

## Haggadah Treasure Hunt

When Rav Achai Gaon rewrote the Passover Haggadah, he concealed many hidden patterns in it. Examples appear in the *Revealed Haggadah* and the *Mysteries of the Haggadah* video series, available at *PesachHaggadah.org*. But there is *much more* to be found.

Below is a list of **50 clues** about further symbols and patterns hidden in the Haggadah and its sources. They are listed roughly in order of difficulty. Many of the answers concern the numbers of letters and words in Maggid's different sections. Other clues refer to words hidden as equidistant letter sequences. These sequences are found in just four parts of Maggid: the sections of the Five Sages and *Dayenu* (which Rav Achai composed), and *Avadim Hayinu* and 'In Every Generation...' (which he significantly rewrote).

**Submit your answers to [PesachHaggadah@gmail.com](mailto:PesachHaggadah@gmail.com). Be sure to include your age and the number of clues you think you correctly solved in the subject line of your email.** Include your mailing address in the body of the email to receive prizes. It isn't necessary to answer every question, or even most of them. **There is currently no deadline for this contest.**

### *Chag Sameach and happy hunting!*

1. The theme of the first section of Maggid—from *Avadim Hayinu* through the Four Sons—is 'Tell your child' (Exodus 13:8) and 'Teach each child according to his ability' (Mishnah Pesachim 10). How many times does the word בן *child* occur in this section?
2. What key phrase in Maggid has the value of 10 times בן (52)?
3. At the Seder, the matzah is a stand-in for the manna we ate for forty years in the wilderness. Rav Achai alluded to the manna in multiple ways, such as the number of words in the paragraphs of *Avadim Hayinu* and the 5 Sages—90 (18 x5), the value of מן manna. Where else is the matzah alluded to in the structure of Maggid (through a multiple of 13, in a fitting location).
4. The number 18 is associated with blessing and the word ברוך, *blessed*, occurs 18 times in Maggid. What word or phrase occurs 13 times?
5. The paragraphs of *Avadim Hayinu*, the Five Sages and R' Elazar ben Azaryah contain either 600 or 601 letters. 601 is the value of Moshe + Aharon (Moses + Aaron). What word with the value 600 represents the antithesis of Moshe and Aharon? What scriptural sources suggest a connection between that word and Pharaoh's 600 chariots?
6. Rav Achai edited Maggid to contain exactly 100 words that personalize the Exodus. What group of 30 words dispersed throughout Maggid were also carefully arranged to equal exactly 100?
7. The names of four of the Five Sages who dined in Benei Brak are repeated elsewhere in Maggid. How is the fifth Sage, Rabbi Tarfon, connected to another unmentioned *fifth*? How is he connected to another supposedly unmentioned figure in Maggid?

