latter passage we expound "this" to exclude the blind, for since the Torah could have written "He" is our son, but wrote instead "this" is our son, we derive that the word "this" excludes the blind. But here, if not "because of this" what else is there to write? Rather it is to teach that one should tell his son that it is because of "this" - the matzoh and the maror, that this verse comes.

Pesachim 116b

אמר רב אחא בר יעקב סומא פטור מלומר הגדה, כתיב הכא בעבור זה וכתיב התם בננו זה, מה להלן פרט לסומא אף כאן פרט לסומין, איני, והאמר מרימר שאלתינהו לרבנן דבי רב יוסף מאן דאמר אגדתא בי רב יוסף, אמרו רב יוסף, מאן דאמר אגדתא בי רב ששת, אמרו רב ששת וכו', בשלמא התם מדהוה ליה למיכתב בננו הוא וכתיב בננו זה, שמע מינה פרט לסומין הוא דאתא, אבל הכא אי לאו בעבור זה מאי לכתוב, אלא בעבור מצה ומרור הוא דאתא.

גמ' פסחים קטז:

The Gemara states that Rav Yosef and Rav Sheishess read the Haggadah for all those present at their table. The Gemara seeks to prove from this that the blind are obligated in the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*. Rav Yosef and Rav Sheishess were both blind, and if the blind are not obligated in the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim* how could their reading satisfy the obligation of those who are obligated.

Clearly, the Gemara assumes that one reader can fulfill the obligation of many listeners, and that the listeners need not recite the entire haggadah themselves. Indeed, it is recorded that the Vilna

⁸ *Shevach Pesach*, Laws of *Maggid*, Part 2.

Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (d. 1797) had the practice of reading the Haggadah for all those present at his table, who themselves remained silent⁹.

Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank (d. 1960) writes that even though the logic of the *Shevach Pesach* was convincing, based on the contradictory information, we must conclude that *shome'a ke'oneh* applies to reading the Haggadah. *Sippur yitzias Metzrayim* was indeed redefined by the *Mechilta*, rather than supplemented as the *Shevach Pesach* suggested. While the original verse alone implies that the mitzvah of *sippur yitziat Metzrayim* must be executed in the form of a conversation, the additional verse compels the *Mechilta* to conclude that it applies even in isolation. Therefore it should be included within the genre of mitzvos where *shome'a ke'oneh* is effective¹⁰.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have now addressed the first two questions with which we began. In the opinion of most poskim the Haggadah must be read aloud, but one can satisfy his or her obligation by listening to others. Let us turn to the third question: Can a man satisfy his obligation to read the Haggadah by listening to a woman?

In order to answer this question, we must clarify halakhah's position on women performing mitzvos on men's behalf. The Gemara says:

Ravina said to Rava: Concerning women's recitation of Bircas Ha'mazon, is this required by Biblical law or Rabbinic law? What practical difference does it make? It is relevant as to whether a woman who has eaten together with men may discharge the public of their obligation by reciting Bircas Ha'mazon on their behalf. If you say a woman's obligation to recite Bircas Ha'mazon is Biblical, then she may indeed recite it on behalf of others, for here, a person Biblically obligated is coming and discharging the obligation of others whose obligation is likewise Biblical. However, if you say her obligation to recite Bircas Ha'mazon is Rabbinic, than her status is in effect that of one who is not obligated in this matter, and anyone who is not himself obligated to do a certain thing cannot discharge the public of their obligation.

Berachos 20b

אמר ליה רבינא לרבא, נשים
בברכת המזון דאורייתא או
דרבנן, למאי נפקא מינה,
לאפוקי רבים ידי חובתן, אי
אמרת דאורייתא, אתי
דאורייתא ומפיק דאורייתא,
ואי אמרת דרבנן, הוי שאינו
מחוייב בדבר, וכל שאינו
מחוייב בדבר אינו מוציא את
הרבים ידי חובתן.

