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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **PESACH** - 5768

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Pesach - The Great Shabbos mailed-by torah.org
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The Great Shabbos

This Shabat is the great Shabat – Shabat Hagadol. Shabat Hagadol this year falls on erev Pesach. It is really most appropriate that Shabat will be already part of the Pesach experience for it is Shabat that truly provides us with the key to the appreciation of Pesach and freedom.

On the first Shabat Hagadol – tradition teaches us that the Exodus itself that year fell on a Thursday – Jews took their paschal lambs and tied them to their bedposts to prepare for the Pesach sacrifice that would herald their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

The lamb was a symbol of Egypt, of its gods and empire and vaunted powers. The taking of the paschal lamb was therefore most risky and dangerous for the Jews. Apparently freedom and independence cannot be gained without risk and danger.

Only a people willing to risk comfort and even life itself for its freedom and independence earns that freedom and independence.

Thus it was the actions of Israel on that first Shabat Hagadol that guaranteed the deliverance from bondage and Egyptian slavery that very same week. The importance of the paschal sacrifice is directly traceable to this idea of risk taking and danger inherent in any drive for freedom and self-improvement.

One of the reasons that this Shabat is called Gadol – great and large – is because of the importance of this lesson in how freedom is achieved. Freedom is a great and noble goal both in terms of personal and national life. But the Torah wished us to know its price and cost. Hence the Shabat Hagadol that precedes Pesach.

Shabat itself is a great risk taking adventure, independent of the story of Egypt, the Exodus and Pesach. Being idle and economically non-productive for one-seventh of the week appears to be a dangerous course for one attempting to earn a living for himself and one's family. Shabat has always been a sacrifice for its observers. Its benefits were not easily known or describable to outside observation. Especially in a world where for millennia Saturday was considered to be an ordinary day of the work week, Shabat stood out as being an anomaly and an irrational waste of time and opportunity. Therefore Shabat itself was always seen in Jewish life as being gadol – the defining issue of Judaism itself.

The seeming sacrifice of Shabat observance itself achieved Jewish self-identity and true internal independence over the centuries, in a fashion that has been unequaled in the human experience.

It is the greatness of the Shabat, its ability to bring serenity and hope to a person and a family that sparks all other positive activities in our lives. As we say in Lecha Dodi – “For it – Shabat – is the source and core of all

blessings.” Freedom without Shabat only leads one to different and more subtle forms of tyranny but tyranny nevertheless.

That is why aside from all of the physical, cleaning and food preparations for Pesach there comes Shabat Hagadol to prepare us mentally and spiritually for the great holiday of redemption.

Shabat shalom Chag kasher v' sameach
Rabbi Berel Wein

From:<shul@yimidwood.org> Subject: [yimidwood] erev pesach on shabbos

Some Practical Guidelines for Erev Pesach:

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Option 1

One should make hamotzi on bread on a plastic table-cloth (use pita bread to avoid crumbs).

At least a kebeitzah of bread should be eaten by each person (1); say, somewhat less than one small pita per person.

The bread should be eaten at the same table as the rest of the meal (2).

Pre-school age children can be given matzoh instead of bread.

After having finished eating the bread, carefully remove any crumbs and flush them down the toilet, and continue with the remainder of the meal.

Kol chamira should now be said.

Bread should not be eaten after 10:16 AM; the house should be rid of chametz by 11:35 AM.

Dessert should be served after bentching. (3)

Option 2

If option 1 is not practical, then another legitimate approach is to use “matzoh ashirah”, e.g. egg matzoh or grape juice matzoh. Grape juice matzoh is preferable to egg matzoh (4). Kol chamira should be said.

Each person should eat a substantial amount of matzoh – at least a whole matzoh. (5)

One should not eat matzoh ashirah after 10:40 AM. (6)

If the meal continues after 10:40 AM, then dessert should be served after bentching. (7)

Matzoh ashirah should not be eaten on pesachdige utensils. Paper and plastic utensils should be used. (8)

Seudah Shelishis

According to most poskim seudah shelishis must be eaten in the afternoon. By this time one may not eat chametz, matzoh, or even egg matzoh. (9)

Therefore, seudah shelishis must be fulfilled with meat, fish, eggs or the like. (10) Although there are views that seudah shelishis requires mezonos, or even bread, in this case where it is not possible we rely on the views that it can be fulfilled with other foods.

Those who eat gebrukt can eat cooked – but not baked - foods made from matzoh meal; e.g. kneidlach. However, mezonos foods may not be eaten in the last quarter of the day, so as to leave an appetite for the seder.

Therefore, kneidlach and the like should not be eaten after 4:00 PM.

