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Gems from Rav Soloveitchik on the Haggada

By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Volume 12, Halachah (2003/5763)

Introduction

Rav Hershel Schachter recently published a work entitled "MiPenieni HaRav," his second volume of collections of Torah insights of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. In this essay, we shall present a number of the Rav's ideas regarding the Seder that Rav Schachter published in this work.

Ha Lachmah Anya

The commentaries to the Haggada pose many questions regarding the introductory section to Maggid, Ha Lachma Anya. We shall focus on the question regarding the relevance of the declaration we make at the conclusion of Ha Lachma Anya, "this year we are here, next year we shall be in the Land of Israel, this year we are slaves, next year we shall be free." Many ask why we mention this at the conclusion of Ha Lachma whose purpose is to invite any who are hungry to come and join us at the Seder.

Rav Soloveitchik cites the Mishna in Bava Metzia 83a to resolve this problem. The Mishna there relates a story about Rav Yochanan ben Matya who instructed his son to hire some workers for a particular job. The son proceeded to hire Jewish workers and he agreed, among other things, to provide them with food. When the son told the father what he did, the father became concerned regarding the fact that the son did not specify to the workers what type of food he agreed to provide them. The father ordered his son to immediately tell the workers before they started the job that he agrees to provide them with only an average meal. Rav Yochanan explained that without specifying otherwise, the workers enjoyed the Halachic right to demand the most lavish meal imaginable. This is because the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, are entitled to the finest treatment possible.

Similarly at the Seder, explains Rav Soloveitchik, when we invite a Jewish person to the Seder they are entitled to the most lavish meal imaginable unless we specify otherwise. Hence, when we extend an invitation to poor people to attend our Seder, we indicate that in principle they are entitled to

the finest meal possible. However, due to our current pre-Messianic circumstances we are unable to provide them with such a meal. This indication raises the self-esteem of the poor guests as we gently imply that their status as Jews endows them with "VIP status" and that anything we give them is less than what they deserve.

Vehee Sheamda

Why do we mention at the Seder that in every generation there are people who seek to destroy the Jewish people? What does this have to do with Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt? The Rav explains that it places the Egyptian experience into perspective. We might have sought to explore whether there was some sociologic, economic, or political motivation for the Egyptians oppressors. However, we note that in every generation and in every imaginable circumstance, enemies have arisen to oppress us. Thus, we cannot attribute any particular set of circumstance as the trigger for hatred of Jews. We must conclude that the reason for the Egyptian oppression is the sad reality that Rashi quotes in his commentary to Breishit 33:4 that it is the way of the world that Esav hates Yaakov. The implications for the contemporary situation are painfully obvious.

Onus Al Pi Hadibbur

We emphasize that Yaakov went to Mitzrayim, Onus Al Pi Hadibbur, coerced by the divine instruction to descend to Egypt. The Rav explains that we emphasize this to contrast Yaakov's leaving Eretz Yisrael with Esav's exit from Eretz Yisrael. Esav gleefully abandoned Eretz Yisrael, regarding it a nuisance. Rashi (Breishit 36:7) explains that Esav felt that the price to inherit a share in Eretz Yisrael – four hundred years of being rootless and enduring slavery and torture as foretold in the Brit Bein Habetarim – was too steep and was happy to rid himself of this great burden. This attitude caused Esav to forfeit any right he had to Eretz Yisrael when he left the country. Yaakov, by contrast, left Eretz Yisrael unwillingly and thus did not forfeit his right to the land.

This is reminiscent of the Rama Orach Chaim 539:7 (citing the Maharil) who states that when one leaves his Sukka because of heavy rain or some other significant irritant his attitude should not be that he is happy to rid himself of a nuisance. Rather, he should be upset that Hashem has exiled him from his Sukka by sending rain or some other disturbance. Interestingly, our sages compare the Mitzva of sitting in the Sukka with the Mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael. For example, the Vilna Gaon noted that the only two Mitzvot that we fulfill with our entire bodies are the Mitzva of sitting in the Sukka and the Mitzva of Yeshivat Eretz Yisrael.

Similarly, the attitude of those of us who do not have the privilege of living in Eretz Yisrael should be like Yaakov Avinu and not Esav. Our attitude should be that the circumstances that Hashem has placed upon us (familial, economic, etc.) force us to reside outside the Land. We should not be happy that we reside in Chutz Laaretz.

Hallel

The Rav asks why don't we sing the Shirat HaYam at the Seder as the song that celebrates Hashem's delivering us from slavery. Why did Chazal choose Hallel as the celebratory song of the Seder? He answers based on Rashi's commentary to the Pasuk in Shmuel 2:23:1 that describes David Hamelech as the "sweet singer of Israel". Rashi explains "the Jewish people do not sing songs of praise to Hashem in the Bait Hamikdash unless it was composed by David Hamelech." The Rav notes that the same applies to Pisukei Dizimra, where we note in Baruch Sheamar that we will sing David Hamelech's songs of praise to Hashem. Indeed, it is for this reason that the Rambam (Hilchot Tefilla 7:13) records a custom to recite the Shirat Hayam, in our daily prayers only after the Bracha of Yishtabach is recited. He believes that since David Hamelech did not compose the Shirat Hayam its place is not in the P'sukei Dizimra that are recited between Baruch Sheamar and Yishtabach. Similarly, the Rav suggests that at the Seder we utilize

only songs composed by David Hamelech to sing praise to Hashem for redeeming us from Mitzrayim.

The Division of Hallel

The Rav explains why the first two chapters of Hallel are recited before the meal and the rest of Hallel is recited after the meal. He notes (see Pesachim 108a for a basis for this assertion) that before the meal we should feel as if we were just redeemed from Mitzrayim. After the meal, the mood is one of reflecting on the fact that we have been redeemed in the past. Accordingly, before the meal we engage in Hodayah, an expression of thanks to Hashem for redeeming us from Egypt. Hodaya may be offered only by someone who experienced the redemption and thus may be expressed only before the meal. Shevach (praise) on the other hand, may be offered even by someone not involved in the event. After the meal, we can no longer thank Hashem for redeeming us (as at that point we no longer feel as if we were redeemed), so instead we express Shevach to Hashem for what He did for us in the past. The Rav explains that the first two chapters of Hallel are expressions of Hodaya and are thus appropriate to recite before the meal. The subsequent chapters are only expressions of Shevach and thus are appropriate for recitation only after the meal.

Shifoch Chamatcha

Many wonder why Chazal included the plea of Shifoch Chamatcha in the Haggada. The Rav explains that it is an introduction to the prayer of Nishmat that is recited soon after we say Shifoch Chamatcha. In the Nishmat prayer, we pray for the arrival of the Mashiach when the soul of all people will call out to Hashem. This is appropriate for the Seder since Hashem introduced himself to Moshe Rabbeinu and Am Yisrael as “I am who I am” (Shemot 3:14). Rashi (ibid) explains this term to mean that I am with them during this period of misfortune and I will be with them in future periods of misfortune. The Rav explains that Hashem promised Moshe Rabbeinu that just as He will redeem Klal Yisrael from Egypt, so too He will redeem us from future difficulties. As such, we ask Hashem at the Seder to fulfill His promise made on the eve of the redemption from Egypt that He redeem us from our current difficulties and send the Mashiach. Similarly, in the Malchiot prayer of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we ask Hashem to bring the time when all of humanity will recognize Hashem “and all of creation will know that You created them”.

Accordingly, those people who do not know Hashem might be preventing the arrival of the Mashiach. It is for this reason we ask Hashem to take His wrath to those who do not know Him, so that an impediment to redemption is eliminated.

We may suggest a variation of this theme. We emphasize at the Seder that Hashem fulfilled His promise He made at the Brit Bein Habetarim (Breishit 15:14) to punish the nation that will torture and enslave us. We develop at length how Hashem punished the Egyptians both in Egypt and at the Yam Suf. Indeed, part of the Rambam’s (Sefer HaMitzvot 157) definition of the Mitzva of telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt includes telling how Hashem punished our oppressors. The point of this emphasis is to demonstrate that there is a heavenly Judge and there is heavenly Justice, which is a general theme of Pesach (see Ramban at the conclusion of Parashat Bo).

Accordingly, in Shifoch Chamatcha we ask Hashem to fulfill His promise to punish our contemporary oppressors, those who do not know Hashem, just as He punished our Egyptian oppressors. “Those who do not know You”, that we mention in Shifoch Chamatcha, seems to refer to those who reject the seven Noachide Laws such as the prohibition to kill people. Even “religious” people who kill innocents seem to be included in this prayer.

Conclusion

We hope you found these insights to be helpful and inspiring. One might consider sharing them with his family this Yom Tov.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Apr 18, 2019, 11:47 PM

Pesach: Imagine That!

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

There was a time when I would only go out of my way to listen to speakers who were older and more experienced than I. Recently, however, I have changed my preferences and have begun to seek out speakers, rabbis and teachers, who are young and relatively inexperienced. I find their ideas fresh and often very much on the mark. After all, they are in much better touch with our fast-changing world than I am.

Once, during a visit to Israel, I sat in on a series of lectures which were designed to prepare the audience for the upcoming Passover holiday. The speaker, a brilliant young rabbi, focused upon the Seder night, and particularly upon the text of the Haggadah. He spent most of his opening lecture elaborating upon what he considered the most difficult task with which we are all confronted on the first night of Passover. The task is described in the following famous passage:

“In each and every generation, a person must see himself as if he personally left Egypt. As it is written, ‘And you shall explain to your son on that day that it is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt (Exodus 13:8).’” The requirement is explicit in the biblical text: the Lord did it for me, when I went free from Egypt.

The young rabbi candidly confessed to his audience that he had never been able to fulfill this requirement. Indeed, he didn’t think it was possible, certainly not for most of us, to envision ourselves as if we personally had experienced slavery and redemption. “This,” he insisted, “is the most difficult task we are faced with on the Seder night.”

When I first heard this assertion, I found it to be quite provocative. I wanted to protest but maintained my silence in respect for the young rabbi. I attributed his conviction to his relative immaturity. I have never found this obligation difficult. Personally, I have found it quite easy to imagine myself as a slave and to personally exult in the emotional experiences of redemption and freedom.

I usually forget the content of most lectures that I hear almost as soon as I leave the lecture hall. This time, however, I could not rid my mind of the young rabbi’s statement. I began to question my own inner certainty. Had it really been so easy for me all these years to envision myself as one of those who had experienced both slavery and the Exodus?

In the midst of my extended preoccupation with the young rabbi’s assertion, a long-forgotten memory suddenly surfaced in my mind. I was taken back in time to another lecture I had heard just before Passover many years ago. This time, the speaker was not a young rabbi at all. Rather, he was an old and revered Chassidic rebbe, a survivor of the Holocaust who had spent years in Auschwitz and had witnessed the vicious murder of his wife and children with his own eyes.

That old rebbe was Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam, may his memory be blessed, who was known as the Klausenberger Rebbe, after the small town in the Balkans where he had served prior to World War II.

In that lecture, Rabbi Halberstam recounted his own puzzlement over a lecture he had heard very long ago from one of his mentors. I no longer remember the name of that mentor, but Rabbi Halberstam was careful to identify him in detail because of the strange and almost unbelievable experience that he reported.

The mentor said that he had no difficulty at all imagining himself to have been in slavery in Egypt and to have been redeemed. In fact, this mentor reported that he could clearly remember the experience. He could recall in great detail the burdensome work he had to perform, the dirty hovel in which he was forced to live, and the sighs and groans of his companions. He could even still see, in his mind’s eye, the cruel face of his tormentors as they sadistically whipped him for not producing his daily quota of bricks.