גמ' ברכות כ:

The Gemara here lays down a substantial constraint to the application of *shome'a ke'oneh* - the reader must be equally obligated, or more obligated than the listener, in the recitation of the specific passage. The logic behind this principle seems to be that if the reader has a less intense obligation than the listener, then the reader's recitation is insignificant in reference to the listener. In exploring whether a man can fulfill his obligation to recite the Haggadah by listening to the reading of a woman, we must discern the degree to which women are, or are not, obligated to read the Haggadah.

⁹ *Maaseh Rav* (Sec. 187).

¹⁰ *Har Tzvi* (*Orach Chaim* Vol. 1 Sec. 57).

Ostensibly women should be exempt from the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*, because it is relevant only on the Seder night. We are well acquainted with the universal rule that women are exempt from all time-bound positive mitzvos¹¹. However, there are two mitigating rationales to include women in the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*.

A] The Gemara states the following regarding the nature of women's obligation to drink the Four Cups of wine at the Seder:

Rebbi Yehoshua ben Levi stated: Women are obligated in the drinking of these four cups, because "af hein ha'yu be'oso ha'neis," they too were included in the miracle.

Pesachim 108a

ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי נשים
הייבות בארבעה כוסות הללו
שאף הן היו באותו הנס.
פסחים קח.

Since women participated in the miracles surrounding Pesach, they too are obligated in the mitzvos which commemorate those miracles. We could extrapolate from this that women should be obligated in all the particulars of the holiday of Pesach and not just the mitzvah of the Four Cups.

However, *Tosfos* notes that "*af hein ha'yu be'oso ha'neis*" cannot be all encompassing, since we find instances where this rule does not apply¹². This leads *Tosfos* to postulate that this rule is only pertinent to rabbinically binding mitzvos, such as the Four Cups of wine, but not biblically binding mitzvos, such as the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*¹³. Other *Tosfos* suggest that "*af hein hayu be'oso ha'neis*" only serves to obligate women on a Rabbinic level, but not on a Biblical level¹⁴. Hence, women are obligated in the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*, albeit only on a Rabbinic level.

The *Minchas Chinuch* writes that these positions of *Tosfos* both preclude women from reading the Haggadah for men, since their obligation is of a lesser intensity¹⁵.

Yet other *Tosfos* do not subscribe to these limitations of *af hein hayu be'oso ha'neis*¹⁶. Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (d. 1806), the *Chida*, writes in his *Birkei Yosef* that women are Biblically obligated in *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*, because they too were involved in the miracle. Hence the force of a woman's obligation would correspond to that of a man, and she might indeed be able to read the Haggadah for him¹⁷.

¹¹ Mishnah *Kiddushin* 29a. The *Sefer Ha'chinuch* (mitzvah 21) writes that women are Biblically obligated to recite the Haggadah to the same extent as men. The *Minchas Chinuch* (ad loc. part 10) immediately questions this ruling in light of the fact that the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim* is a time-bound mitzvah. The *Minchas Chinuch* then points out that this is not merely a theoretical debate; since whether or not a man can satisfy his obligation by listening to the reading of a woman should depend on this issue.

¹²For example, the Gemara in *Sukkah* 28a states that women are exempt from the mitzvah of sitting in the Sukkah even though they participated in the miracles surrounding Sukkos just like men. Additionally, the Gemara in *Pesachim* 43b requires an independent source to Biblically obligate women in the mitzvah of eating matzoh on Pesach, which implies that *af hein hayu be'oso ha'neis* alone would not have been sufficient.

¹³ *Tosfos* to *Pesachim* 108b, sv. *Hayu*.

¹⁴ *Tosfos* to *Megilah* 4a, sv. *She'af*.

¹⁵ *Minchas Chinuch* ad loc.

¹⁶ *Tosfos* to *Megilah* ad loc.

¹⁷ *Birkei Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* sec. 473 part 15).