If one eats the morning seudah early enough, it is possible to finish the seudah, take a short break to learn, take a walk etc., and then wash again. In this way, one will have fulfilled the requirement of seudah shelishis even according to those poskim who require that it be eaten with bread – at least according to the view that seudah shelishis can be eaten before noon.

NOTES:

1. Because the berachah of al netilas yadayim requires that a kebeitzah (=2 kezseisim) of bread be eaten

2. See Biur Halacha to 177:2, from which the following conclusions emerge:

If the bread portion of the meal, and the remainder of the meal, are eaten on the same table (even if on a different tablecloth) – then it is all considered one meal and the beracha of hamotzi continues to exempt all the other foods that make up the meal – until dessert. Regarding dessert itself, however, see below.

If, however, the bread portion of the meal, and the remainder of the meal, are eaten on two different tables – then it is a matter of dispute between Rishonim whether or not the beracha of hamotzi can extend to the non-bread part of the meal. It is better, therefore, to avoid this situation. (If one does find oneself in this situation, we apply the rule that we are lenient in doubtful cases regarding berachos, and no further berachos are required – until dessert.)

3. Since it is a matter of dispute whether the berachos of hamotzi and of birkas hamazon can apply to the dessert in a case such as this where all the bread has been cleared off the table before dessert was eaten; see *ibid*.

4. Since according to the Rambam only the former is matzoh ashirah.

Obviously, from a practical standpoint, option 2 is more convenient. There is, however, a certain halachic trade-off, since there are views (that of the Vilna Gaon, for one) that maintain that the prohibition to eat matzoh on erev Pesach extends even to matzoh ashirah. However, the prohibition involved is rabbinic in any case, and one can rely on Rabbeinu Tam and the authorities who follow him who do allow matzoh ashira to be eaten on the morning of Erev Pesach.

5. Firstly, because the beracha of al netilas yadayim requires a kebeitzah of bread/matzoh to be eaten and, secondly, because egg matzoh and grape juice matzoh are pas habaah bekisnin on which the proper berachah would be mezonos unless they are eaten in sufficient quantity to be considered the basis of a meal.

6. Although we gave the z'man for stopping to eat chametz as 10:16, in regard to matzoh ashirah one can certainly follow the Vilna Gaon's view that hours should be reckoned from sunrise to sunset, rather than the Magen Avraham's view that they be reckoned from dawn to tzeis hakochavim. Hence, the z'man extends to 10:40.

7. Since one can no longer eat the matzoh, the situation is one of siluk yadayim min hapas which forms the subject of the dispute mentioned in note 3.

8. R' Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l, cited by sefer erev pesach shechal beshabos.

9. Ashekanzic custom is not to eat egg matzoh (or other forms of matzoh ashirah) after the z'man when chametz is prohibited has arrived, out of concern that the admixture of other substances to the dough may cause it to become chametz very quickly, before it finishes baking.

10. This is preferable to merely eating fruit, which is less substantial; see Orach Chaim 291: 5.

<http://www.613.org/rav/notes1.html>

Rav Soloveichik ZT'L Notes (Volume 1)

Asking for Goods Lecture of February 1, 1975

This lecture deals with "asking for goods from Egypt, placing them upon your children, emptying out Egypt. You cannot force people to love you, but you can command respect according to your worth. If there is respect, there will be no contempt; act in a dignified manner and it will precipitate respect. The Egyptian discovered suddenly that the slaves of yesterday were charming today. During the year of negotiations, they found Israel charming!"

The man, ish, Moshe was great in the eyes of the officials and the common people. This respect built up in the year of negotiations. At the beginning, Pharaoh treated Moshe and Aaron with humor, almost contemptuously. Pharaoh declared, "Go mind your own business!" Later, the touch of humor is gone. Pharaoh realized that it was a serious business, but there was no reverence. Each time that a plague struck, it interrupted the economy. Just before the last, it is stated that Moshe was great in the eyes of the people. Moshe had ruined the Nile, the economy etc., and yet they respected him, and yet greater was the admiration.

Also, unique to Egypt was the fact that they respected him as a human being, not a super being. The Egyptians, being pagans, could have deified him, but the Almighty ruled a different relationship. They looked upon him,

not as a G-d in a pantheon, but as an ish (a man). It was the first time in pagan history that a "man" was considered "great." Previously, their kings were considered as gods. However, Moshe and Aaron taught the Jews never to idolize any man, no matter how great. It was therefore later, when Moshe failed to return on time (their calculation) from Mt. Sinai, that they said in fear, "Ze ha'ish" (that man). They feared because they knew he was just a mortal man.