The Klausenberger Rebbe confessed that when he first heard his mentor make those claims, he had difficulty believing them. He thought that his

mentor had made such a claim just for the effect it would have upon his listeners. He stressed that sometimes it is justified for a speaker to resort to hyperbole to make his point more dramatic and more graphic.

But then the rebbe continued to say that after many years, he had come to realize that his mentor was telling the absolute truth. "It took the experiences I had during the horrible years of the Holocaust," he exclaimed, "for me to realize why my mentor was able to recall his experiences in ancient Egypt's tyranny."

The rebbe then went on to elaborate upon two psychological processes that are necessary to invoke during the Seder night as we recite the Haggadah. He used two Hebrew and Yiddish terms respectively: koach hadimyon (the power of imagination) and mitleid (empathy).

The lesson that the old Rebbe related to me and to the dozens of other eager listeners that evening so long ago was that we are often restricted by our own tendencies to rely upon our reason, rationality, and intellectuality. We underplay the powers that we have to fantasize, to imagine, to dream freely. In a sense, we are slaves to reason and need to learn to allow ourselves to go beyond reason and to give our imaginations free rein. Only then can we "see ourselves as if we had personally endured slavery." Only by cultivating our imagery can we ourselves experience the emotions of freedom and liberty.

We are all required to imagine ourselves as if we are the other person. If the other person is poor, the mitzvah of charity demands that we ourselves feel his poverty. If he is ill, we must literally suffer along with him. This is empathy, and to be empathic, one must rely upon a well-developed imagination.

Imagination and empathy are not words that one often hears in rabbinic sermons, but they are the words that the Klausenberger Rebbe used that evening. And, as he concluded in his remarks, he learned about those words through the bitter suffering that he endured when he was enslaved in Auschwitz, and he appreciated redemption when he himself was finally freed from his personal bondage.

The young rabbi who started my thinking about this had, through his good fortune, never really experienced anything remotely resembling slavery. Naturally, he was thus deprived of the ability to really appreciate freedom.

After a few days, I approached the young rabbi and shared with him the words that I had heard decades ago, before this young rabbi was even born. I told him what the Klausenberger Rebbe had said about empathy and imagination. The young rabbi responded politely and with gratitude, but with a gentle smile got in the last word: "But the Klausenberger Rebbe didn't say that learning to imagine and to empathize were easy."

I had to admit that the young rabbi was correct. Creative imagination and compassionate empathy are not easily attained. Achieving them may indeed be the hardest task of the holiday of Passover.

But I feel confident that the young rabbi agreed with my assertion: Learning to use one's powers of imagination in order to empathize with the plight of others is the essential objective of this magnificent holiday, zman cheiruteinu, the season of our freedom.

Chag Sameach! A happy holiday!

from: Jewish Media Resources <list@jewishmediaresources.com> via spmailtechn.com reply-to: Jewish Media Resources <jonathanrosenblum@gmail.com> date: Apr 16, 2019, 11:08 AM subject: Klal Yisrael Is Always Free

Klal Yisrael Is Always Free

Yonoson Rosenblum

"In that merit will Klal Yisrael continue to exist"

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

The Nesivos begins his commentary on the Haggadah, Ma'aseh Nissim, with a question that has, unfortunately, recurred constantly throughout Jewish history: If a prisoner were freed from jail, would he celebrate the anniversary of his release in subsequent years if, in the meantime, he had

been returned to an even crueler and more impregnable prison? And if not, why do we sit at our festive tables and invite guests to join us in celebrating the Seder, even though we are now sunk in a long galus?

Following the Rambam, the Nesivos argues that the opening paragraph of the Haggadah — Ha lachma anya — was only added after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, when the Jewish People were in the Babylonian Exile, precisely to answer this question.

And the answer is that Hashem took us as His nation in front of the entire world, revealing His glory to an unprecedented extent. And He will rescue us from all subsequent exiles, whether we are deserving or not, in order that His Name not be desecrated. It is that assurance, which is a direct consequence of the great miracles Hashem performed on our behalf in Egypt, that we gather to celebrate.

AT NO TIME in our history did the Nesivos's question present itself with such force as during the darkest days of the Holocaust. On my first visit to Poland last November, our superb guide, Rabbi Ilan Segal, shared numerous stories of Sedorim conducted under the most difficult conditions imaginable — during the final days of the Warsaw Ghetto, amid the last roundups in the Krakow Ghetto, and in the Mauthausen concentration camp.

As we stood in the Umschlagplatz in Warsaw, from which the transports took hundreds of thousands of Jews to Treblinka and other death camps, Rav Segal read from an eyewitness account that appeared in the Bais Yaakov Journal (Sivan 5721) of the last days of the ghetto. The witness was the wife of one of a group Gerrer chassidim, who retained their beards, despite the strict prohibitions against them, and continued learning in the ghetto, under the leadership of Rav Hirsch Rappaport.

The Nazis yemach shemam, entered the ghetto in force on April 19, 1943, Erev Pesach. On Seder night, around 70 Jews gathered in two rooms, men and women separate, in the house in which they had been hiding in an attic. The Gerrer chassidim were joined by about 20 other Jews who had found refuge in the building. One of those was a famous doctor. Though he was nonobservant, he had drawn close to the chassidim in the ghetto. "When my soul departs," he told them, "I want it to do so together with kosher Jews."

The Germans were going through the ghetto street by street and setting fire to every remaining building. The Seder participants were poised at every moment to have to flee the flames of their abode, but for whatever reason, the Germans did not set fire to their building that night.

Indeed, not until they finished davening Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh Iyar was the group of chassidim forced to leave their hiding place. A photo still exists of Rav Hirsch Rappaport standing face-to-face with Jurgen Stroop, the SS commander who put down the ghetto revolt. His face betrays no fear; he almost seems to be laughing at the taller Nazi, dressed in battle gear, who, according to eyewitnesses, shouted at Rav Rappaport and the chassidim with him, "Because of you I wasn't able to wipe out the ghetto."

In his final two-hour derashah, Rav Rappaport had prepared his followers for this moment: "We have nothing to fear, chalilah, with regard to the existence of Klal Yisrael," he told them. "After the Spanish Inquisition, Klal Yisrael remained. The main thing for us is to devote ourselves to [dying] al kiddush Hashem. And in that merit will Klal Yisrael continue to exist."

TWO DAYS LATER, as we walked through the streets where the Krakow Ghetto once stood, Rabbi Segal read from the account of the last Seder in the Krakow Ghetto that Reb Moshe Brachfeld used to share every year at the Seder table with his offspring. Mendel and Moshe Brachfeld were the last two remaining survivors of their family, and they vowed never to be parted from one another no matter what happened.

Five weeks before Pesach 5003, the Germans liquidated the ghetto and declared it Judenrein. The brothers went into hiding, moving from attic to attic. Prior to Pesach, they managed to create a makeshift oven — a blech, heated by igniting flammable paint — on which to bake a few matzos.

According to a recounting of that period by Moshe Brachfeld's grandson Yakov ("Passover in Hell," Aish.com), as the time for the Seder drew near, Moshe, the younger brother, protested, "There is no way I can have a Seder

tonight. The Seder is to celebrate our freedom, our going out of exile. Yet here we sit, our lives in danger, our family all gone — our parents, our sister and her children were all killed, the entire city is up in flames. The Nazis, with their wild dogs searching for us, won't be happy until every Jew is dead. Isn't this worse than the lives the Jews lived in Egypt? What kind of freedom are we celebrating tonight?"

His older brother Mendel provided the answer — an answer that Moshe would quote every Seder thereafter. "Every night in Maariv, we praise Hashem for taking us out of Egypt to everlasting freedom (l'cheirus olam). The freedom referred to is not physical freedom; it's spiritual freedom we recognize. Pesach celebrates going from being Egyptian slaves to becoming a newborn nation — a nation that Hashem calls His own. When we sit down at the Seder table, we celebrate becoming a G-dly nation. That is something that cannot be taken away from us. No matter how much they beat, torture, and kill our physical bodies, our souls remain free to serve Hashem."

IN HIS MEMOIRS, Rabbi Sinai Adler devotes a chapter to Pesach in Mauthausen. (Rabbi Segal shared this account at the gates to the Birkenau extermination camp.) There the prisoners recited the Haggadah from memory as they walked around a courtyard, during the few moments of "free time" granted them each day. "At least the Jews in Mitzrayim had 'poor bread,' they thought to themselves. Even that we do not have. We have been placed under overseers even crueler than the Egyptians."

Rabbi Adler found his consolation in the fourth language of Geulah — lakachti li lam (I have taken you to Me as a Nation): "The Germans can enslave our bodies, but our souls they cannot enslave. And our spirit they cannot break and cause us to forget that in every generation they rise up to destroy us, but, in the end, Hashem saves us from their hands." As they sang "L'shanah haba'ah bi'Yerushalayim," at the conclusion of that Seder, Rabbi Adler could not help thinking how far away Yerushalayim seemed from their present slavery. But the next year, he was in Yerushalayim, together with others saved from the Nazis.

THE COMMON THREAD running through all these accounts is how powerful is the recognition of being part of Klal Yisrael, Hashem's Chosen People. Just as Hashem created the world mei'ayin, so too did He create the Klal Yisrael mei'ayin. Where do we find Avraham in the Torah? the Gemara asks. In the verse: Eilu toldos shamayim v'aretz b'hibaram. Avraham is formed from the same letters as the word for the formation (b'hibaram) of the heavens and the earth.

The Haggadah emphasizes that just as Hashem's smiting of the firstborn was not through any intermediary so too the creation of Klal Yisrael: "I took your father... I led him throughout the Land, I multiplied his offspring, I gave him Yitzchak, I gave Yaakov and Eisav to Yitzchak."

Nothing can exist in Hashem's presence when He fully reveals His glory. That is how the firstborn of the Egyptians died. Only the Jewish People could survive because we are one with Hashem: "Beni bechori Yisrael." May we all be merit to rejoice in that knowledge this Seder night. Chag kasher v'samei'ach.

from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org> to: rabbiwein@torah.org
date: Apr 17, 2019, 6:21 PM subject: Rabbi Wein - Dayeinu -- Always
Enough to Say Thank You!

Rabbi Berel Wein

Dayeinu -- Always Enough to Say Thank You!

At the great seder night of Pesach when we read and discuss the immortal words of the Pesach Hagada, my family has always enthusiastically sung the portion of the Hagada that we know as "Dayenu." By the grace of God, I have been able to witness a number of my generations singing this meaningful poem of praise to the Almighty for the bountiful goodness that he has bestowed upon us.

Since I am leading the singing that always accompanies this poem, the melody may be somewhat out of tune but what it lacks in pitch it makes up

for in enthusiasm and volume. I have always thought about the words that make up this poem and the entire concept that "Dayenu" communicates to us. The poem deals with half measures, so to speak, of goodness that were bestowed upon us. As one of my grandchildren one intuitively remarks to me: "Zeydie, it is like proclaiming victory when only half the game has been played and your team is winning. But the game is not over yet, so is our cheering not a bit premature?"

That same question troubled me for quite some time. How can we say that it was sufficient for us to be delivered from Egyptian bondage even if later we would've been destroyed at Yam Suf? Or what advantage would have accrued to us had we come to the Mountain of Sinai but never received the Torah or experienced the revelation that took place there? Why would we say that all these half measures would have been more than enough for us?

