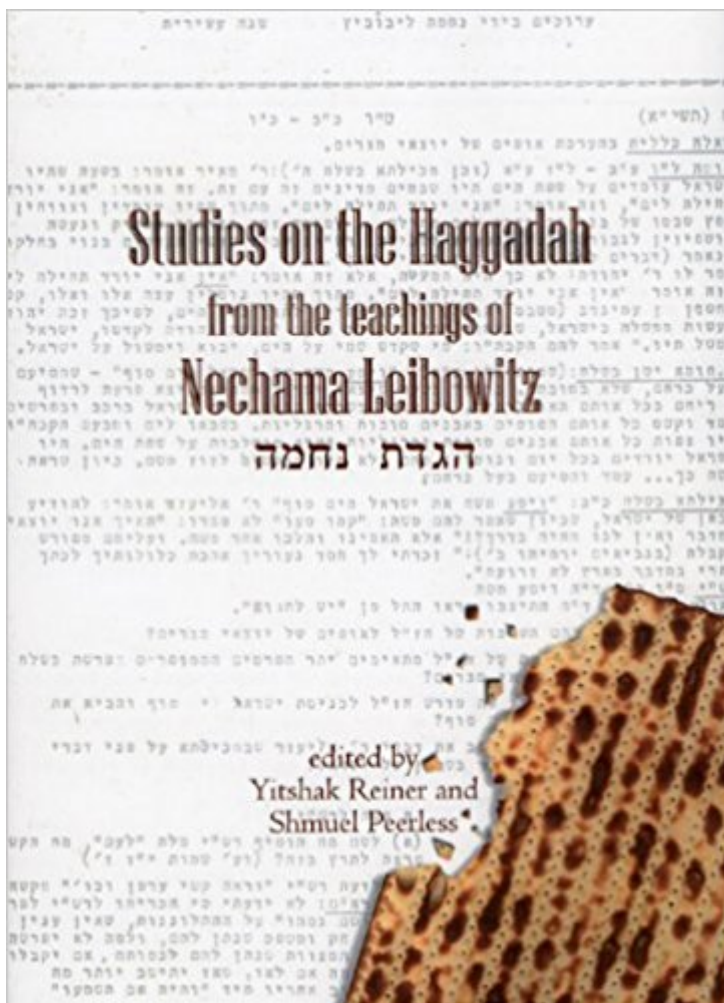


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# Studies On The Haggadah From The Teachings Of Nechama Leibowitz



## Synopsis

Based on the teachings of Nechama Leibowitz, one of the outstanding scholars of the Hebrew Bible of the 20th century, this book presents more than 100 analytical questions relating to the Passover Seder and the Exodus from Egypt. The questions are extracted from Leibowitz's renowned weekly Torah study sheets and guide readers through an analysis of the Haggadah text and the sources upon which it is based. The editors, both former students of Nechama Leibowitz's, provide suggested answers. In addition to the English translation, the full Hebrew text of the Passover Haggadah is provided.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 159 pages

Publisher: Urim Publications; Bilingual edition (February 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9657108381

ISBN-13: 978-9657108383

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.6 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,754,074 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #89 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Haggadah #269 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Holidays #1365 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Jewish Life

## Customer Reviews

Before her death in 1997, Nechama Leibowitz was perhaps the best-known Bible teacher in Israel, if not the world. Her terse essays on the Five Books of Moses, always followed by questions for the reader to unravel, drew on the classic rabbinic commentators as well as modern trends in literary criticism and linguistics. She was no liberal, but she invited a wide-open discussion of text across religious and ideological boundaries and remained throughout her life a role model for Jewish educators, especially women. In *Studies on the Haggadah: From the Teachings of Nechama Leibowitz*, editors Yitshak Reiner and Shmuel Peerless have distilled Leibowitz's teachings on all aspects of the Seder observance, from the four cups of wine to the bitter herbs. The full text of the Haggadah is included, but the book will be most useful in the hands of a good Seder leader, who can offer up Leibowitz's insights and challenge the guests to find new meanings in passages they have read - or, more likely, skimmed - dozens of times. --Andrew Silow-Carroll, *Forward* Like a key that

unlocks the door to a room of buried treasure, Haggadat Nechama enables the reader to touch, as if holding in her hand, newer, more shining and beautiful jewels of understanding into the paradigmatic learning experience we call the Passover Seder. --Mordechai Ben-Dat, The Canadian Jewish News

The learned market segment which traditionally leans to Artscroll has other options to expand their Seder fare. Studies on the Haggadah from the teachings of Nechama Leibowitz draws from Leibowitz's classic chumash studies to provide new insights. --Deborah Stone, Australian Jewish News

Yitshak Reiner is the former director of the department for seminars and advanced courses in the department of education of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and the former principal of Tahkemoni Jewish Day School in Antwerp, Belgium. He was a long-time student of Nechama Leibowitz's. Shmuel Peerless is the director of the Center for Jewish School Leadership at Bar-Ilan University's Lookstein Center. He studied with Nechama Leibowitz for several years and is the author of *To Study and to Teach: The Methodology of Nechama Leibowitz*.