There are three aspects in the change of feeling of the Egyptians towards the Jews.

(1) They saw Moshe's love and tenacity for the people. When Moshe was with the Almighty, he was the defender, with the people he was the accuser.

(2) Humans pass the right to take vengeance upon others for wrongs committed upon them (to refuse to punish criminals is to turn society into a jungle). Two purposes of punishment are to punish for the crime, and secondly, a catharsis to rehabilitate. However, the catharsis rarely works.

Consider what would have been if Pharaoh had declared, "All right, go ahead," and the Jews had walked out. How about the years of slavery, the killing of the children etc., all would have been forgotten. They would have walked out with merely a thank you. This would have been the greatest tragedy! However, this depended on the Almighty. That is why it is written, "He will not let you out until I smite Egypt with all my wonders."

Otherwise, it would have been comical. It was a lesson that human blood which is spilled cannot be forgotten. As long as people are not punished for crimes, there cannot be freedom. G-d wanted to teach Pharaoh that the Jews are an abandoned race.

(3) The conduct of the Hebrews themselves! During Greek and Roman eras, the populace was in great fear of slave rebellions. The rebellions were bloody as exemplified in more modern times, such as in France and in Russia. The feudals were always haunted by such occurrences, for slaves rebel at the worst times of crisis.

Pharaoh's own officers said, "Don't you see that the land is ruined?" His own prestige was in trouble because his officers spoke to him abusively-a far cry from the autocracy he held previously. During the three days of darkness, they (Israel) could have destroyed the entire populace, certainly could have could have robbed the treasury. They, certainly, had many grievances. There would have been no resistance. But instead, they left it to G-d. Who taught them? Moshe! Consider during the night of the exodus, they could have taken vengeance. Instead, what did they do? They ate the korban pesach and sang Hallel.

Thus, after the plague of darkness, the Egyptians realized how great Moshe and the people were. The people of Egypt started to change towards Israel before the requesting of jewels. It states that the women borrowed from their women friends because they were closer, and knew one another more intimately. After the ninth plague, however, we find man borrowing from his friend.

Yad Chazaka (a strong hand) is the plague dever (smiting the cattle). It ruined the agriculture and the economic resources, such as horses and cattle. But the emptying of Mitzrayim took away the riches, leaving the land bankrupt, and showing that you cannot prosper from slavery.

Egypt was famous for its manufactured clothes and its fabrics; the people should have worn these items, but they didn't. "You shall put it on your sons and your daughters, but no display of the brocades and beautiful things on yourselves." G-d's intention was not to promote vanity, but to discipline the Egyptians. He did not want them to display it. "I allow you to place it upon your children!" A child is the most envious person on earth when he sees things on other children which his parents cannot afford to give to him. Children feel the pain! The children of Egypt had suffered pain, and therefore it said, "Place it on your children." These are the two purposes of the riches-punish the Egyptians and give your children an hour of joy.

Right after the giving of the ten commandments, G-d commanded them to build the Mishkan (the Tabernacle). Cannot a small house accommodate the Almighty? G-d wanted from them the very items they took to

demonstrate that they were not miserly. "Lift your eyes to G-d and be happy with what he gives you!" The people responded well.

<http://rygb.blogspot.com/>
2007

Jewish Action

"Some English Haggados: Short Reviews and Snippets"

Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer

The English-reading public has been blessed with an extraordinary array of Haggados. We have come a long way from our forefathers' story of the Exodus, which was largely based on the Maxwell House Haggadah (which, of course, is still available, for the Traditionalists among us...). Here are some brief reviews and excerpts from some recently published, widely available Haggados, in no particular order:

1. Studies on the Haggadah From the Teachings of Nechama Leibowitz Edited by Yitshak Reiner and Shmuel Peerless Urim Publications, 2002

The Leibowitz Haggadah will appeal to the greatest extent to the many students she acquired through her Gilyonot on the Torah. The work is very didactic, and pertains mostly to the sections of the Haggadah that are based on pesukim in the Torah – reflecting the material's source in Dr. Leibowitz's shiurim and writings on that material. There are interesting personal vignettes from Dr. Leibowitz's life scattered through the Haggadah.

Nechama liked to refer to the four questions to demonstrate the difference between a kushyah and a she'eilah. The four questions, she pointed out, are referred to as the Arba She'eilot rather than the Arba Kushiyyot. This is based on the way in which the questions are framed. Each of the four questions follows the same format: On all other nights we __, but tonight we __. According to Nechama, this format represents a kushyah, as opposed to the simple she'eilah format which would be: Why on this night do we __? The she'eilah is a simple informational question. The kushyah, on the other hand, takes note of something that deviated from the norm... The kushyah is the fundamental pedagogic instrument of both the Pesach Seder and of Biblical exegesis. Nechama's insight turns what many think of as the child's part of the Seder ritual into a sophisticated paradigm for Torah learning.