The answer to all of this lies in the Jewish attitude towards the holy attribute of gratitude. Gratitude is the basis of all moral law and decent human conduct. It underpins all the beliefs and behavioral aspects of Judaism, Jewish values and lifestyle. And Judaism declares that gratitude must be shown every step of the way during a person's life.

We are to be grateful and thankful for our opportunities even if they did not yet lead to any positive results and accomplishments. The Talmud admonished us not to complain too loudly or too often about the difficulties of life "for is it not sufficient that one is still living?" If one expresses gratitude simply for opportunity, then how much more is that person likely to be truly grateful for positive results in one's life?

This is not only the message of the "Dayenu" poem in the Hagada, it is really the message of the entire recitation of the Hagada itself. Gratitude for everything in life is the message of Pesach, for the matzo and even for the maror as well. And perhaps this is why the poem of "Dayenu" is usually put to melody, for it is meant to be a poem of joy, a realistic appraisal to life and not a sad dirge. Like everything else in Jewish life, it is meant to be a song of eternity.

Shabbat shalom Pesach Kasher v'sameach Rabbi Berel Wein

from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Apr 17, 2019, 10:06 PM subject: Rabbi Daniel Stein - **Talking Our Way Out of Mitzrayim**

Rabbi Daniel Stein

Generally, Chazal advise us to be defined by our actions and not by our words, as the Mishna states "say little and do a lot" (Avos 1:15). However, a notable exception to this rule is the night of the seder, when the Haggadah exhorts, "whoever talks excessively about the exodus from Mitzrayim is praiseworthy." Similarly, the matzah is described as "lechem oni - the bread of affliction" (Devarim 16:3) which could also be read as "the bread of responses," from which the Gemara (Pesachim 36a) derives that the matzah should be the topic of great and lengthy conversation, "lechem she'onim alav devarim harbei - the bread about which many answers are offered." The Arizal has observed that even the name of the yom tov of "Pesach" itself, can be deconstructed to form two words, "peh sach - a mouth which is speaking", because throughout Pesach our mouths should be working tirelessly to recount the story of yetzias Mitzrayim. The month during which Pesach occurs is the month of Nissan, which has the numerical equivalent of one hundred and seventy, or two times eighty-five, which is the numerical value of the word "peh - mouth." This underscores the message that during the month of Nissan, and particularly on Pesach, our mouths should be operating on overdrive, speaking twice as much as usual, in delving into the miracles of the exodus.

Most of our discussions regarding yetzias Mitzrayim are concentrated in the Maggid section of the Haggadah, which is introduced with the words "ha lachma - this is the bread," which also has the numerical value of eighty-five, and the word "peh," prompting us to be prepared to open our mouths immanently in conversation. Moreover, the formal beginning of Maggid

opens with the letter mem, in the word "mah - why," and closes with a mem sofit, an ending mem, in the word "mayim" at the conclusion of the first part of Hallel. This is analogous to the Torah She'baal Peh itself which opens with the letter mem, in the word "mei'eimasai," at the beginning of Berachos, and closes with a mem sofit, in the word "shalom," at the conclusion of Uktzin. The letter mem is one of the four letters in the aleph beis which are formed with the lips, along with the letters, beis, vuv, and peh. The Maggid section of the Haggadah, and the Mishnah commence with the letter mem which is produced with the lips as an indication, that we should seek to open our lips and mouths to a greater degree when speaking and engaged in learning Torah and retelling the story of yetziyas Mitzrayim. The mem sofit at the end, encourages us, to be to be more discerning and economical with what we say and how much we speak after we have concluded learning Torah and discussing yetziyas Mitzrayim.

When addressing the fourth son in the Haggadah, the one who does not even know how to ask, the Haggadah prescribes, "at pesach lo - you should initiate with him." However, here the narrator of the Haggadah transitions from the masculine "ata" to the feminine "at", which is curious. This leads the Divrei Chaim, to suggest that in fact the word "at" is an acronym for "a'leph...t'af", which coaches us to exhaust the entire lexicon, dictionary, and thesaurus, all the way from the letter aleph, at beginning of the aleph beis, to the letter taf at the end of the aleph beis, in order to engage the children at the seder and inspire them with our description of yetziyas Mitzrayim. A short while later, we raise our glasses of wine and declare, "vehi she'adma le'avoseinu ve'lanu - and this is what has stood for us" and preserved us throughout the diaspora and saved us from mortal danger. The item referred to in this proclamation, "vehi - and this," is vague and one of the classical mysteries of the seder which is the subject of voluminous speculation. However, perhaps on some level the word "vehi", which has the numerical value of twenty-two, is an allusion to the twenty-two letters of the aleph beis which we must utilize completely in speaking with and educating our children on the night of the seder regarding our beliefs and practices, and it is precisely this endeavor which has secured our continuity and survival from generation to generation.

Why do we exaggerate speaking and talking to such an unusual degree on the night of the seder? Perhaps it is because we were only exiled to Mitzrayim in the first place as a result of harmful and destructive speech. When Yitzchak was born, Sarah approached Avraham Avinu and urged him to "evict this handmaid (Hagar) and her son" (Breishis 21:10), lest Yishmael have a harmful influence on Yitzchok. The Baal Haturim claims that since Sarah spoke in an exceptionally harsh fashion towards Hagar, the Jewish people were punished that they too would be driven from their home. In accordance with Hashem's usual method of administering justice in-kind, Sarah's descendants were exiled specifically to Mitzrayim, which was the birthplace of Hagar. Rav Shlomo Kluger (Yeriyos Shlomo), suggests that this is the meaning of the assertion in the Haggadah that we descended to Mitzrayim "trapped by the speech." This phrase is generally interpreted as a reference to Hashem's verbal bond with Avraham Avinu, "and your children will be strangers in a foreign land" (Breishis 15:13) which compelled our deportation and servitude. However, Rav Shlomo Kluger argues that it also refers to Sarah's severe tone in speaking with Hagar, which further induced our expulsion and held us prisoner in Mitzrayim.

But more directly, Yaakov and his sons originally traveled to Mitzrayim only as a result of the sale of Yosef. For this reason, the seder begins with karpas, the first dipping of the night. Rabbeinu Manoach contends that this dipping serves as a reminder of the first dipping recorded in the Torah, when the shevatim dipped Yosef's coat in the blood of a goat (Breishis 37:31) in order to deceive and mislead their father. This is supported by Rashi (Breishis 37:3) who defines Yosef's coat as a garment made from material "similar to karpas and techeiles." Additionally, the seder finishes with the cryptic chad gadya parable, which centers around a pivotal goat who is sold for two zuzim. Rav Asher Weiss proposes that this too is an allusion to

Yosef and his fateful coat that was worth two selaim (Shabbos 10b), which aroused the jealousy of his brothers and led to his kidnaping and sale at their hands. The Torah attests that when Yosef "spoke evil tales about them to their father" (Breishis 37:2), the shevatim began to despise Yosef to the point that "they could no longer speak with him peacefully" (Breishis 37:4). The dysfunctional relationship between Yosef and his brothers, that facilitated the Jewish people's initial descent to Mitzrayim, deteriorated so dramatically and tragically because of a breakdown of peaceful and positive speech. Therefore, it is not surprising that the only way to leave Mitzrayim on the seder night, is to rehabilitate our speech and talk our way out of it. On the night of the seder we accentuate talking to a greater degree than usual, because we are attempting to cleanse our power of speech by channeling our words towards praising Hashem, learning Torah, and welcoming others.

The mouth and our ability to speak were designed expressly for the purpose of holy speech and engaging in Torah learning. The Shelah Hakadosh cites the Rokeach that there are thirty-two teeth in the mouth, sixteen above and sixteen below, corresponding to the sixteen aliyos of Torah reading we participate in each week, (seven Shabbos morning, three Shabbos afternoon, three on Monday, and three on Thursday), because our mouths were intended deliberately to enable weekly and daily Torah learning. Similarly, the five areas in the mouth where letters are formed, the throat, palate, tongue, teeth, and lips, are related to the five books of the Torah which we should be discussing incessantly. The Bluzhever Rebbe (Tzvi LeTzaddik) suggests that these five areas in which letters are enunciated are the basis for the five expressions of redemption mentioned by the Torah in connection with yetziyas Mitzrayim, "I shall take you out", "I shall rescue you", "I shall redeem you", "I shall take you", and "I shall bring you" (Shemos 6:6-8), as well as the five illustrations of emancipation and salvation contained within the Haggadah, "from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity, from deep darkness to great light, and from bondage to redemption." If we immerse ourselves verbally in the story of yetziyas Mitzrayim and limmud haTorah on the seder night, may we be able to purge our mouths from all aspects of negative speech, and may we merit to attain and experience all of the five manifestations of redemption, culminating with "and I will bring you to the land" so that we may be able to celebrate Pesach next year in Yerushalayim!

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from: Chabad.org <learntorah@chabad.org> reply-to: feedback@chabad.org date: Apr 17, 2019, 5:16 PM subject: TORAH STUDIES: **Passover Pesach**
Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Pesach is the festival of liberation, it celebrates a historical event: The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. But one of the tasks that the event lays upon us is that "in every generation, and every day, a Jew must see himself as if he had that day been liberated from Egypt." The implication is that freedom was not won once and for all. It needs constant guarding. And that every day and every environment carries its own equivalent of "Egypt"—a power to undermine the freedom of the Jew. Perhaps the most potent threat comes from within the individual himself. It is the conviction that certain achievements are beyond him: The strong and comfortable belief that he was not born to reach the heights of the religious life. To believe this is to set bars around oneself, to imprison oneself in an illusion. Pesach is thus an ongoing process of self-liberation. And the festival and its practices are symbols of a struggle that is constantly renewed within the Jew, to create the freedom in which to live out his eternal vocation.

The following extracts are adapted from Pesach letters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

1. The Meaning of Liberation
2. The Festival of Spring
3. The Fifth Son

1. The Meaning of Liberation
 ...The days of the Festival of our Freedom are approaching, when we will again recall that great event at the dawn of our history, when our people were liberated from Egyptian bondage in order to receive the Torah as free men.

Memory and imagination are the ability to associate oneself with an event in the past, and in so doing to live again through the emotions that were felt at the time of the event. Only physically are we bound by time and space. In our minds we can travel without limits, and the more spiritual we become, the closer we can approach the past, the more intensely we can experience its message and inspiration.

Remembering is a spiritual achievement. Commenting on the verse, “And these days shall be remembered and done” (Esther 9:28), the Rabbis say that as soon as those days are remembered, they are re-enacted in Heaven. The Divine benevolence that brought the miracles in the past is awakened again by our act of recollection.

This is one of the reasons why we have been enjoined to remember the liberation from Egypt in every generation and every day. And why every Jew must see himself as if he had been freed from Egypt on that day. For every day he must personally “go out from Egypt,” that is, he must escape from the limits, temptations and obstructions that his physical existence places in the way of his spiritual life.

The counterpart of the liberation from Egypt is the liberation of the Divine Soul from the constraints of its physical environment. And this must be experienced every day if true freedom is to be reached.

And when it is achieved, as it must be, with the help of G-d who freed our people from Egypt, and through a life of Torah and Mitzvot, a great spiritual anguish is ended. The inner conflict between what is physical and what is Divine in the Jew’s nature, is transcended. And then, only then, can he enjoy real freedom, the sense of serenity and harmony which is the prelude to freedom and peace in the world at large....

(Source: Letter, 11th Nissan, 5713; Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 7 pp. 205-6)

...One of the most significant lessons of the festival of Pesach is that the Jew has the capacity, even within a short space of time, to transform himself from one extreme to another.