Nonetheless, it is entirely unclear that this last opinion is authoritative. Moreover, any time one's obligation in a mitzvah is established solely because of *af hein hayu be'oso ha'neis*, his relationship with those who are genuinely obligated is tenuous. Perhaps *af hein hayu be'oso ha'neis* cannot substitute for a fundamental obligation. It might only serve as an umbrella obligation, forcing one to act out of gratitude, but retaining no affiliation with the primary mitzvah per se¹⁸. This argument would preclude a woman from reading the Haggadah for a man by means of *shome'a ke'oneh* even if we accept the latter opinion of *Tosfos*.

B] Another avenue proposed to obligate women Biblically in the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*, has been through the association of this mitzvah with other mitzvos. The Gemara states unequivocally that women are obligated in the mitzvah of eating matzoh (even though it is a time-bound mitzvah), because it is connected with the prohibition to eat *chametz*:

For R' Elazer said: Women are obligated in the eating of matzoh by Biblical law, for it is stated: You shall not eat chametz with it etc. From this juxtaposition, we learn that whoever is subject to the prohibition, "do not eat chametz" is likewise subject to the commandment of eating matzoh. Thus these women too, since they are subject to the prohibition "do not eat chametz," they are also subject to the commandment to "arise and eat matzoh.

Pesachim 43b

דאמר רבי אליעזר נשים חייבות באכילת מצה דבר תורה, שנאמר לא תאכל עליו חמץ וגו' כל שישנו בבל תאכל חמץ ישנו באכילת מצה, והני נשי נמי הואיל וישנו בבל תאכל חמץ ישנו בקום אכול מצה.

פסחים מג:

The Gemara earlier explains that this linkage between the prohibition of eating chametz and the mitzvah of eating matzoh is by virtue of the fact that they are juxtaposed in the same verse. Working off that paradigm, Rabbi Betzalel Ha'kohen of Vilna (d. 1878), in his *Mar'e Kohen*, writes that a similar portal should exist between the mitzvah of eating matzoh and the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*¹⁹. These two mitzvos are enumerated in the same verse in the Torah. He therefore argues that since women are Biblically included in matzoh, they should be Biblically included as well in *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*.

From a different perspective, but in a similar vein, Rabbi Moshe Schick (d. 1879) suggests that women should be Biblically obligated to recite the Haggadah based on the following passage in the Gemara:²⁰

Shmuel said: The bread of affliction (oh'ni), the bread which has much said about it (oh'nim).

Pesachim 115b

אמר שמואל, לחם עני, לחם שעונין עליו דברים.

פסחים קטו :

¹⁸ Rabbi Yehudah Leib Gunzburg, *Turei Even* to *Megilah* 4a, and Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, *Chiddushei Ha'griz* to *Erchin* 3a.

¹⁹ *Mar'e Kohen* to *Pesachim* 116b. This same suggestion was subsequently made by Rabbi Reuven Katz (d. 1963), *Degel Reuven*, (vol. 1 sec 6.). See also Rabbi Yechiel Epstein, *Aruch Ha'shulchan* (sec. 472 part 15) for a similar idea.

²⁰ *Maharam Schick*, Commentary to the Enumeration of Mitzvos, (Mitzvah 21 part 2).

The Gemara mandates that the matzoh be “matzoh which much has been said regarding it”. The discussion which must take place in the presence of the matzoh is that of the Haggadah. It therefore stands to reason, that since women are obligated to eat matzoh, presumably they must eat matzoh in the optimal form. In order to properly fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzoh, the Haggadah must be recited in the presence of the matzoh. Women would then be included in the recitation of the Haggadah by way of the mitzvah of matzoh²¹.

[It should be noted, that *Tosfos* themselves endorse this line of reasoning. *Tosfos* write that since women are obligated to drink the Four Cups of wine, and one of those cups must coincide with the conclusion of the Haggadah reading, women would be obligated to read the Haggadah by virtue of their obligation to drink Four Cups of wine. However, the implication of *Tosfos* is that women are only obligated on a Rabbinic level to read the Haggadah, since the Four Cups are only Rabbinic in origin.]²².