8. The addition of one letter to the paragraph of Avadim Hayinu turns an allusion to flesh and blood (248, the parts of the human body) to something Divine (249, the finger of God). The paragraphs of Avadim Hayinu, the Five Sages, R' Elazar ben Azaryah, and the eleven words of 'Blessed is the Omnipresent' contain either 644 or 645 letters. 644 is the value of Abraham + Isaac + Jacob (אברהם + יצחק + יעקוב). What phrase in Maggid with the value 645 alludes to the great transformations possible through the addition of just *one*?
9. The numbers 26 and 72 are significant in Maggid through their connections to Divine Names. What key phrase in Maggid has the value of the smallest number that is divisible by both 26 and 72?
10. Receipt of the Torah is listed thirteenth among the fifteen ascending steps in Dayenu. What word or phrase with a telling value (a multiple of 13) indicates that receipt of the Torah was the pinnacle among God's many gifts to Israel?
11. Two Talmudic passages connected to key numbers in Rav Achai's system, 208 and 248 (Megillah 15b & Yoma 75b), are the only places where the Talmud suggests changing the spelling of scriptural words to raise their numeric values. Where do we see a connection between 208 and 248 in those verses themselves?
12. The sections of the Four Sons and of Rabbi Yose HaGalili are opposite each other in the symmetrical organization of Maggid. How is the language of those sections also similar?
13. The atomic building blocks of Rav Achai's system are 13 and 18. The value of Avraham (248) bridges between them because it equals  $(13 \times 8) + (18 \times 8)$ . Rav Achai demonstrated this explicitly via the structure of Maggid. What other person mentioned in Maggid brings together significant multiples of 13 and 18?
14. The Midrash notes that the letters that spell out אמת, *truth*, span the entire Hebrew alphabet from the first to the last letter (if final letters are included, they are also equidistant). But the three letters that spell out שקר, *falsehood*, are all crowded together near the end of the alphabet. Thus, falsehood is *common*, while truth is *rare*. How might Rav Achai have inverted this Midrash (also using equidistant letters) to note that falsehood is widespread while truth can be found closely associated with the Torah?
15. Rav Achai built Maggid like a human-scale imitation of the Torah's composition from Divine Names. The Midrash says that the Almighty wrote the Torah 'in black fire on white fire'. Where did Rav Achai conceal a reference to this substance through equidistant letters?
16. How many ways does the paragraph of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah (adapted from Mishnah Berachot) allude to the Divine 72-part name?
17. Multiples of 72, especially 144, are a repeated motif of Maggid, including significant passages with exactly 72 or 144 words. Where do we find 72 and 144 in the numbers of letters?
18. The word למקום, referring to God, has the value of 216 ( $3 \times 72$ ), the number of letters in the Divine 72-part name. What word or phrase in the Haggadah referring to God has the value of  $4 \times 72$ ?
19. The words מופתים and ומכפלה both have the value  $8 \times 72$ . Where else do we find  $8 \times 72$  in the structure of Maggid?

20. What word or phrase with the value  $12 \times 72$  announces a series of allusions to the 72-part name? What knowing word or phrase has the value  $16 \times 72$ ?
21. Sequences of significant numbers, like 248, 249, 250, are important in Maggid, especially those involving multiples of 13 and 18, like 90/91 and 143/144. The value of Torah is 611 ( $13 \times 43$ ), and the Torah contains 613 commandments. What word near the center of Maggid bridges the gap with a value of 612 ( $18 \times 34$ ). Where is this word also concealed as equidistant letters?
22. The values of the names of the first two Patriarchs, Avraham (248) and Yitzchak (208) appear in the number of words in different parts of Maggid. Where do we see the value of the third Patriarch appear through numbers of words?
23. Maggid contains hidden allusions to two related stories from the Talmud (Bava Batra 73-74) about members of Korach's rebellion calling out 'Moshe and his Torah are Truth' and about a protective implement inscribed with the phrase אהיה אשר אהיה. The words משה (Moshe) and אשר are hidden right on top of each other in the paragraph of the Five Sages. What slightly odd phrase that helps build both Torah and Truth hints toward both אהיה אשר אהיה and Moshe's *sign of truth*, the letter *vav*?
24. Moshe's staff was inscribed with letters, including the mnemonic of the Ten Plagues and the names of the Matriarchs. The mnemonic is hidden in Avadim Hayinu and the Matriarchs' names are hidden in the closing paragraph of 'In every generation...' What word that helps to build the Matriarchs names also alludes to the mnemonic?
25. The Haggadah connects the word עֲמַלְנוּ *our labors* (Deut. 26:7) to children. This comment circles back to the beginning of its exposition of Deuteronomy 26 which cites Pharaoh's wicked decree against male children (Ex. 1:22). What other surprising figure in the Midrash was accused of making a terrible decree after calling child rearing עֲמַל *labor*? Like Lavan, his actions could have meant disaster for both males and females.
26. Rav Achai concealed words in the paragraph of the Five Sages in part to glorify the Haggadah, as it says, ה' חֲפֵץ לְמַעַן צְדָקוֹ יַגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה וַיֵּאֲדִיר (Isaiah 42:21). Where do we see that Rav Achai concealed a reference to this verse through equidistant letters? How does it allude to (1) the Torah (2) its enlargement and (3) its glorification via a 3-fold expansion?
27. The Song Dayenu consists of 144 ( $72 \times 2$ ) words and contains many references to the 72-part Name, including repetition of the 4<sup>th</sup> name (מעל) in the introductory line and the 11<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> name (אלו, ולא, ואל) throughout the song. Certain parts of the Name were singled out by our Sages for special mention. How does Dayenu reference these Names right from the start? How does it quickly reference the 72 parts from beginning to end?
28. The number five is uniquely connected to redemption. According to the Midrash, the first four final Hebrew letters are connected to the redemption of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Israel. They are all mentioned explicitly in Maggid. The fifth final Hebrew letter refers to the Messiah. Where is the Messiah's name hidden as equidistant letters?
29. Joseph was one of Jacob's sons, but he was also the father of two of the tribes of Israel. The values of Patriarchs' names are found in the initial paragraphs of Maggid, beginning with the 248 (Abraham) letters of Avadim Hayinu. The next section has 156 letters, like Joseph.