The Torah and the Rabbis graphically describe the extent of the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt, and the spiritual depths to which they had sunk. They were slaves in a country from which none could escape. They were under the power of a Pharaoh who had bathed in the blood of Jewish children. They were destitute, broken in body and spirit by the lowest kind of forced labor. And then, suddenly, Pharaoh’s power was broken, the whole people liberated, and a nation who not long ago were slaves, left the land “with an outstretched arm” and “with great wealth.”

And their spiritual liberation was equally dramatic. They had reached the “forty-ninth stage of impurity,” to the point of idolatry. And then—they saw G-d revealed in the fullness of His glory. A few weeks later they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, at the apex of holiness and prophecy and heard G-d saying to each of them, without any intermediary: “I am the L-rd, thy G-d.”

From this it follows that no matter where a Jew stands, or a Jewish community stands, on the ladder to perfection, the call comes every day to remember the liberation from Egypt, to strive after freedom, boldly (“with an outstretched arm”) and with a total commitment (“with great wealth”) to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” by accepting the life of Torah “as in the days of your liberation from Egypt.” Despair belongs to those who see with human eyes, not to those who see with the eye of faith.

There must be no pause nor hesitation on this road; no resting satisfied with what has already been accomplished. One must press on unrelenting until one experiences the call: “I am the L-rd, thy G-d....”

(Source: Letter, 11th Nissan, 5719; Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 18 pp. 318-19)

...One of the most striking features of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt was their demonstration of faith in the Providence of G-d.

Consider the circumstances: An entire nation, men, women and children, numbering several million, willingly left a well-settled and prosperous country, a country whose pagan values had already left their impression on them, to venture on a long and dangerous journey, without provisions, but with absolute reliance on the word of G-d as spoken by Moses.

What is more, they did not follow the familiar and shorter route through the land of Philistines, which although it involved the risk of war, was far more attractive than the prospect of crossing a vast and desolate desert. In war there is the chance of victory; in defeat there is the chance of escape; but in a desert, without food or water, nature allows no chance of survival. Yet they followed this route, disregarding rationality, and trusting in the word of G-d.

The facts are more remarkable still. The Israelites had spent 210 years in Egypt, a highly agricultural country, where the nomadic life was mistrusted, where the soil was fertile and irrigated by the Nile whatever the caprices of the climate. They forsook all the security of the natural order....

Why did they do so? This question is echoed in every generation. The secular world, and the Jew who has strayed from Jewish truth, asks the practicing Jew: You live like us in a materialistic world. You belong to a competitive society. You too face the struggle for economic survival. How can you exempt yourself from its values? How can you adhere to a code of precepts that burden your life and restrict your actions at every turn?

The answer lies in the exodus from Egypt.

Then, when Jews responded to the call of G-d, disregarding what seemed reasonable at the time, breaking with the values of their Egyptian environment, it transpired that the path they took was the path of true happiness, spiritually in receiving the Torah and becoming G-d’s chosen people, materially in reaching the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey.

It is so today and always. Through the Torah (the Torat Chayim, the “law of life”) and the Mitzvot a Jew attaches himself to the Creator of the World, and frees himself from all “natural” limitations. This is the way of happiness, in the spirit and the material world....

(Source: Letter, 11th Nissan, 5721; Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 20 pp. 204-5)

2. The Festival of Spring

Pesach is the festival of Spring. “Observe the month of Spring and keep the Passover unto the L-rd your G-d, for in the month of Spring the L-rd your G-d brought you out of Egypt by night” (Devarim 16:1). This commandment has dictated the form of the Jewish calendar, for although it is primarily based on the lunar month, the seasons are determined by the sun. As a result, every two or three years an extra month must be added to the year, to keep the solar and lunar dates in harmony, so that Pesach will indeed fall during the Spring. Is there a deeper significance in the fact that Pesach is always a Spring festival? True, that was the time of year when, historically, the exodus took place. But why did G-d choose just that season? And what is the lesson that is implied?

...For hundreds of years the Jews had been enslaved by a powerful nation, which had imposed its dominion on all surrounding nations, not merely by brute force (its “chariots and horsemen”) but by its overwhelming preponderance in science and technology, in everything which we now call “culture” and “civilization.”

The civilization of the Egyptians was based on the forces of nature and natural phenomena, especially the Nile river. Rain is scarce in Egypt; but human ingenuity had devised an elaborate irrigation system which had turned Egypt into a flourishing oasis, surrounded by desert.

This circumstance produced an idolatrous culture, which was characterized by two main features: The deification of the forces of nature, and the deification of the powers of man who was able to use natural forces for his own ends. From here it was only a short step to the deification of Pharaoh, who personified the Egyptian ideal of the god-man.

This system, which viewed the world as an aggregate of natural forces (of which the human element was one), combined as it was with the philosophy expressed in the verse, “My power and the strength of my hand have made me this wealth” (Devarim 8:17) led to extreme forms of paganism and was the “justification” of the enslavement of, and atrocities towards, the weak and the minority in society.

The cultic activities of the Egyptians reached their climax at the time of annual reawakening of the forces of nature, in the month of Spring, for which the zodiacal sign was the Ram (Aries), a sacred symbol of Egyptian paganism.

Moses’ intervention was dramatic. Suddenly he arrived with the announcement from G-d: “I have surely remembered you” (Shemot 3:16). Now was the time when the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had willed the liberation of the Jews from Pharaoh’s oppression and Egyptian exile. But there was one condition: “Withdraw and take for yourselves a lamb for your families and offer the Pesach (sacrifice)” (Shemot 12:21).

This was the command. “Withdraw”—withdraw from the idolatry of the land. “Take for yourselves a lamb”—take the symbol of the Egyptian deity and offer it as a sacrifice to G-d. It was not enough to deny idolatry inwardly, in their hearts. They had to do it openly, without fear, in accordance with all the details they had been commanded.

If it were done, Moses assured in the name of G-d, not only would they be freed from Egypt, but Pharaoh himself would urge them to leave; and not when the forces of nature were dormant and concealed, but in the month of Spring, when they were at the height of their powers.

In this way the Israelites acknowledged that the world was not simply an aggregate of natural forces, nor even a dualism of naturalism and supernaturalism in which nature and the spirit struggle for supremacy. Their action declared that there is One and only One G-d, who is the Master of the world, and in Whom all is a Unity.

This received its highest expression in the Giving of the Torah, which was the culmination and the ultimate purpose of the liberation from Egypt. It lay in the words: “I am the L-rd thy G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods....”

The gods of Egypt have their descendants. There are those today who base their lives on the deification of the forces of nature, and who still say “my power and the strength of my hand have made me this wealth.” And there are those who leave room for G-d in their homes, while forsaking Him outside for the sake of social norms.

But Pesach intervenes with the reminder: “Withdraw” from the idolatry of the land, in whatever form it is disguised. Do so openly, without fear and with dignity. “Take unto

yourselves” all your powers and dedicate them to G-d. Do so “in the month of Spring” at the moment when prosperity, technology and the deification of human achievement is at its height. And remember that every achievement is a Divine blessing, every form of prosperity a facet of G-d’s benevolence.

(Source: Letter, 11th Nissan, 5725; Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 23 pp. 361-5)

3. The Fifth Son

The Seder service, and the reciting of the Haggadah, have always been considered to be directed particularly towards the children: “And you shall relate to your son on that day” (Shemot 13:8). Many of our customs at the Seder table were intended specifically to capture the attention of the child. And the different kinds of education which are needed by different personalities are illustrated in the passage in the Haggadah which tells of the four kinds of son, the wise, the wicked, the simple and the one who does not know how to ask. But there is a fifth, and far more problematic, son. There is a good reason why he is not mentioned explicitly in the Haggadah. For he is the absent son.

... While the “four sons” differ from one another in their reaction to the Seder service, they have one thing in common. They are all present. Even the so-called “wicked” son is there, taking an active, if dissenting, interest in what is going on in Jewish life around him. This, at least, justifies the hope that one day he will become “wise,” and that all Jewish children attending the Seder will become conscientious and committed Jews.

Unfortunately there is, in our time, another kind of Jewish child: The child who is conspicuous by his absence, who has no interest whatever in Torah and Mitzvot, who is not even aware of the Seder and the miracles it recalls.

This is a grave challenge, which should command our attention long before Pesach and the Seder-night. For no Jewish child should be forgotten and given up. We must make every effort to save the lost child, and bring him to the Seder table. Determined to do so, and driven by a deep sense of compassion and responsibility, we need have no fear of failure.

To remedy any situation, we must discover its origins.

In this case, they lie in a mistaken analysis of their situation on the part of some immigrants arriving in a new and strange environment. Finding themselves a small minority, and encountering the inevitable difficulties of resettlement, some parents had the idea, which they communicated to their children, that assimilation was the solution. But in their efforts to abandon the Jewish way of life, they created a spiritual conflict within themselves. They were determined that their children should be spared the tension of divided loyalties; and to rationalize their desertion of their Jewish heritage they convinced themselves and their children that the life of Torah and Mitzvot did not fit their new surroundings. They looked for, and therefore “found,” faults with the Jewish way of life, while everything in the non-Jewish environment seemed attractive and good.

By this attitude, the parents hoped to ensure their children’s survival in the new environment. But what kind of survival was it to be, if the soul was sacrificed for the material benefits of the world?

And what they thought was an “escape into freedom” turned out, in the final analysis, to be an escape into slavish imitation, which tended to be so marked by caricature and a sense of insecurity as to command little respect from that younger generation that it was intended for....

The festival of Pesach and the deliverance that it commemorates, are timely reminders that Jewish survival does not rest in imitation of the non-Jewish environment, but in fidelity to our traditions and our religious vocation.

Our ancestors in Egypt were a small minority, and they lived in the most difficult circumstances. But, as the Rabbis tell us, they retained their identity as Jews, preserved their uniqueness, and kept up their traditions without anxiety or shame. It was this that made their survival certain, and assured their liberation from all forms of tyranny, physical and spiritual....

There is no room for hopelessness in Jewish life, and no Jew should ever be given up as a lost cause. Through compassion and fellow-love (Ahavat Yisroel) even a “lost” generation can be brought back to the love of G-d (Ahavat HaShem) and love of the Torah (Ahavat HaTorah); not only to be included in the community of the “four sons” but to belong in time to the rank of the “wise” son....

May the gathering of these “lost tribes of Israel” to the Seder table hasten the true and complete redemption of our people, through the coming of the Messiah speedily in our time.

(Source: Letter, 11th Nissan, 5717; Vol. 15 pp. 33-37)

from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: **Rav Kook** List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Apr 16, 2019, 3:30 PM subject: [**Rav Kook Torah**] Pesach: The Strong Hand and the Outstretched Arm

Pesach: The Strong Hand and the Outstretched Arm

“Remember... the strong hand and the outstretched arm with which the Eternal your God brought you out [of Egypt].” (Deut. 7:18-19) We are familiar with this phrase from the Haggadah, read every year on Passover. But what exactly do the “strong hand” and “outstretched arm” refer to?

Strong Hand - Dramatic Transformation

If the objective of the Exodus had been only to liberate the Israelites and raise them to the level of other free nations of the world, then no special Divine intervention would have been necessary. By the usual laws of nature and history, the Jewish people would have gradually progressed to a level of culture and morality prevalent among nations.