We have mentioned two possible rationales which would obligate women on a Biblical level in the recitation of the Haggadah, thereby allowing them to read it for a man through *shome'a ke'oneh*. Practically, the *Shulchan Aruch* states that women are indeed obligated to read the Haggadah²³, but there is no clarification as to the level of that obligation. Therefore, since the matter is unclear, most poskim are reluctant to allow a man to fulfill his obligation to read the Haggadah by listening to a woman. However, if one did so, there is sufficient room to argue that he did not err²⁴.

Question and Answer Format

We now turn to our final question. Can an adult's obligation to recite the Haggadah be fulfilled through listening to a child? Should a distinction be made between the Four Questions and other parts of the Haggadah?

Based on what we have learned, it should be apparent that neither a man nor a woman can fulfill their obligation of reading the Haggadah by listening to a child, whose obligation is only Rabbinic. Nonetheless, the *Mechilta* indicated that the ideal way of reciting the Haggadah is to have children ask questions, and adults provide the answers. Indeed, the *Mechilta* suggested that in the absence of children, the Haggadah need not be recited. Only after the onset of a secondary verse did the *Mechilta* revise its position to include even two adults having a Seder together. The original statement of the *Mechilta* felt that a child's questioning is indispensable even in terms of an adult's obligation to recite the Haggadah.

²¹ From this approach it would emerge that women are not be obligated in the mitzvah of reciting the Haggadah for its own sake, but for the utilitarian purpose of eating the matzoh. This argument then would be very narrow in its application and would probably not be relevant to our discussion of a woman reading the Haggadah for a man, as opposed the suggestion of Rabbi Betzalel Ha'kohen of Vilna which is relevant.

²² *Tosfos* to *Sukkah* 38a, sv. *Mi*. See also Rabbi Avraham Danzig, *Chayei Adam* (sec. 130 part 14) who explains a woman's obligation to read the Haggadah in a similar fashion.

²³ The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* sec. 472 part 14) as explained by the *Mishna Berurah* (part 45).

²⁴ Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, *Chazon Ovadyah* (Pesach, pg. 52). See also *Teshuvos Chazon Ovadyah* (vol. 1 sec. 20).

It would be fair to assume that this would still be valid even within the concluding statements of the *Mechilta*. The *Mechilta* in its revision sought only to broaden the mitzvah further, not to retract its original breadth. This is borne out by the Gemara:

Why do we remove the table? It was said in the house of Rabbi Yannai, so that the children will notice and ask. Abaya was once sitting in the presence of Rabba. He observed that they were removing the table from in front of Rabba. Abaya asked: "But we have not yet eaten?" Rabba responded: "You have exempted us from reciting the Four Questions."

Pesachim 115b

למה עוקרין את השולחן, אמרי דבי רבי ינאי כדי שיכירו תינוקות וישאלו, אביי הוה יתיב קמיה דרבה, חזא דקא מדלי תכא מקמיה, אמר להו עדיין לא קא אכלינן וכו', אמר ליה רבה פטרתן מלומר מה נשתנה.

פסחים קטו :

The *Rashbam* and *Tosfos* explain that the removal of the table will eventually lead children to ask the Four Questions. Once the children have asked the Four Questions, the adults need not repeat them. This is codified by the *Rema*, Rabbi Moshe Isserles (d. 1530)²⁵.

Is this because *shome'a ke'oneh* can be applied to the reading of a child who is not Biblically obligated to read the Haggadah?

It would appear that this has nothing to do with *shome'a ke'oneh*, because if that were true, it should not be limited to the Four Questions specifically. Rather an adult satisfies his obligation to read the Four Questions by listening to a child since the Four Questions are not an essential part of the Haggadah text as per the mitzvah of *sippur yitzias Metzrayim*. They serve merely to set the tone. As mentioned previously the Seder is meant to be conducted in question and answer format; the Four Questions are meant only to create that setting, but not to discharge a formal obligation²⁶. Presumably, even though *shome'a ke'oneh* can not be applied to the reading of a child, his recitation can serve to set the tone of question and answer.