This is a wonderful book with lots of fascinating commentary on the Haggadah from one of the leading Torah teachers of the last century

Urim Publications has scored a hit with this latest Haggadah (I liked their Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach one, last year). Little did I know that the late Ms. Nechama Leibowitz was one of Israel's most popular and respected teachers of Jewish theology and Torah. Two of her students have compiled this classic haggadah based on her Torah study sheets (Gilyonot). The seder is supposed to be a symposium for eating and active learning, so the format of this Haggadah is a winner, because it consists of Ms. Leibowitz's probing questions and answers that force the seder participants to learn, to draw conclusions independently. For example, for the Magid, or The Telling of the story of the exodus, Nechama asks, "Why does the passage switch from second person singular to second person plural when you read 'In order that you (singular) may tell your child... that you (plural) may know that I am the Lord.'"; or for The Four Children, she questions how the rabbis deduced who was the simple and who was the wise child. When responding to the child "Because of THIS, God did for me when I went out of Egypt...", Nechama questions what THIS refers to, and asks the reader to compare the commentaries of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Rabbi Marinos. When discussing the sojourn of 400 years, Nechama questions the meaning of the cantillation notes and the placement of the "etnachta" and how it changes the meaning of the passage. She asks you to contemplate why

Rashi wrote that the store cities of Ramses and Pitom already existed. You are also asked to compare the strategies of Esau, Pharaoh and Haman to those of Gog and Magog. The section on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart discusses free will, and brings in comments by Sforno and Resh Lakish to help the reader reach a fuller understanding. I recommend one copy for the seder leader or life experiences melamed (not morah), however it is not for the neophyte, since it requires some grounding in Talmud to get the most out of the book.

Nechama Leibowitz (1905-1997) was a much loved and highly respected teacher in Israel. Her Gilyonot, study sheets, in which she raised questions and offered the answers of famous Bible commentators, were very stimulating and they fostered in-depth study and understanding of the Bible by its readers. Many rabbis consider her their teacher. Books have been written about her and her Gilyonot. The editors of this volume collected Gilyonot that relate to the Haggadah and help explain parts of it. The Haggadah is the book that many Jews read on Passover evening at the Seder meal. It tells many facts and traditions regarding the Israelite exodus from Egypt during the days of Moses. When Jews read it, it helps them fulfill the biblical command to recall the exodus and the message that it has for people today, a message of freedom. The word Seder means "order." It is the name given to this Passover meal because of the order of the Haggadah readings, its fifteen parts, and the physical practices that are part of the Seder, such as encouraging children to ask questions, and eating unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This book contains the entire Haggadah with the Leibowitz questions and answers and is interesting. Readers do not have to read it from front to back, but can leaf through it and see Leibowitz's comments on various parts of the readings and practices. Leibowitz, for example, explains why Jews drink four cups of wine during the Seder and why a fifth cup is set aside, and said to be placed for the prophet Elijah. She notes that the blessing made over the first cup of wine begins with part of a verse from the end of chapter one of Genesis and continues with chapter two and explains why. She tells that some scholars' explanations of various practices differ with those offered by other scholars and analyzes why they differ. Four different kinds of sons are discussed during the Seder, and she asks what is it that makes one of them wicked? She answers many other questions, such as: How many years did the Egyptian slavery last? Why wasn't God's decree that the Israelites should borrow goods from Egyptians with no intention of returning them theft? What was the significance of Moses' staff? What was the purpose of the plagues; couldn't God have saved the Israelites without them or with fewer of them; and how should they be grouped? Did God "harden" Pharaoh's heart? Why were the Israelites told to mark their homes with blood; wouldn't God know who lived in each house? The

editors include some heart-warming stories about Nechama Leibowitz and her encounters with people that readers will also enjoy. These include conversations with cab drivers and her refusal to leave Israel, which she loved, for any reason.

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