However, God wanted the newly freed slaves to swiftly attain a high moral and spiritual plane. In order to prepare them for their unique destiny, they required God’s “strong hand.” This metaphor implies a forceful intervention that neutralized the natural forces of the universe. God’s ‘strong hand’ dramatically raised the Jewish people from the depths of defilement and degradation in Egypt to the spiritual heights of Sinai.

We commemorate this sudden elevation of the people, the ‘strong hand,’ by eating the rapidly-baked matzah. This rationale for eating matzah is stated explicitly in the Haggadah:

“Because there was not time for the dough of our fathers to leaven before the King of all kings, the Holy One, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them.” Outstretched Arm - Toward the Future

The “outstretched arm,” on the other hand, implies an unrealized potential, a work in progress. The Hebrew word for “arm” is zero’a, from the root zera (seed), indicating future growth. Even today, the ultimate goal of the Exodus has still not been fully achieved. The process of perfecting and redeeming the Jewish people is one of gradual progression.

If matzah commemorates the sudden redemptive quality of God’s “strong hand,” which Passover mitzvah symbolizes the “outstretched arm”? That would be the maror, the bitter herbs. The maror reminds us of the bitterness of slavery. The very fact that we felt this bitterness is an indication that servitude contradicts our true essence. By virtue of our inner nature, we will slowly but surely realize our true potential.

While the “strong hand” gave the initial push, it is through the “outstretched arm” that we steadily advance toward our final goal. This gradual progress is accomplished through the mitzvot, which refine and elevate us. It is for this reason that all mitzvot are fundamentally connected to the redemption from Egypt.

(Silver from the Land of Israel (now available in paperback), pp. 154-155. Adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. II, pp. 279-283.)

See also: Passover: The Hillel Sandwich

<https://www.bnaiyeshurun.org/weeklybulletin>

The Rishon Who Thwarted Arab Terror

Rabbi Steven Pruzansky

The Rishon Who Thwarted Arab Terror We can start with two trivia questions – trivia, but not trivial. What three word phrase in the hagada is the most frequently recited? That’s the relatively easy question. The more difficult one is this: what paragraph did Rav Soloveitchik say is the most important in the hagada? If you know the first, the second should come naturally. And it all goes to prove this amazing story, a true story entitled “how the responsum of the Rashba (Rav Shlomo ibn Aderet, 1235- 1310) eliminated the terrorists.” The Gemara (Pesachim 33a) states that one can only give terumah to a kohen if he is able to consume it immediately but not if it is something that he would have to burn. For example, “wheat that became chametz while it was still attached to the ground.” That means that if wheat is rained upon, the wheat becomes chametz even before it was harvested. But how can that be? All wheat receives rain; if not it does not grow! R. Shlomo ibn Aderet, native of Barcelona, asked this question (Rashba, Volume 7, Chapter 20) and he answered that this is only true if the

wheat is fully ripened and doesn't require any more nourishment. In that situation, it is as if it is already in a jug and will become chametz if rain falls on it. Indeed, this is the halacha, as codified in the Shulchan Aruch (OC 467), and the Mishna Berura (467:17) adds that "for this reason, the pious ensure that their matzot come from wheat that has been watched from the time of the harvest and that they are still a little moist," just as the Rashba required. Practically, this rarely presents a problem because in Israel the rainy season ends long before the time for harvest. But in 2014, there were sudden and unexpected thunderstorms across the south of Israel right before Shavuot, and that endangered the whole crop. The Badatz had to invalidate most of the wheat fields because the rain had fallen on ripe wheat. They searched and researched, and the rabbinical court in Bnei Brak found that there had been no rain in Kibbutz Sufa, adjacent to the Gaza border, quickly negotiated with them, and harvested their entire wheat field in June 2014. Unbeknownst to anyone, Hamas terrorists had for the previous six months dug a tunnel from Gaza under the wheat field into Kibbutz Sufa. Their reconnaissance had revealed that it was perfect cover – a large field covered by high stalks of wheat. They planned a terrorist attack on Sufa for the end of June 2014. I have seen the video. Almost 15 terrorists emerged from the opening to the tunnel, and scattered in two different directions. You can sense their surprise and confusion – they had anticipated a field that was covered with wheat. Instead, they found a field that was open, flat and exposed. They ran from the opening, and then they aborted the attack, and ran back to the opening, scurrying about frantically. They made it back to the opening and started climbing down – but not before they were greeted by one IDF missile. Six terrorists were killed, seven wounded and captured. The wounded related that they knew the field was not harvested until late summer and they did not understand why the field was harvested that year in the early summer. It was perfect cover – but they had not planned on the responsum of the Rashba! This was not 3,000 or 2,000 years ago – but five years ago. This is the law of grain that is completely dry and no longer needs nourishment. Look it up – you have to harvest the grain before rain falls on it. And so they did, and a great salvation occurred. True story. The three word phrase that occurs most in the hagada is "ki l'olam chasdo", that G-d's kindness is everlasting. And Rav Soloveitchik wrote that the most important paragraph in the hagada is "lefishach:" "therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, glorify, extol and exalt He who performed for us and for our forefathers all these miracles." The whole hagada, the whole seder, and the entire Pesach are designed to bring us to the point that we are imbued with praise of G-d and gratitude for the kindnesses that He has done for us and our forefathers. Everything leads to praise and gratitude – and so it is in our lives as well. We don't only rejoice over the miracles done to our forefathers; if we have eyes and ears, and a mind and a heart, we will see the miracles of today as well that G-d performed for a nation that is not always aware of it and does not always appreciate it – but should. We do – and so we welcome Pesach not only for the mitzvot, the wonderful spirit and the joys of family, but because we can utilize this moment to declare His name and proclaim His deeds to the nations, with the hope and prayer that we will again behold His redemptive hand. Chag kasher v'sameach to all!

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**The Four Cups:
Moscato Or Merlot?
Rabbi Yaakov Hoffman**

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/holidays/the-four-cups-moscato-or-merlot/2019/04/10/>

6 Nisan 5779 – April 10, 2019

On Seder night, many aficionados of Bartenura suddenly opt for Bordeaux. They seem to be under the impression that for the Four Cups, one must drink red, non-mevushal, unsweetened wine. But is that actually true?

Chazal never explicitly require these three elements for the Four Cups. In fact, the Talmud Yerushalmi states the opposite (Pesachim 10:1). While the Yerushalmi does encourage using red wine, it only states that doing so is a "mitzvah," which – according to most Rishonim – means preferred, not required. (The Tur writes that white wine is actually preferable if it is better quality than the available red wine [Orach Chayim 472].)

The Yerushalmi is even more definitive regarding the other two elements. After questioning the validity of cooked (mevushal) wine and sweetened spiced wine (konditon) for the Seder, the Yerushalmi concludes flatly that they can be used. Is there any basis, then, to being more stringent than the Yerushalmi?

The main source for insisting on using red wine is the Ramban (Bava Batra 97b). He writes that when the Yerushalmi categorizes using red wine as a "mitzvah," it means red wine is required. In addition, several commentators on the Shulchan Aruch strongly encourage using red wine for the Four Cups since the color red symbolizes the Jewish blood Pharaoh spilled in Egypt. (The Taz [Orach Chayim 472:9] writes that using red wine is inadvisable in lands where Jews are subject to blood libels; thankfully, this concern is no longer relevant today.)

To follow the view of these commentators, one can still use mostly white wine as long as one mixes in a little red wine so that the cup of wine looks red (see note 44 to Orach Chayim 472 in the Dirshu edition of the Mishnah Berurah, which discusses whether one violates the prohibition against "coloring" on Shabbat or Yom Tov by mixing red wine with white).

If one wishes to adhere to the opinion of the Ramban, one's cup must contain actual red wine – not merely red-colored wine. For this purpose, though, rosé wine would be sufficient. (cf. Tosafot, Bava Batra 97b s.v. "chamar"). Indeed, most red wines in the ancient world were lighter in color than contemporary red wines.

In any event, clearly the practice to use red wine for the Four Cups is rooted in Chazal and poskim. What can we say, however, about the insistence to use non-mevushal wine? It seems to contradict the Yerushalmi outright!

The source of this insistence seems to be the Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 29:14), who holds that one may not recite Kiddush on mevushal wine. Apparently, the Rambam's version of Yerushalmi lacked the line stating that mevushal wine is allowed for the Four Cups (one of which is Kiddush). Alternatively, the Rambam may have believed that the Talmud Bavli disagrees with the Yerushalmi on this matter (cf. Rosh, Bava Batra 6:1).

The Shulchan Aruch rules that mevushal wine is acceptable for Kiddush (Orach Chayim 272:8), but notes that some consider it invalid. By mentioning a dissenting opinion, the Shulchan Aruch arguably implies that it is proper to accommodate it when possible (see Mishnah Berurah 272:23). For this reason, many people prefer making Kiddush on non-mevushal wine year-round. (It should be noted that this stringency must not come at the expense of leniency in the area of handling non-mevushal wine.)

It is only for Kiddush, however, that one possibly needs non-mevushal wine – not for the Four Cups per se. Thus, according to the Rambam, only the first of the Four Cups – i.e., Kiddush – needs to consist of non-mevushal wine. Furthermore, only the person making Kiddush needs to use non-mevushal wine. Everyone else around the table seemingly can use mevushal wine (Hilchot Chag BeChag, Pesach, ch. 19 n. 24; see, however, Rav Schachter on the Haggadah, p. 57). But in households where everyone recites Kiddush aloud on Seder night (see HaSeder HeAruch 50:5-7), everyone has to use non-mevushal wine for the first cup according to the Rambam.

Rashi, the Rif, and some Ge'onim go even further than the Rambam in their attitude towards mevushal wine; they maintain that it is not even full-fledged wine, and one should make a shehakol – not a hagafen – before drinking it (see all the sources cited in Hilchot Yom BeYom, Brachot, vol. 3, 4:1).

According to these authorities, then, all Four Cups must consist of non-mevushal wine.

In practice, however, there is no reason to follow such an extreme stringency, since later poskim and common custom completely reject the opinion that mevushal wine is shehakol (see Mishnah Berurah, op. cit.). Furthermore, this ruling applied only to mevushal wine in ancient times, which was cooked over an open fire and was of a perceptibly different taste and quality than regular wine. All authorities would presumably agree that the blessing on contemporary mevushal wine – which is merely pasteurized – is borei pri hagafen (Hilchot Yom BeYom, op. cit.). (Indeed, some poskim argue that pasteurized wine is not considered mevushal at all, even for purposes of Kiddush and handling by a non-Jew.)

Sweetened or spiced wine is even less problematic than mevushal wine. It may be used for the latter three cups according to all opinions; even for Kiddush, it is likely less problematic than mevushal wine (see Rambam, op. cit.; see also Responsa Teshuvot VeHanhagot 1:253). It should be noted that there are naturally sweet wines available for those who wish to be stringent, yet do not enjoy dry wine.

The upshot: Red wine is preferable for all Four Cups. Some rule that the first cup should be unsweetened and non-mevushal, but this ruling probably applies only to one who recites Kiddush, not to one who listens to another's recitation. The last three cups may certainly be sweetened and mevushal.

Drinking the Four Cups is indicative of our status as a free people following our redemption from Egypt. As such, it is supposed to be a pleasant experience (see Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 7:9)! While using wine for the Seder that complies with all possible stringencies is admirable, it is more important to drink a wine one enjoys. (According to most opinions, grape juice is also acceptable, although a thorough analysis of this question is beyond the scope of this article.)