- Where else in that paragraph do we find a hidden indication that Joseph may sometimes be counted among the Patriarchs?
30. The Children of Israel fulfilled the commandments of circumcision and the Pesach offering in Egypt prior to the Exodus. The offering is mentioned explicitly in Maggid. Where is the commandment of circumcision concealed between the lines as equidistant letters?
  31. Where do we find a reference to the Passover sacrifice also concealed as equidistant letters through a complete phrase from the Torah that the Midrash associates with the sacrifice?
  32. Numbers associated with Divine Names appear repeatedly in the structure of Maggid, including 72, 66 (the value of **היד הגדלה** a reference to the 72-part name), and 314 (**שדי**). What other numbers associated with Divine Names appear in Maggid's structure?
  33. Divine Names, the biblical commandments and the merit of the Patriarchs are the pillars of Maggid. What three-word phrase in Maggid mentions or alludes to all three together? Where do we also find this phrase encoded in the structure of Maggid?
  34. Following from the previous clue, where do we find the three-word phrase **אהיה אשר אהיה** similarly encoded in Maggid? Bonus: what Midrash might explain its arrangement?
  35. The last three words inscribed on the spiritual weapon are an exclamation of praise. These three words are hidden as equidistant letter series in the final paragraph of 'in every generation...' an appropriate place for such an exclamation. What other doubled word (like amen) did Rav Achai conceal there to continue this exclamation indefinitely?
  36. Together with Moshe and Torah, Rav Achai concealed the words **אשר** and **צוה** in the paragraph of the Five Sages so that biblical phrases like **התורה אשר צוה משה** (Joshua 1:7) might be alluded to. A similar phrase in the Torah itself says: **התורה אשר שם משה** (Devarim 4:44), but since the word **שם** has only two letters it does not seem possible to encode it through equidistant letters. How might Rav Achai have managed to encode **שם** nevertheless?
  37. The words **משה**, **אשר**, **תורה**, and **צוה** may together allude to Joshua 1:7. How does this part of Joshua connect to the next paragraph in Maggid? How does it point toward a Talmudic passage that provides an interesting angle on the opinion of Ben Zoma?
  38. In addition to 104 (26 x 4), the value of **בְּדַמִּיָּהּ הָיִי**, the number 154 (104 + 50), the value of **לֵךְ בְּדַמִּיָּהּ הָיִי** (Ezekiel 16:6) appears more than once in the structure of Maggid. Most significant numbers in Maggid are connected to Divine Names. What towering scriptural phrase connects 154 to God's name? Where in scripture is the value 208 (**בְּדַמִּיָּהּ הָיִי בְּדַמִּיָּהּ הָיִי**) connected to God's name, specifically in the context of the *final* redemption? How does this reference connect back to the terms God employed to announce Israel's redemption from Egypt?
  39. The section of Maggid that describes the descent and bondage in Egypt (Deut. 26:5-7) is bookended by two 117-words blocks subsumed within a 400-word block. This may allude to the years of bondage (117) and the years of exile foretold to Avraham (400). However, these may not be the only allusions made by this arrangement. This section is also surrounded by two 72-word blocks. The first block recounts the Covenant Between the Parts, when God told Avraham, "I am the Lord, who took you out of the 'fire of Kasdim'". The latter block

of 72 words tells how God Himself (not an angel) took the nation out of Egypt. When the archangel Gabriel saved Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah from another fire (Daniel 3), it was also on Passover, and the four of them recited part of Hallel, Psalm 117 (Shemot Rabbah 18:5). How might the repetition of 117 allude to other repeated words or phrases in the Haggadah? Where in the Midrash do we find the repetition of 117 subsumed within 400 (hint: see page 117)?