The Staff

The staff was used in the performance of signs in Egypt and at the sea. According to the midrash, its function changed in the process.

Lift up (Harem) your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it (Shemot 11:16).

The Egyptians said: "Moshe could not do anything without the staff with which he smote the river and brought all of the plagues." When Israel came to the sea, G-d said to Moshe: "Cast aside your staff so that they not say that you could not split the sea without the staff." As it says: "lift up your staff" (Shemot Rabbah 21:9).

Questions: 1)How does the midrash interpret the word "lift up" (Harem)? 2)What compelled the midrash to interpret it in this way?

Suggested Answers: 1) The midrash translates the word Harem as "throw" rather than "lift." 2) This interpretation is based on the fact that G-d did not tell Moshe to "lift up the staff and stretch your hand over the sea." It seems from this that the staff was cast aside and that Moshe only used his hand in parting the sea. According to the midrash, this was to wean the people of their dependency on the staff as an integral element in bringing signs and wonders.

2. The Chazon Ish Haggadah Compiled by Rabbi Asher Bergman; Adapted into English by Rabbi David Oratz and E. van Handel Mesorah Publications, 2006

Among the Haggados in this review, this is the only one that we find it necessary to caution our readers against. The Haggadah is replete with strange anecdotes of dubious credibility, sprinkled with a liberal amount of gratuitous swipes at the State of Israel and its leaders. The following excerpts are among the more innocuous!

On the seventh day G-d completed His work

A true Shabbos observer not only abstains from forbidden work, but also believes that Hashem created the world and that on Shabbos he abstained from creating.

The Chazon Ish ruled that one who keeps Shabbos according to Halachah but denies any of the Thirteen Principles of Faith has the law of a gentile with regard to touching wine. "There are Jews," he said, "who have glatt-kosher kitchens but false beliefs. Their food may be eaten, but their wine may not be drunk."

We cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our fathers.

Prayer has always been the Jewish people's weapon.

Once, when the Holocaust was discussed, the Chazon Ish told his brother-in-law, R' Shmuel Greineman, "Heaven hid the matter from me. Had I known, I would have stopped it. When the Germans were poised to enter the Land of Israel, I knew and I stopped it."

In 5708 (1948), the Arab Legion shelled Jerusalem day and night, killing many Jews, The Chazon Ish told his sister Rebbetzin Tzivia Greineman, "The Brisker Rav requested we do something about the shelling. More than that I am forbidden to reveal."

3. Light of Redemption: A Passover Haggadah Based on the Writings of Rav Kook Gideon Weitzman Grow Publications/ distributed by Urim Publications, 2005

Rabbi Weitzman writes: The commentary here is based on the writings and thoughts of Rav Kook, particularly those that appear in the second volume. However, other sources have been used as well. All translations are my own and, while all the ideas here are based on Rav Kook, they are not necessarily direct translations."

The Simple Son

In the Torah this son appears before the wise son. The verse, "What is this?" is taken from the book of Shemot (13:14) and the question of the wise son appears only later, in the book of Devarim (6:20).

The message here is that one needs to be simple before he can be wise. The initial stage of learning is to understand the basic concepts and to ask simple questions. The simple son wants to know what to do and he receives a clear answer. The wise son looks deeper for meaning, rhyme, and reason. This knowledge is important but it cannot be attempted before one has grasped the basic understanding of what to do.

Therefore we are obliged to give thanks

This starts the first half of the Hallel that we recite at the Seder. A question is asked as to why we do not recite the blessing over the Hallel during the Seder. After all, when we say Hallel as part of our prayers, we do make the blessing.

We could answer that on all other occasions that we recite the Hallel, we do so as part of our religious obligation. When we remember that G-d commanded us to observe the festivals due to past events, we recite the Hallel. As it is a religious requirement, we recite the blessing.

However, at the Seder we do not recite the Hallel only as a religious requirement. Rather, if we see ourselves as coming out from Egypt we feel a deep appreciation to God. The Hallel is a natural reaction and a way to show our thanks and praise of God. The Hallel is an essential response to having relived the story of the Exodus. Therefore we do not recite the berachah before saying the Hallel; we simply turn to G-d to praise Him.