From: Project Genesis <genesis@torah.org>

Date: Tue, Apr 16, 2019, 5:54 PM

Subject: Weekly Halacha - Pesach Issues

To: <weekly-halacha@torah.org>

Weekly Halacha

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Pesach Issues

Question: Is it halachically acceptable to celebrate Pesach away from home after selling one's home with all of its chametz contents to a non-Jew?

Discussion: Anyone who owns chametz is obligated to get rid of it before Pesach begins. This can be accomplished in one of two ways: By destroying it¹ or by selling it [or giving it away] to a non-Jew. ² Either way, one fulfills his basic obligation and does not transgress the Biblical injunction against owning any chametz. But there is something else to consider: The Rabbis obligated each person to search for chametz on the night before Pesach. [If one leaves town before that time, he is still obligated to search for chametz the night before he leaves, although no blessing is recited for that search.] In the opinion of many poskim, the search for chametz is obligatory whether or not one owns his chametz by the time Pesach arrives, since once the rabbinic ordinance was enacted, it cannot be abrogated regardless of the circumstances. ³ Consequently, selling the house to a non-Jew does not free one from his personal obligation to search for chametz. A solution⁴ to this problem is to set aside one room in the house, even a small one, and not sell it to the non-Jew along with the rest of the house. That room should be cleaned for Pesach and thoroughly searched for chametz on the night before Pesach, with the proper blessing recited for the bedikah⁵. One who will have already gone out of town by the night before Pesach should follow the same procedure on the night before he leaves—but he may not recite a blessing on the bedikah. Question: How extensive does the search for chametz have to be? How is it possible to thoroughly search a whole house in a short period of time? Discussion: Halachically speaking, an extensive and thorough

search is required in any place where chametz may have been brought during the past year. ⁶ Since it is almost impossible to properly check an entire house in a short period of time, some people actually spend many hours checking and searching their houses on the night of bedikas chametz, often devoting a good part of the night to the bedikah. ⁷ But most people cannot—or do not—spend so much time searching their homes for chametz. How, then, do they fulfill this obligation? Several poskim find justification (limud zechus) for the laxer version of bedikas chametz, as the house has undergone many weeks of meticulous pre-Pesach cleaning and scrubbing and there is no vestige of chametz around. Once the rooms of the house have been cleaned, they may be halachically considered as “a place into which no chametz has been brought.” While checking and searching is still required in order to ascertain that no spot in the house was overlooked, the search need not be as thorough and exacting as if no cleaning had been done. ⁸ A better suggestion—for those who do not do a meticulous search on the night before Pesach—is to do partial searches earlier. As soon as a certain area in the house is cleaned, the area should be carefully checked for chametz—either at night using a flashlight or in the daytime by natural light. The wife or an older child can be entrusted with this search. If the house is checked in stages, then an exhaustive search need not be repeated on the night before Pesach in the areas that were already checked, provided that it is certain that no new chametz was carried into those areas. ⁹ Question: Is it permitted to get a haircut or do laundry on erev Pesach after midday (chatzos)? Discussion: It is forbidden to do melachah, “work,” even if it is needed for Yom Tov, on erev Pesach after chatzos. Two¹⁰ basic reasons are given for this rabbinic prohibition: 1) When the Beis ha-Mikdash stood, erev Pesach was considered a Yom Tov, since the Korban Pesach was brought on that day. It retains the status of Yom Tov today even though the Korban Pesach is no longer offered. ¹¹ 2) To give everyone a chance to properly prepare for the Seder. ¹² Certain forms of personal grooming and certain household chores that are halachically classified as “work” are forbidden to be done on erev Pesach after chatzos. Thus it is forbidden to get a haircut or a shave, ¹³ to sew new clothing¹⁴ or to do laundry¹⁵ on erev Pesach after chatzos. One must arrange his schedule so that these tasks are completed before midday. L'chatchilah, one should even cut his nails before chatzos. ¹⁶ If, b'diavad, one could not or did not take care of these matters before midday, some of them may still be done while others may not: sewing or completing the sewing of new clothes may not be done at all; a haircut and shave may be taken only at a non-Jewish barber; laundry may be done only by a non-Jewish maid or dry cleaner. ¹⁷ Other chores, such as ironing clothes, ¹⁸ polishing shoes, cutting nails, sewing buttons and other minor mending, ¹⁹ may be done with no restrictions. Question: What should be done if a package containing chametz arrives at one's home or business during Pesach? Discussion: One who knows or suspects that the package may contain actual chametz may not assume ownership of the package. If he can refuse to accept the package, he should do so. If he cannot, he should not bring it into his house or yard and should have specific halachic intent not to “acquire” the chametz. The package is considered “ownerless”—anyone who wants it is free to take it. If the package was mistakenly brought into the home or business, one must have specific intent not to “acquire” it. One may not touch the actual chametz. ²⁰ If the package comes on Chol ha-Moed, the chametz should be immediately discarded, either by burning it or by flushing it down the toilet. If it comes on Shabbos or Yom Tov, it should be put aside²¹ and covered until it can be discarded.

Sources: 1. By eating it, burning it, flushing it down the toilet, or throwing it in a river.

2. This is a complex halachic procedure which can only be administered by an experienced rabbi. 3. See O.C. 436:3 and Mishnah Berurah 27 and 32. 4. Another possible solution [for people who are away for Pesach and are staying at another person's home] is for the guest to “rent” from his host—with a valid kinyan—the room in which he is staying, and search for chametz in that room; Maharsham 3:291. But other poskim prefer not to rely on this solution; see Shevet ha-Levi 4:44. 5. Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso 12:1. 6. O.C. 333:3. 7. Several gedolim, among them the Gaon of Vilna, the Chasam Sofer and the Brisker Rav, were reported to have spent a good part

of the night searching their homes for chametz. 8. Sha'arei Teshuvah 433:2; Da'as Torah 433:2; Chochmas Shelomo 433:11; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Mevakshei Torah Ohr Efrayim, pg. 532); Kinyan Torah 2:122; The basic idea is quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 432:12. 9. Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso 13:1. 10. See Pnei Yehoshua (Pesachim 50a) for a third reason for this prohibition. 11. Mishnah Berurah 468:1. 12. Beir Halachah 468:1. According to this reason, even when erev Pesach falls on Shabbos it is forbidden to do work on Friday. 13. Mishnah Berurah 468:5. 14. Rama, O.C. 468:2. 15. Mishnah Berurah 468:7. 16. Mishnah Berurah 468:5. Although a minority view recommends that one shower/bathe and polish his shoes before chatzos as well, this was not accepted by most poskim. 17. Mishnah Berurah 468:7. Towels and children's clothing which became dirty (or were discovered to be dirty) after chatzos and are going to be needed during Yom Tov may be machine-washed even by a Jew. 18. Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 56, quoting an oral ruling by the Chazon Ish. 19. Rama, O.C. 468:2 and Mishnah Berurah 8. Lengthening and shortening a hem is also permitted. 20. Mishnah Berurah 446:10. 21. The chametz is severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any reason; O.C. 446:1. Some poskim add that it may not even be moved with one's body or foot, even though other types of severe muktzeh may be; L'horos Nassan 5:30.

Who Wrote the Passover Haggadah?

Different people wrote different portions at different times, for instance - the ancient 'Four Questions' changed when Jews eschewed sacrifice.

Elon Gilad Apr 18, 2019

After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, the Jewish religion faced one of its greatest challenges: adapting to this new reality, in which a central focus of religious observance was suddenly and brutally gone.

The Jewish leadership reestablished the Sanhedrin, the Jewish legal council recognized by the Romans, in the city of Yavne. Handed the daunting task of leading the Jewish people down a new road was Rabban Gamaliel II, who resided over the Sanhedrin assembly as Nasi.

Gamaliel and his fellow rabbis strived to adapt Judaism as best they could to the new circumstances. Among their efforts was a profound reform of the Passover ritual.

The ritual changes

Contemporary Jews read the Haggadah every Passover, during the Seder feast. But the book they ritualistically read now would be unrecognizable to ancient Jews.

After the destruction of the Temple no longer could Passover be a holiday of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Instead the holiday moved from the Temple to the home.

Before the destruction of the Temple, the lamb would be sacrificed there and its blood sprayed on the altar; then the family would get back the body to roast and eat it at a festive meal. Afterwards, Gamaliel enacted a halakha – a new observance - by which each household would continue to sacrifice lambs in their own homes. These sacrificial lambs were called gedi kilusin (“blessed kid” - kid as in young goat). While eating, dinner conversation centered on the minutiae of the laws governing the Paschal sacrifice in the Temple.

The anti-sacrifice lobby prevails

Even during the lifetime of Gamaliel, the rabbis vehemently opposed this sacrificial practice. It became a major issue of contention at the time. Some communities followed the practice, others didn't.

Within a number of generations, the slaughter of lambs for Passover was completely stamped out, after the rabbis threatened to expel its practitioners as heretics.

By the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 132 CE, the issue had been settled and the practice of sacrifice had disappeared. The theme of discussion at the Passover table had also changed. No longer did the discussion focus on the sacrifice but rather on the Exodus from Egypt.

This was fitting: the time saw a rise in nationalistic fervor and hope that once again God would save his people and the Temple would be rebuilt.

The Romans crush the revolt

After some initial success, the revolt was crushed by the Romans, with horrific results. Most of the Jews who lived in Judea were either killed or exiled. The dwindling number of rabbis transmitting the law and the fear that all would be lost led Rabbi Judah the Prince, the leader of the small remaining Jewish populace of Judea, to write down the oral law in a compilation of Jewish code called the Mishnah.

The Mishnah is our oldest source prescribing the order of the Passover Seder.

Its description - though brief - is very similar to our modern-day Seders, though at the time no fixed Haggadah had yet been written. This happened during the time of the Talmud, probably in the 3rd or 4th centuries CE, as the earliest reference to the Haggadah is in a Talmudic discussion of which Abba ben Joseph bar ama, known as Rava, (c. 280 – 352 CE) takes part. The Haggadah is mentioned as a book one may lend

out in order to be copied, making it clear that during his lifetime people were already making copies of the Haggadah.

The earliest manuscript to survive is an 8th century Haggadah discovered in the Cairo Geniza. It is strikingly similar to both our modern day Haggadahs and the text of the Mishnah.

Here's a breakdown of how the Haggadah as we know it came about.

Kadesh

As is done in the contemporary Seder, the Mishnah tells us to start with Kiddush. It does not however provide the text, though the Talmud written two centuries later does (c. 500).

According to the Mishnah, the House of Hillel says we should first bless the wine and then the day. The House of Shammai says it's the other way around. Like in most cases when the two houses disagreed, the Jews wound up siding with the House of Hillel.

Urchatz

The Mishnah is mute about the washing of hands at his point, though it is mentioned in the Talmud.

The earliest manuscripts of the Haggadah dictate that a benediction should be chanted after washing your hands. Today's Haggadahs actually say you shouldn't.

Why this change took place is not clear but it happened sometime during the Middle Ages.

Karpas

The Mishnah is very terse on the herb. It only says: “It is brought before him and the hazeret is dipped.” Early Haggadahs like our own have the benediction on vegetables spelled out. As for the nature of hazeret, in modern Hebrew that means "horseradish" though this is due to a misunderstanding. Today, different families have different customs for the actual vegetable or leaf used.

Yachatz

This portion only appeared in the Middle Ages, it is based on a Talmudic passage in which Rav Papa describes breaking his matzas..

Magid

Halachma Aniya first appears in Rabbi Amram's Haggadah, dating from the 9th century.

The Four Questions

Ma Nishtana? - While one of the most well known parts in the Haggadah is very ancient, it has gone through some change since it was first spelled out.