In light of this, there is a puzzling statement in the *Rambam*:

After that, the table is removed from the reader of the Haggadah alone, and the second cup of wine is mixed, and here the son asks, and the reader recites the Four Questions.

The Laws of Chametz and Matzoh 8:3

ואחר כך עוקרין השולחן מלפני קורא ההגדה לבדו, ומזגין הכוס השני וכאן הבן שואל, ואומר הקורא מה נשתנה. הלכות חמץ ומצה פ"ח ה"ב

²⁵ *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 473:7) as explained by the *Mishna Berurah* (69).

²⁶ This is highlighted by a minority opinion in the *rishonim* who disagree with *Tosfos* and the *Rashbam*, and assume based on this passage in the Gemara as well as others, that as long as the child asks any question the Seder can proceed, even if the Four Questions themselves were never uttered by anyone present at the Seder. This is stated explicitly by the *Maharil*, Rabbi Yaakov Moellin (d. 1427) who is in fact the source cited by the *Rema* (ad loc.) mentioned before. This opinion can also be found in a much earlier source, the *Rokeach*, Rabbi Eleazar ben Yehudah of Worms (d. 1238) Sec. 283, as well as in a plethora of later commentaries collected by Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef, *Teshuvos Chazon Ovadyah* (Vol. 1 Sec. 22).

A literal reading of the Rambam suggests that the child is not supposed to ask the Four Questions at all. The child was only intended to ask what troubles him particularly, and then the adults should recite the Four Questions. The medieval commentary by R. Manoach of Narbonne writes that the Rambam rejects the aforementioned passage of Gemara which gives significance to the child's presentation of the Four Questions.

Based on this comment of the Rambam, Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik (d. 1918) instructed all those at his Seder to repeat the Four Questions after they were recited by the child²⁷. In understanding this opinion we are forced to conclude that the Rambam believes: either that the text of the Four Questions is itself a primary component of the Haggadah text (and not meant merely to set the tone); or that the reading of a child is insufficient even to create the question and answer format²⁸.

The Final Act

We have demonstrated that the Haggadah must be recited verbally. Under certain circumstances one can suffice by listening to others, but only through the principle of *shome'a ke'oneh*. What is the significance of this halachah?

The Mishnah (cited by the Haggadah) presents us with a daunting charge. In every generation we are obligated to view ourselves as if we had just left Egypt²⁹. This is an overwhelming task; how are we supposed to feel like participants in a situation we never experienced?

The answer is that through the verbal recitation of the Haggadah, we are emphasizing to ourselves the immediate nature of the story. A historical lesson is read and recorded mentally, a recent story is on the tip of our tongues ready to be recounted.

We mentioned that the story of the Exodus should be told in question and answer format, to the extent that if one is alone he must ask himself questions. Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum explains that this is linked to this theme as well³⁰. A story which is unfolding and developing is generally clarified through questions and answers. Even though we are sitting alone, asking the same questions as last year, we must conduct ourselves as though the story, with all its details and nuances, is new and fresh.

The Gemara has a tradition that the final redemption will take place in the month of Nissan, corresponding to the original redemption from Egypt which occurred in Nissan³¹. May we all properly experiencing the redemption of Egypt, and in that way merit to see the redemption in our times, culminating in the building of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

²⁷ *Haggadah Shel Pesach MiBeis HaLevi* (Vol 2. Pg. 80).

²⁸ Meaning there are two distinct points. Firstly, that the child must ask what troubles him specifically; and secondly that the story of the Exodus be told by the adults in question answer format This explanation can be found in the *Siach HaGrid Haggadah* (pg. 23), authored by Rabbi Yitzchok Lichtenstein and containing lessons conveyed by the Rav z"l, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik.

²⁹ *Mishnah Pesachim* 116a.

³⁰ *Haggadah Minchas Chein* (New York 2001) pg. 87.

³¹ *Rosh Hashana* 11a.