4. The Pesach Haggadah through the Prism of Experience and History Rabbi Berel Wein Shaar Press, distributed by Mesorah Publications, 2004

This Haggadah is, as the title of a book of Rabbi Wein's stories, puts it best, "Vintage Wein." The commentary is wonderful, but the Haggadah (which is written in first person, an innovation that I had previously seen) is outstanding when the comments are personal.

I have always enjoyed looking at Haggados from different periods of Jewish life and history. On of the more fascinating things that I have discovered in perusing these Haggados is the illustrations that are used to represent the evil son. He is always portrayed as wearing the most stylish and provocative clothes of that period, be it Roman armor and toga, Renaissance Italy, Dutch feathery, Cossack Eastern Europe, foppish Victorian England, or Roaring Twenties America. These depictions of the evil son may well be inaccurate and even unfair, but they reflect the belief that being too radically up to date and "cool" is not really the Jewish way. The wise son always seems to be dressed more conservatively than his evil brother. Apparently, appearances do count in this world of ours, even in our illustrated Haggados. It is true that a person may be wise and pious and yet dress wildly differently from the norm, and a person may dress in rabbinic garb and have "his tzitzis showing on the outside visible to all while his heart may be far away from his Father in Heaven," in the words of R' Menachem HaMeiri (Sotah 20b). Yet, how a person looks and dresses often says a great deal about his character, beliefs, and behavior. One can also note how the garb of the wise son has changed over the centuries of illustrated Haggados.

In life, all of us know that many times it is the small things that count. A great event can be ruined or diminished by a small flaw in planning or execution. I have often seen how the wonder of transcontinental flight in a jumbo jet is erased by a minor discomfort or a surly flight attendant. God, therefore, knowing our human frailties all too well, arranged for a "perfect" Exodus and sojourn in the desert for the Jews. Even this perfection did not prevent the people from complaining, but there is no doubt that it was God's intent, so to speak, to please us completely.

5. From Bondage to Freedom: The Passover Haggadah with a commentary illuminating the liberation of the spirit By Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. With Rabbi Hirsh Michel Chinn, MSW And Rabbi Benzion Twerski, Ph.D. Shaar Press, distributed by Mesorah Publications, 1995

This was my personal favorite among all the Haggados included in this review. It is chock full of original, brilliant – yet realistic and relevant – psychological and

philosophical insights. The treatment of Hebrew names is somewhat curious (Phineas?), but that does not detract from the work's utility and vitality.

We cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our fathers.

... We said that we cried out onto [sic] G-d to be merciful and relieve our distress and that he heard our prayers. Yes, but why all the years of suffering? Why did he not intervene earlier?

While this question does not always have an answer that satisfies our logic, I did gain some insight on this in a pediatrician's office.

A mother had brought her infant to the doctor for immunization. As soon as the child saw the white-clad doctor he began crying, remembering only too well what had befallen him at this man's hands just several months earlier.

The mother assisted the physician by forcefully restraining the child, who clawed and kicked here. If we could enter the child's mind, we would no doubt discover that he was violently angry at his mother who had suddenly betrayed him, and who, instead of protecting him from harm as she always did, was now collaborating with this brutal aggressor who was going to stab him with a sharp instrument.

The moment the physician withdrew the needle and the mother released her restraining hold, the infant embraced her and clung to her for dear life. But why? Was she not the very person who had just betrayed him and had subjected him to such intense pain?

Obviously, the infant's trust in the mother was so great that even though he thought she had allowed him to be hurt, he nevertheless turned to her for comfort, protection and relief from the pain. This is precisely how we relate to God. Although we cannot understand why He subjects us to suffering any more than the infant can understand his mother's behavior, our trust in Him is so great that it is not shaken by our own suffering. Even when we angrily protest, we are nevertheless aware that G-d is a loving and caring Father, and that is why we appeal to Him in our distress...

A kid, a kid

... Even people of great spirituality must exert caution when motivated by zeal. The Torah states that Phineas was handsomely rewarded for avenging the desecration of the Divine honor when he slew an adulterer who publicly profaned the Torah. Years later, in his other identity as Elijah, he fled into the desert because he could not tolerate the Israelites' idolatrous behavior, but the Midrash states that this time G-d rebuked him for his zeal. The commentaries ask: Why was he rewarded for his initial zealotry but chastised for its repetition?

The answer, they say, is that a single act of zeal may be assumed to be genuine, and a person who overcomes his natural passivity to avenge injustice is praiseworthy. However, if he commits repetitious acts of zealotry, it must be suspected that his motives are not purely in the interests of righteousness and justice, but are tainted by a trait of intolerance. Phineas's first act of zealotry was therefore considered virtuous, but a repetition thereof was suspect as being less than one hundred-percent unadulterated zeal.