The Mishnah asks: Why matza? Why bitter herbs? Why roasted meat? and why double-dip? In our own Haggadahs we dropped the roasted meat, which had to do with the temple sacrifice we don't observe any more, and instead ask why we recline while we eat, while on other nights we sit up.

This change probably came about during the 11th century.

Avadim Hayinu only appears in the Middle Ages.

The discussion between Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Akiva on the reading of Shama in Bnei Brak doesn't appear in the Talmud or in the earlier Haggadahs, though the characters described in the conversation are from the second century.

The four sons

The four sons - wise, wicked, simple and one who can't even ask questions - appear in the Jerusalem Talmud, where Rabbi Hyyia, a student of Rabbi Judah the Prince, is quoted as bringing this parable.

Hyyia's text varies quite a bit from the text we know today: for one, the simple child is not "simple" but stupid.

In the beginning our forefathers were... this is a medieval addition of unknown source.

Vehi sheamda - appears in the early 8th century Haggadahs. So does Tze ulmad.

Here the Mishnah only gives us a short instruction that one should read the entire “Wondering Aramian” portion, alluding to Deuteronomy 26:5-8. The earliest Haggadahs give this text with some minor additions. Our contemporary Haggadahs have the same portion – and a lot of other biblical texts added within it.

The plagues appear

At this point the 10 plagues are recited. This recitation is not explicitly warranted by the Mishnah.

The early Haggadahs have the ten plagues, not the following elaborations, including Rabbi Judah's helpful acronym for remembering the plagues and the weird counting of them by his contemporaries, the rabbis Yossi, Eliezer and Akiva. This material comes from a Halakhic Midrash called the Mekhilta, which was written sometime between the 2nd and 5th centuries.

Dayenu - This poem first appears in the 9th century Seder Rav Amram.

The next part, with Gamaliel saying that one must say pesach, matza and maror is from the Mishnah and was likely said by the distinguished rabbi. The elaborations on this are medieval reworkings of Talmudic elaborations (Pesachim 116b) on the original short elaborations that appear in the Mishnah.

The following Bekhol dor vador, Lefikhakh aleynu lehodot and Nomar alav halleluia are all taken directly from the Mishnah, with only minor changes.

Next the Mishnah says we should sing some psalms, but tells us the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel disagree on how many. We follow the House of Hillel and read both Psalm 113 and 114.

The following benediction Ga'al Yisrael is based on quotes by rabbis Tarfon and Akiva that appear in the Mishnah.

Rakhatz

The washing of the hands with a benediction here is a medieval contrivance.

Mozti Matza

Hamotzi appears in the early Haggadah manuscripts found in the Cairo Genizah, but the special benediction on the matza is newer, only appearing in medieval haggadot.

Maror

The benediction on the maror only appears in the Middle Ages.

Korekh

This section only appears in later medieval haggadot.

Shulkhan Arukh

Though the Mishnah isn't explicit on this, it is clear that this is where the meal took place.

Tzafun

It is not exactly clear when the tradition of stealing/hiding a piece of matza began.

The tradition is based on a quote from Rabbi Eliezer in the Talmud, saying that "matzot are stolen on Passover Eve so that the children won't fall asleep" - though it isn't at all clear what he means.

The stolen matza began to be called the afikoman in the Middle Ages, though it isn't clear why. Also, the name for this piece of matza is a borrowed word from Greek, meaning dessert. But the Mishnah explicitly says that afikoman must not be eaten at the Seder's end.

Barekh

The Mishnah forgets to say we should eat - but does say we should recite the benediction on our food. These benedictions appear in the Talmud and are composed of mainly biblical texts.

Halel

The Mishnah only says that one finishes with praise (halel).

The early Genizah Haggadot finish after the benediction on the food, but in the Middle Ages, that short statement in the Mishnah was interpreted as meaning that one should read a collection from The Book of Psalms.

Nirtza

All the songs at the end of the Haggadah are late additions to the Passover Seder.

Some are adaptations from older texts, such as Ve-Natan Lanu Et Mamonam, but most are folk songs written for the entertainment of children in the Diaspora.

The most popular examples are:

Adir Hu, which appeared in Europe in the 15th century.

Echad Mi Yodea, which is also believed to have originated in the 15th century and is probably an adaptation of a German folk song "Guter freund ich frage dich", meaning "Good friend whom I ask."

Khad Gadya, which appeared in Europe in the 16th century. It's written in flawed Aramaic.

This concludes our quick survey of the Seder. We hope it will enrich yours and your family's holiday experience.

From: Rabbi Goldwicht [mailto:rgoldwicht@yutorah.org]

Sent: Thursday, April 06, 2006 11:44 PM

Subject: Pesach 5766 Weekly Insights by RAV MEIR GOLDWICHT

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/710800/>

Insights into the Haggadah shel Pesach

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The most difficult mitzvah on the night of the Seder, more difficult than any of the other mitzvot, is, as the Rambam says, to truly feel as if we are leaving Mitzrayim, as if we are actually going from avdut to cheirut: בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו כאילו הוא בעצמו יצא עתה משעבוד מצרים, שנאמר 'ואתנו הוציא משם וגו' ועל דבר זה צוה הקב"ה בתורה, 'זכרת כי עבד היית' (Hilchot Chametz u?Matzah 7:6).

This theme runs through the entire Haggadah. All of the meforshim of the Haggadah ask: Why don't we make a bracha on sippur yetziat Mitzrayim at the beginning of the Seder as we do before every other

mitzvah?? Based on this Rambam, which is so central to the Seder, we can answer this question very simply.? At the beginning of the Seder, we are obligated to feel as if we are still enslaved, a state that is certainly not conducive to making a bracha related to our geulah from Mitzrayim.?

The moment we finish saying 'בצאת ישראל ממצרים', however, the point where we actually feel ourselves leaving Mitzrayim, we make the bracha אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים וכו' ונודה לך שיר חדש על גאלתנו ועל פדות ? אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים?? The Chatam Sofer explains that this bracha is the bracha on sippur yetziat Mitzrayim. We do make a bracha on sippur yetziat Mitzrayim, but the bracha is made in the correct place and in the proper state-of-mind?cheirut.

This obligation to feel as if we ourselves left Mitzrayim also explains why we drink כוסות ארבע.? The Rashbam (Pesachim 99b) explains that the four כוסות correspond to the four leshonot of geulah mentioned by galut Mitzrayim: ? לכן אמר לבני ישראל אני ד' והוצאתי אתכם ממצרים ובעשתיים גדלים ולקחתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר אתכם מעבדתם וגאלתי אתכם בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים גדלים ולקחתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר אנכי יוצא ברכש גדול לך.?? Hashem told Avraham Avinu that his descendants would be subject to three stages of galut. In the first stage, B?nei Yisrael would be strangers in a foreign land. In the second stage, B?nei Yisrael would be enslaved. In the third stage, B?nei Yisrael would be subject to עבודה פרך, work of affliction.

Yetziat Mitzrayim was the reversal of this process.? The first of the ארבע כוסות corresponds to the first stage of geulah, our redemption from the afflictions of Mitzrayim: ? והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלת מצרים.? עבודה פרך, the עבודה, was lifted, but the עבדות remained.? The second of the ארבע כוסות corresponds to the second stage of geulah, our redemption from slavery: ? והוצאתי אתכם מעבדות.? The עבדות, was lifted, but we remained in galut.? The third of the ארבע כוסות corresponds to the third stage of geulah, our redemption from exile in a foreign land: ? וגאלתי אתכם מעבדות גלות.? We finally left galut.? After geulah from the three-stage galut, we can experience the fourth geulah, corresponding to the fourth of the ארבע כוסות: ? ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם וגו' והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ 'אנו'.

The ארבע כוסות also correspond to the four situations for which we are obligated to say birkat hagomel.? The siman to remember these four people is, ? וכל החיים יודוך סלה: ? ה = חולה שנתפרה; י = יורדי ים; י = יוצא מבית; ? = מדברות. When we left Mitzrayim we experienced all four of these situations, obligating us to say birkat hagomel for all four reasons.? We fulfill these four obligations by drinking the ארבע כוסות, each of which is essentially a birkat hagomel.

The reason, he explained, is that when someone drinks orange juice, for example, he finishes the entire first cup, enjoying even the last drop.? He manages to finish the entire second cup as well, albeit not as easily as the first cup.? By this time he is already sick of orange juice, and he leaves part of the third cup; when it comes to the fourth cup, he can only drink part.? With wine, on the other hand, each cup is better than the first.? It is only fitting that wine, which gets better with each cup, be drunk for the ארבע כוסות, each one of which represents a level of geulah that is better than the last: ? והוצאתי והצלת ? וגאלתי ולקחתי.

It is for this purpose?to demonstrate our current departure from Mitzrayim?that there is a minhag to put out the nicest dishes on the night of the Seder, demonstrating the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham Avinu, ? ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול.?? Another aspect of the table setting also demonstrates our transition from avdut to cheirut: there is a prevalent minhag to leave the table completely empty except for the Seder plate and silver cups of wine until 'בצאת ישראל ממצרים' is read; as

soon as the paragraph is read, everything is brought out to the table, showing that now, as we leave Mitzrayim, we possess this רכוש גדול? The theme continues: ? כלנו זקנים, כלנו יודעים את ? Even though we remember the divrei Torah from previous years, even though we know the Haggadah, we still must feel as if this is the first time we are hearing the divrei Torah and the sippur yetziat Mitzrayim, as if we are actually leaving Mitzrayim right now. In the next paragraph, the ba'al haHaggadah demonstrates this by example. ? מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי עקיבא ורבי ? These chachamim, gedolei olam, certainly remembered all the divrei Torah they had said and heard at past Sedarim, but they went all night, conducting this Seder as if it was their first. ? Truly ולהראות ולהרגיש, to show and to feel.

The idea that on the night of the Seder we must feel as if all that happened actually happened to us, reexperiencing as much of the galut and geulah as possible, allows us some insight into the idea of karpas. ? Why do we dip the karpas in saltwater?? Galut Mitzrayim began because sold Yosef. ? The Torah tells us that after throwing Yosef in the pit, his brothers dipped his ketonet pasim in blood, leading their father to cry out, !טרור טרור יוסף,?? Rashi explains that the ketonet pasim was made of expensive wool, as the passuk says, חור כרפס ותכלת, (Megillat Esther 1:6). ? The vegetable karpas symbolizes the fabric karpas, reminding us of the ketonet pasim. ? We therefore dip the karpas in saltwater, symbolizing the brothers' dipping of the ketonet pasim in blood and reminding ourselves how galut Mitzrayim began. ? (Rabbeinu Manoach on the Rambam (Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 8:2) in fact writes that the minhag of dipping the karpas in saltwater is a remembrance of the ketonet pasim that Yaakov Avinu made for Yosef, which was the underlying cause of our ancestors' descent to Mitzrayim.)

This is also why we break the matzah (יחזק) immediately after eating the karpas. ? The breaking of the matzah represents the breaking up of the family of Yaakov, which set the galut in motion. ? Once we understand the reason for the galut, i.e. the machloket between the brothers that caused the breaking up of the family, we can begin Maggid, essentially testifying to the fact that accept upon ourselves to do as much as we can to bring everyone in Am Yisrael together. ? Therefore Maggid begins with the announcement of "כל דיכפין ייתי ויכיל" Let everyone who needs come and eat with us," inviting people who we wouldn't necessarily invite under normal circumstances to join us, or providing for those who don't have matzah or nice clothing for yom tov. ? Through this we show our willingness to help others shoulder their burdens. ? Immediately after יחזק, we begin to fix the rupture in the family of Am Yisrael by performing actions and making statements that express our togetherness. ? This includes bringing the בנים together, not breaking the bones of the korban Pesach, and many other things.

