



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF  
**CENTER FOR JEWISH LEARNING**

*Excerpted from:*

**The Lips of Solomon**

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## Shabbat Hagadol

[The Shabbat before Pesach]

*With the help of heaven, this is being written on the closing of Shabbat, Parshat Tzav, during the year 1942, which has passed over us with favor*

*This week which passed by with favor there was great tribulation, fear and anguish that was beyond measure, may the all Merciful save us. On the Sunday of the week we read Parshat Tzav we prayed, as always, the morning prayers at the Shul, Mevakshei Torah [Seekers of Torah], at 8:30AM, because we are not allowed outdoors until 8:00AM. During the preliminary Psalms of the morning service five or six "destructive messengers" ["angels"] may the all Merciful save us, came to the Shul and beat me, but the Lord may He be blessed had compassion for I was only hit once and my glasses were broken. They announced they were going to destroy the Holy Ark and all the precious vessels in the Shul, but after a few minutes they left through the Lord's compassion.*

*On Sunday evening, what we had been fearful of for many days came to pass, may the Lord have mercy upon us quickly. In the evening they came to Jewish homes and took all the daughters of Israel who were sixteen years or older for work. Many girls went in the morning full of fear and panic accompanied by the tears of fathers and mothers, may the Lord, may He be blessed, have mercy.*

*And I will always mention the compassion of the Lord for my daughter, Bracha Golda had just been married a few days before and because of this with God's help, she was saved from their hands. They searched throughout my house for her and I told them and showed them that she had been married in accordance with their laws, and with God's help they left.*

*This past week, which passed with favor, all week long there was fear anxiety and misery, may the All merciful save us, and there were frightening rumors about the girls who were taken, for they were closed off from us and not one came or went. There was also fear that they would soon come after the men and I had not a free moment or thought to prepare my class for the great Sabbath before Passover..*

*On the eve of the holy sabbath, about a half hour before the Friday evening service which welcomes the sabbath, there was a great disturbance, may the all Merciful save us. They had come suddenly to all of the houses and they took the men and the boys with them.*

*They also came to my house and they wished to take my son Simcha Bunim, may his light shine. But he had traveled to Nitra, a few days before. And the compassion of the Lord I will mention when I showed them that he was in the hospital in Nitra and they left, with the help of heaven. May He be blessed and exalted for the compassion He has showed me and my household and for the compassion He will show me and my household and all of Israel in the future.*

*So, it should be understood that I didn't know whether I would feel able to teach on the Great sabbath. But on the holy sabbath the townsfolk came to the shul with the boys who were left behind and I gave a class which expounded on the laws of Passover as is appropriate for The Great Sabbath, after which I said:*

**“This is the bread of affliction.”**<sup>1</sup>--For we are in strife as they were then.

**“For all who are hungry”**<sup>2</sup>--to be wicked and perform acts of cruelty, **come and eat**<sup>3</sup>--us! May the All merciful save us. “And **“all who wish”**<sup>4</sup>--to do evil, and spill innocent blood, **“come and have a feast”**<sup>5</sup>--on us, May the All merciful save us...

**Why is this night different**<sup>6</sup>...What is the difference between our festival of freedom and theirs, may they never be compared? We celebrate our freedom this night and it is **all unleavened bread**<sup>7</sup>, the bread of affliction, and **this night is all bitter herbs**<sup>8</sup>. However, from within the darkness and the bitterness we evoke the memory of freedom, with the dipping of the greens in salt water and we sit reclining, for we believe that everything indeed does come from heaven.

That is why this holy night is called a **seder** [Hebrew for order]. For this night and all the trials and decrees, May the All merciful save us, as well as the redemption and salvation that has happened in the past and will happen in the future with favor is happening **in order**--whatever the Holy One wishes to do with us.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Passover Haggadah

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

Afterward, I recalled what the great sage the *Chatam Sofer* had expounded on the Seder song “*One little kid*”. For the ***cat thought it could consume the kid***, but in truth, they will never consume us, because our ***father bought us for two zuz***...So, inevitably there will always remain “*One little kid*”... *For the Holy One will also make miracles for us. **And the dog came...and the stick***...all because of one little kid, Israel. And in the end what remains is the Holy One and the one little kid, after the holy One consumes and smites all those who hate us.

After those words I said with bitter tears while everyone wailed with great pain, that the Holy One would have mercy upon us by virtue of the daughters of Israel, holy and pure that ***each man had taken a lamb from the fathers house, a lamb for each house***<sup>9</sup>. For from their fathers’ homes the young daughters were taken. A lamb was taken for each house, for the house of the sons and the house of the fathers.

The Holy One commanded us to fulfill the commandment on Passover night to ***Tell your child***<sup>10</sup>...***Here, the child asks***<sup>11</sup>...Where are they? Where are the sons to ask questions and where are the ones to listen to the story? Where is the joy of Passover? Israel remains holy in its time of trial. They come to shul to pray and hear the words of Torah and to fulfill the commandments of the Lord, may He be blessed. By virtue of this remarkable behavior, “***Behold I will send to***

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<sup>9</sup> *Exodus* 12:3

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* 13:8

<sup>11</sup> From the Passover Haggadah

***you Elijah the Prophet who will revive the hearts of fathers upon the sons  
and the sons upon their fathers.***<sup>12</sup>--altogether at one time.

*There was great emotion and tears in the sanctuary. May the holy One have mercy upon us and receive our prayers and our tears, and the prayers and tears of the daughters and sons of Israel. May He send His redeemer who will redeem us for eternity, and may we merit the celebration of the festival of matzo, which comes to us in favor, with gladness and rejoicing...Amen*

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<sup>12</sup> Malachi 3:23 This chapter from the minor prophet Malachi is always read on the Sabbath morning before Passover.