In the Had Gadya hymn, the first offender, the cat, is the real villain, having attacked the innocent kid, and all subsequent characters can be seen as heroes, each one meting out just punishment for what it saw as an evil act. Why are they then all punished, and why does G-d intervene at the end to punish the Angel of Death? It is because no one is beyond acting out of personal interest, and even the Angel of Death, a totally spiritual being, is considered to be acting sadistically rather than carrying out the mission for which he was created...

6. Rav Shlomo Zalman Haggadah: The Pesach Haggadah with insights, halachic rulings and customs of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. Compiled by Rabbi Yisroel Bronstein. Adapted into English by Rabbi David Oratz. Mesorah Publications, 2005

While Reb Shlomo Zalman zt"l was one of the most (if not the most) universally admired and beloved Poskim of our generation, the Haggadah that has emerged – primarily from his Halachic perspectives – is a bit dry. It will appeal mostly to those readers interested in Reb Shlomo Zalman's psakim and minhagim, and may not be that useful for readers looking for a Haggadah that will galvanize them on the night of the Seder.

The mitzvah of eating matzah also comes to remind us about the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. Maharam Mintz writes that ordinarily, bread requires a previous "sourdough" as a starter, creating a never-ending chain of sourdough, dough, sourdough, dough, etc. Eating matzah teaches us that it is possible to start at the beginning and bake a "bread" that satiates even without a pre-existing sourdough. This hints at a world for which there was absolutely nothing before its creation.

The matzah must be eaten before midnight (*chatzos*). According to Rav Shlomo Zalman, this ideally should be considered the midpoint between nightfall (not sunset) and dawn – about twenty minutes before the time listed in the calendars (Minchas Shlomo Vol. II 58:19).

7. The Palace Gates Haggadah: Parables for the Pesach Seder. Compiled by Rabbi Shalom Wallach. Feldheim Publishers, 1995

8. The Redemption Haggadah: Commentary of the Dubno Maggid. Commentary translated and adapted into English by Menachem Silver. Feldheim Publishers, 2005

Both of these Haggados are wonderful resources for fans of parables (and who is not a fan of a good parable?). Nevertheless, they are somewhat impractical for the Seder. A parable often takes a long time to relate, following a long time to read, so by the time the reader finishes reading the parable he may be several paragraphs behind the other Seder participants – and by the time he finishes relating the parable (and its message!), his listeners may be getting antsy. Best to read up ahead of the Seder and try to compact the material efficiently. The following excerpts are essentially the shortest pieces from The Palace Gates Haggadah. (By virtue of its being an anthology, it contains more material than, and somewhat overlaps, The Redemption Haggadah.)

Afterwards they shall go forth with great possessions.

Our Sages tell us that the "great possessions" promised to Avraham Avinu at the Covenant between the Portions was the Torah which his children received at the foot of Mt. Sinai. But if this is indeed true, why were we commanded, before leaving Egypt, to ask the Egyptians for money and goods?

The Maggid of Dubno answered with one of his most famous parables.

A wealthy merchant needed a young boy to deliver packages to his customer's houses. It was vacation time, so he offered the job to his friend's son with the promise that he would be handsomely paid with a purse full of silver coins. The boy felt fortunate for being given the opportunity, and he worked earnestly for the entire vacation. When the time came for him to take his leave, it occurred to the merchant that a purse full of silver coins was too small a payment for the splendid services the boy had rendered him. He therefore put the silver aside, and instead wrote out a check for an amount many times the total value of the silver. But the boy, instead of thanking his employer for his generosity, sullenly stuffed the piece of paper into his pocket and went home weeping.

The next day, his father called at the merchant's house and said to the wealthy man: "You have been most generous to my son and I want to thank you. But the boy is still a child and does not understand the value of a check. All he knows is that he expected to receive a bag filled with shiny new coins, and that instead he got a plain sheet of paper. Therefore, I would be most grateful if you would let him have at least part of his wages in silver coins"...

Joyful in Your sacrificial service.

... This need to seek outside entertainment is a sign of inner emptiness. It is also the subject of a parable given by the Maggid of Dubno.

A father and son were traveling together, and stopped at an inn on the way. The innkeeper served them a heavily spiced meat dish. The father refused to eat it, but the smell of the spices wafted into his son's nostrils and made his mouth water.

"Why don't you eat, Abba?" the boy asked. "The smell of this food is irresistible!"

"That's the problem, my son," the father replied. "The meat is spoiled. It has already become putrid and begun to stink. The spices testify to this. If the meat was good, not nearly as much spice would be needed!"