Thus, at the end of the Haggadah, we arrive at the אליהו. ? In Tanach, Eliyahu is written without a ו (אליהו) five times and Yaakov is written with a ו (יעקוב) five times. ? Rashi in Bechukotai (Vayikra 26:42) explains that Yaakov told Eliyahu that he would get his ו back when he would come to announce the geulah of Yaakov's children. ? Why did Yaakov take the letter ו specifically?? Because ו represents chibur. ? This is why, whenever we deal with chibur between Jews, Eliyahu is present. ? This is why Eliyahu attends every brit milah, because brit milah creates a chibur between the generations. ? This is also why Eliyahu appears in many aggadot in Shas discussing Yerushalayim, because Yerushalayim is the place of chibur for all of Am Yisrael. ? So too, on the night of the Seder, we have a של אליהו, כוס של אליהו, which symbolizes our coming back together, our chibur, fixing the split in the family that started galut Mitzrayim.

At the end of the Seder, after we have truly felt all along כאילו עתה יצא מצרים, as the Rambam writes, we can say, "ונאמר לפנינו שירה חדשה." ? How can we call this a שירה חדשה, especially considering we sang the

exact same song last year and the year before?? This is the very point. ? We feel כאילו עתה יצא מצרים, and we can't help but spontaneously burst into songs of praise. ? For this reason, the Hallel of the night of the Seder is a Hallel said as a song, sung by people saved through the most miraculous of miracles from the most difficult and trying of circumstances. ? Such a Hallel is said while sitting, with an interruption in the middle to enjoy a festive meal, unlike the standard Hallel, because all of this is part and parcel of the gratitude we show הקב"ה.

ב.

The תורה שבעל פה is the first work of הגדה של פסח. ? When we analyze some of the tannaim in the Haggadah, we recognize a small aspect of their individual personalities by what they say or where they appear in the Haggadah.

1) R? Eliezer says, מימי לא קדמי אדם בבית המדרש? (Sukkah 28a). ? R? Eliezer was always the first to open the doors of the Beit Midrash. ? Therefore he is the first to open the Haggadah.

2) R? Elazar ben Azaryah was appointed Rosh Yeshiva in place of Rabban Gamliel, and he taught that there is a chiyuv to recall yetziat Mitzrayim at night, but the Chachamim did not accept his opinion because of his youth, despite his elderly appearance. ? Ben Zoma, however, accepted R? Elazar ben Azaryah's opinion and defended it, because Ben Zoma says in Avot, איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל אדם, regardless of his age.

3) R? Yehudah says, לעולם ילמד אדם בנו ותלמידו בדרך קצרה, Therefore R? Yehudah made simanim for the makkot: דצ"ך עד"ש באה"ב.

4) Rabban Gamliel says that מצות צריכות כוונה. ? A mitzvah without כוונה is lacking. ? Therefore Rabban Gamliel rules in the Haggadah, כל שלא אמר, ? How do we know this?? Because regarding עשו דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו וכו'. ? אמר ויאמר יקרבו ימי אבל אבי, ? עשו עשו אקומה ואהרנה את אחי. ? עשו עשו it. ? Rivka revealed to Yaakov. ? We see that כוונה אמר means כוונה.

5) Hillel teaches us in Pirkei Avot, אוהב שלום ורודף, ? הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף, ? Hillel's essence is to combine everything together. ? Thus it is only fitting that Hillel is the one who, the Haggadah tells us, would make כורך out of the bitter and the good, out of the marmor and the matzah.

ג.

The Haggadah quotes the passuk, במתי מעט כמה שנאמר בשבעים נפש ירדו, ? In this passuk in Devarim the Torah says that 70 people came down to Mitzrayim, whereas in Bereishit (46:26) the Torah says that only 66 people came down to Mitzrayim. ? The Torah itself explains that 66 came down to Mitzrayim, but we include Yosef and his two sons as well. ? The seventieth is Yocheved, whom Chazal tell us was born החומות וכו'. ? Why doesn't the Torah just say the total and leave it at that?

The גר"א explains that 66 is the gematria of גלגל (wheel). ? The גלות is גלגל. ? When we roll around? in galut, one secret is key to our survival ? to stay in the center of the wheel. ? If you venture out from the center, the centrifugal force hurls you outward. ? Therefore the Torah wishes to teach us that being in galut is להתגלגל, and someone who is rolling around must be very careful. ? Therefore we must be very careful to stay in the center and not around the edges.

Therefore, it is so fitting that when Am Yisrael crossed the Yarden after 40 years in the desert, the first place they stayed was גלגל. ? In other words, גלגל was the place where the גלות officially ended. ? The passuk in fact says, גלותי את הרפת מצרים מעליכם ויקרא שם המקום ההוא גלגל עד היום הזה, (Yehoshua 5:9). ? Once we reach Eretz Yisrael, the גלגל of galut is stopped.

7. ויאמר משה אל ד' בי אדני לא איש דברים אנכי גם מתמול גם משלשם גם מאז דברך אל " עבדך כי כבד פה וכבד לשון אנכי. ויאמר ד' אליו מי שם פה לאדם או מי ישום אלם או "חרש או פוק או עור הלא אנכי ד'. ועתה לך ואנכי אהיה עם פיך והוריתיך אשר תדבר. (Shemot 4:10-12).
 וידבר ד' אל משה לאמר בא דבר אל פרעה מלך מצרים וישלח את בני ישראל מארצו. " וידבר משה לפני ד' לאמר הן בני ישראל לא שמעו אלי ואיך ישמעני פרעה ואני ערל (Shemot 6:10-12) שפתים?
 How could Moshe Rabbeinu say, if Hashem promised him earlier, and I was to enable Moshe to speak normally, speaking with Pharaoh would be like talking to the walls. To this Hashem responded that not only would Pharaoh listen to Moshe, he would even repeat Moshe's words. Therefore, when we left Mitzrayim, not only did we leave physically, but our dibbur also left galut. This is why this holiday is called פסח. The Ari"l explains that פסח comes from the words פה שח, indicating that even though we normally believe that חסיג לחכמה, on this night, חסיג לחכמה שתיקה is specifically not being silent? כל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משוכח? It is for this reason that all of the mitzvot of the night of the Seder are performed with the mouth. We eat the matzah, marror, karpas, and afikoman, and we say Maggid and sing Hallel, showing that ever since Hashem redeemed our mouths from galut, we are ready and willing to use our mouths for the proper purposes of praising Hashem and fulfilling His mitzvot, and not for improper uses.

8. Throughout the Haggadah we find many numbers. At the very end of the Haggadah, the paytan of יודע מי יודע comes to teach us that a number is not just a number, but much more. Every number has an essence. Let us, therefore, try to understand the paytan's explanation of the essence of the different numbers.

The number one represents standing alone. Nothing can be attached to it. This represents הקב"ה, as we say in Adon Olam, והוא אחד ואין שני. Nothing is like Him and nothing can attach itself to Him. אחד א-להינו שבשמים ובארץ.

This One, א-להינו, chose to create a world in which every single creature, living and non-living, has a משפיע and a מקבל. This is the essence of the number two. שני לחות הברית, represented by the משפיע ומקבל? The first five dibrot are Hashem is the משפיע and the person is the מקבל? and the last five are בין אדם לחבירו? one person is the משפיע and the other is the מקבל.

Having a משפיע and a מקבל does not necessarily mean that there will be a connection between them. This is where the number three comes in, the essence of which is the keshet between the משפיע and the מקבל, as it says, וההוה המשולש לא במהרה יינתק? (Kohellet 4:12). This relationship between משפיע and מקבל is represented by the שלשה אבות, who demonstrated to the entire world the keshet between the משפיע and the מקבל, between הקב"ה and the world.

Once this keshet between משפיע and מקבל has been established, things can move from potentiality to actuality. This is the essence of the number four, the implementation from potential to actual, represented by ארבע אמהות, who have the ability to give birth, representing the movement from potential to actual. (Four is the most dominant number in the Haggadah? ארבע כוסות, ארבע קושיות, ארבע לשונות גאולה, ארבע בנינים? because the avodah of this night is not just to tell the story of yetziat Mitzrayim, but to feel as if we ourselves just left Mitzrayim, moving from the potential to the actual.)

Once the things have left הפועל אל מהכה, there is a certain desire to hold onto them, to retain a certain grasp of them. This is the essence of the number five, which represents אחיזה and אגודה. In Pirkei Avot (3:6) it says that even when only five people are sitting and learning Torah

together, the Shechinah is with them, as it says, ואגודתו על ארץ יסדה? (Amos 9:6). אגודה is the first step in grasping a concept. What represents this אגודה is the חומשי תורה. However, because the Torah is so deep and we cannot understand it in its entirety, we only have a very limited אחיזה. The essence of the number six is complete אחיזה, because the number six represents physicality? in our physical 3-dimensional world, there are six directions (up, down, north, south, east, and west). Physical things have these six dimensions. This complete אחיזה is represented by the ששה סדרי משנה, the חמשה חומשי תורה, which we create and pass on to future generations. Once we have אחיזה of תורה שבעל פה, we feel שביעות, the essence of the number seven. This feeling of שביעות is represented by Shabbat, when a person is שבע ורגוע.

When a person experiences שביעות, it is important that he remember to connect to that which is above him. This is the essence of the number eight? connecting to that which is מעל לטבע. What represents this is the brit milah, which creates the kedushah of the בן אדם and connects him to the בורא עולם. For this reason, the root of the word שמן is שמונה, oil. שמן represents מעל לטבע, because oil always floats on the top of the water. In Bayit Rishon, they would anoint the כהן גדול with שמן המשחה. In Bayit Sheini, when they no longer had the שמן המשחה, they would anoint the כהן גדול with the שמן בגדים.

Once a person has attached himself to that which is above him, to הקב"ה, he can be reborn. This rebirth is the essence of the number nine, represented by the תקיעת שופר. It is interesting that תקיעת שופר, according to the mishnah in Rosh HaShana (33b), is שלש שלש שלש, three sets of three blasts. These nine tekiot wake us up and bring us back to life, essentially allowing us to be born anew. Being reborn leads a person to עשירות and שלמות, the essence of the number ten. What expresses this is the עשרת הדברות, which encompass כל התורה כולה.

After a person reaches עשירות and שלמות, he must be very careful not to lose it. What expresses the חסר בניגוד לשלם and the חסר בניגוד לטוב is the number eleven. The gemara in Sanhedrin (29a) says, מניין שכל המוסף? The number twelve is עשר וכו' 'עשתי עשרה יריעות, and the number eleven is עשתי עשר. By adding a letter, we are in reality subtracting. What represents the חסר and the רע is the eleven stars in Yosef's dream, which brought about the machloket and the separation that brought about the galut Mitzrayim.

When this happens, you need to come together all over again. This is the essence of the number twelve? achdut. This is why there are twelve שבטי ישראל, together making up the שבטי ישראל.

The secret through which we come together is the thirteen attributes of Mercy, הקב"ה. י"ג מדות הרחמים. He promised that when we come together and say the י"ג מדות הרחמים, He will forgive us.

This is why thirteen is the gematria of the number thirteen. Through the י"ג מדות הרחמים, we return to שבשמים ובארץ.

Chag Kasher v'Sameach!

Meir Goldwicht

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