40. The two bookending 117-word blocks can each be divided into 39- and 78-word blocks. What other repeated words or phrases in the Haggadah are alluded to by the repetition of 78? Psalm 78 (quoted in Maggid) contains 72 verses. Where else does 78 connect to the 72-part Name?
41. Maggid's exposition of the first three words of Deut. 26:8. (*The Lord took us out of Egypt*) summarizes a lengthy Midrash. Rav Achai concealed the phrase *כתב אמת*, *true writing*, a unique marker for part of that Midrash in the paragraph of the Five Sages. He may have also concealed markers there for another part of that Midrash—the contrast between Pharaoh and Sennacherib. What are they?
42. By concealing the words *שמש* (sun) and *ירח* (moon), in the passage of the Five Sages, Rav Achai alluded to scriptural verses that span all of history, from Creation until the Messianic age. The subject of the third chapter of Habbakuk is pointedly ambiguous. How many different events and time periods does the Midrash connect to Habbakuk 3:11, *שָׁמַשׁ יָרַח עָמַד, יְזַבְּלָהּ לְאוֹר הַחֲצִיף יְהִלְכוּ לְנִגְהָ בָרֶק חֲנִיתָהּ*?
43. How is the prophet Habbakuk connected to the Divine 72-part Name? Where is this connection in the Midrash? How is it reminiscent of the Midrash about Moshe's engraved staff?
44. In addition to multiples of 13, 18 and 50, square numbers, like 144 (12 x 12) and 441 (21 x 21) are also important in Rav Achai's numeric system. Where do we find 13 x 13? What glorious 5-letter word (hidden as equidistant letters) has the value of 15 x 15?
45. The plague of hail has a special role. Its interpretation is central to the argument between Rabbis Eliezer and Akiva, it is connected to Moshe's 'sign of truth', and the Midrash says it unites past and future—the Exodus, the conquest of the land by Yehoshua and the tribulations preceding the Messianic age. Where do we see that Rav Achai concealed words from verses about the hail, in the days of Yehoshua and in future times, as equidistant letters?
46. There are 396 letters in the paragraphs following the 248-letter (Abraham) paragraph of Avadim Hayinu. 396 (a multiple of 18) is the combined value of Isaac and Jacob, if Jacob is spelled with a vav (a rare spelling in scripture). According to the usual spelling, Isaac + Jacob = 390 (a multiple of 13). It may be that Rav Achai avoided 390 because 39 is associated with punishment, the maximum number of lashes administered by a court. Where *do* we find 390 in the structure of Maggid, broken apart, perhaps to nullify the connection to punishment? What word or phrase in the Haggadah with the value 396 refers instead to God's mercy?
47. The fifth plague, pestilence, was described as striking five types of domestic animals. The same verse (Exodus 9:3) also appears to repeat the letters of the Tetragrammaton in two

different orders. In Ex. 6:6-9, God promised Moshe he would redeem Israel using five terms and repeating the phrase 'I am the Lord' three times. What about these verses also suggests the *doubling* of the Tetragrammaton?

48. Maggid alludes to a Talmudic story about an implement engraved with nine words including names of God. Like the mnemonic for the Ten Plagues and the names of the Matriarchs engraved on Moshe's staff, Rav Achai concealed most of these words in Maggid as series of equidistant letters. However, one of the nine words, the Name יה-י, has only two letters, making it impossible to encode through equidistant letters in a normal fashion. The Midrash says the Almighty used these two letters, half of His Four-letter Name, to create the world. How did Rav Achai use this Midrash to encode the Name יה-י and represent it as a framework within which the rest of creation is built (hint: רבי יהושע is the front entrance and והיו מספרים is the central hub).
49. 144 (72 x 2 or 12 x 12) is a repeated motif of Maggid. Maggid is also full of hidden allusions to Moshe Rabbeinu. Where in the Talmud do we find that 144 may also be a tribute to Moshe?
50. Maggid connects מופתים *wonders* to blood. And blood may refer to the commandments of the Pesach offering and circumcision (brit milah). The value of מופתים is 8 x 72. Where in the Midrash do we find that 8 x 72 is connected to britot (covenants)?