9. The Heritage Haggadah. Eliyahu Kitov. Feldheim Publishers, 1999

While The Heritage Haggadah contains an excellent commentary, it is even more valuable – and very much so – for its 95 pages of introductory material and its 107 pages of four appendices. The introductory material on all aspects of the preparations for the Seder, the other observances that precede the Seder, and the structure of the Seder; and the appendices: "A Compendium of Midrashim" and "Those Who Would Devour Yaakov: Persecution and Blood Libels," are phenomenal contributions to the experience of Pesach.

Customs of the Rabbis

In many Jewish communities, it was customary for rabbis and other halachic authorities to delay the start of their own Seders, until long after the rest of the townspeople had begun theirs. Compared to other nights of the year, many more questions of law are liable to arise on the Seder night, for the laws forbidding *chametz* are more stringent than the laws regarding other types of forbidden foods, and punishment for violations of these laws is more serious, too. Were the rabbis to have begun their own Seders along with everyone else, they would not have been able to issue halachic rulings. Once they had made *Kiddush* over wine, they would be prohibited from ruling, since anyone who drinks a *revi'is* (86 grams) of wine is considered not to be in complete control of his faculties.

It is told of two of Jerusalem's great rabbis, Rabbi Shemuel Salant and the Saba Kadisha, Rabbi Shelomo Eliezer Alfandri, zt"l, that they came up with a brilliant way of helping to deal with this problem. They would pray *Ma'ariv* at the earliest possible time, quickly begin and finish their Seders, and then would rest for half an hour, in order to free themselves of the influence of the wine they had drunk. Then they would make themselves available for questions from their congregants, though at that time, practically everyone in the town would just be starting to recite the Haggadah. Congregants who had questions earlier, while the two rabbis were rushing

to complete their Seders, would take them to other rabbis who had delayed their Seders!

The Haggadah in Any Language

Since the Haggadah's primary purpose is to teach the children about the Exodus, and to publicize the miracles and wonders to all those attending the Seder, the leader must explain the Haggadah's different elements and supply additional explanations, in a way that is understandable to all those present. He must be especially careful to make sure that the children understand, as well as the Seder participants who are unfamiliar with the language and the expressions used by our Sages. Outside the Land of Israel, where Jews do not usually speak *lashon haKodesh* – Hebrew, the language of the Haggadah – one should recite the Haggadah in the language of that particular country, for that is the language which is familiar to everyone.

On this point, the *Beis Yosef* writes (*Orach Chaim* 473):

It should be recited in a language that the women and children understand, or it should be explained to them. This was the practice of R' Yitzchak of Londerres [one of the *ba'alei hasafos* who lived in London], who would recite the entire Haggadah in English so that the women and children would understand.

It is said of the *Chasam Sofer* that he would recite the entire Haggadah in both Hebrew and German.

10. The Historical Haggadah Nachman Cohen Torah Lishmah Institute, 2002 (also available in Hebrew)

Rabbi Dr. Cohen's Haggadah is a treasure trove of very interesting and engaging material, much of which takes a refreshing, novel approach to the Haggadah. Historical context and insights, along with comprehensive analyses (such as his tabular correspondence of the twenty-six lines of *Hallel HaGadol* to the twenty-six generations from Adam until the Exodus) make this a truly innovative work.

HaMakom

Referring to G-d as *HaMakom* (the place) began in Talmudic times. G-d is never referred to by this noun in the period of Tanakh. The Midrash explains that *HaMakom* infers that "God is the space (place) of the universe and the universe is not His space (place)." What exactly does this mean, and more importantly, what gave rise to the use of this connotation?

The answer can be elucidated with the aid of ancient Greek thought. Greek philosophers were enthralled with the problem of change. Simply stated: How is change possible? If an object, x, truly changes into another object, y, this would mean that when x changes into y, x is annihilated and y is created from nothing. The Greeks rejected the notion of creation *ex nihilo* [something from nothing].

Several attempts were made to solve this problem... *Paramenides*... argued that change was but an illusion. Change was logically impossible. Hence, it does not occur. The world is really composed of an unchanging oneness.

Paramenides had a student named *Zeno*. To reinforce his master's point, *Zeno* devised many paradoxes which showed that change was not possible...

The Paradox of Space

To exist, an object must be confined within a physical area. The room I am sitting in is within my office. This is within my home, which is on my street in Yonkers, which is in New York State, which is in the United States of America, which is within North America, which is on Earth, which is in our solar system, which is in the Orion Arm of the Milky Way Galaxy, which is in the Virgo Supercluster, which is in the visible Universe. But within what is the Universe contained? Since we are faced with an infinite regress, that is, everything must be contained within something else, and since there cannot be a last item which can exist without being contained, this proves that space is but an illusion.

The Rabbinic Response

The Rabbis responded to this last paradox of *Zeno*. Their response consisted of calling G-d "*HaMakom*." By this they meant that "the world is encapsulated within G-d and not that G-d is encapsulated with the world." It was G-d who created space. Only physical entities require space [and time] for existence. God, the Creator of space [and time] does not.

This response was important. The fallacy of the Greeks was that everything had a physical component. The pre-Socratics did not accept the notion of a totally spiritual being. The use of the term "*HaMakom*" serves to emphasize that the Greek scope of the Universe was incomplete and insufficient.

Opening the door for Eliyahu

...In this regard, the following excerpt from *Josephus* (*Antiquities*, Book 18: Ch. 2) is of some interest:

2. (29) As *Coponius*... was exercising his office of procurator, and governing Judea, the following accidents happened. As the Jews were celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which we call *Passover*, it was customary for the priests to open the Temple gates just after Midnight. (30) When, therefore, those gates were first opened, some of the Samaritans came privately into Jerusalem, and threw about dead men's bodies in the cloisters; on which account the Jews afterward excluded them out

of the Temple, which they have not used to do at such festivals, and on other accounts also they watched the Temple more carefully than they had formerly done.

While *Josephus* gives no reason for the Temple gates being opened at Midnight on *Pesach*, there is not apparent reason to doubt his account... it is interesting to consider that our custom of opening the door after the meal might be as ancient as the Temple.

11. *Touched by the Seder: The Pesach Haggadah with soul-stirring stories and commentary* Rabbi Yechiel Spero Mesorah Publications, 2006

Touched by the Seder, part of Rabbi Spero's popular *Touched by...* series, is not just stories. It is a warm, homey, and ultimately uplifting work. It too, as the *From Bondage to Freedom Haggadah* (above, #5) is written in the first person, adding to its aura.

...The symbolism of the *kittel*, as perceived by the *Tiferes Shlomo*, *Rav Shlomo* of *Radomsk*, is perhaps the most striking, and powerful. *Rav Shlomo*, as he donned his *kittel* before the Seder would declare... And then he would pause and begin to cry, "Heilige Bashefer, may all the *neshamos* that join us here tonight find the proper *tikkun* (rectification) for their needs."

In other words, the *Tiferes Shlomo* implied that when one wears a *kittel* he is representing all the *neshamos* from generations past; all those who have gone to the next world now come to join us at the Seder. *Zeides* and *bubbies*, *opas* and *omas*, *sabas* and *savtas*, and *grandpas* and *grandmas*. Tonight, at the Seder, they come to *shep nachas* from their offspring.

The Haggadah states: "Bechol dor vador chayav adam liros es atzmo k'ilu hu yatza MiMitzrayim. In each and every generation one is obligated to view himself as if he went out of *Mitzratim*." But there is another depth of meaning – "Bechol dor vador, together with each and every generation." As we don our *kittels*, we sense that our ancestors have joined us to celebrate the past and, even more, to anticipate a glorious future.

The Wicked Son

...Let us examine the *pesukim* which introduce us to the *rasha*. In these *pesukim* we find the word *Vehayah*, which, the *Gemara* tells us, always signifies joy. Isn't it odd that the word "joy" is associated with the *rasha*?

But there is reason to be joyous. Think about it – this *rasha* could have been anywhere tonight. But instead, as uncomfortable as it may be for him to sit among family members who do not think highly of him, he is at the Seder. And he cares enough, and is brave enough, to speak his mind in front of the group!...

...Let us take a look at the word *rasha* itself, at the letters that form the word, and another layer of meaning will be uncovered. The *Belzer Rebbe* revealed a penetrating insight. The letters *resh* and *ayin*, spelling *ra*, are found at the outside ends of the word *rasha*, but a *shin* is what fills the middle. On the outside he appears to be *ra*, but on the inside he is just a little boy crying for help. The *shin* has three crooked branches sprouting forth from the same root. Perhaps it is telling us that at the very core of this "rasha" is a confused child who is linked forever, eternally, to the root of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*, never to be detached. And that is another reason for *simchah*.

12. *Haggadah Simchas Yaabetz* By Rabbi David Cohen Translated by Rabbi Zev Meisels Mesorah Publications, 1993

Rabbi David Cohen is one of the foremost *Poskim* in the United States, and at the same time a true scholar and an insightful person. Hence, his Haggadah (whose publication preceded all the others reviewed here) includes aspects that resemble Rabbi *Wein's Haggadah* (#4 above) – the insights; the *Rav Shlomo Zalman Haggadah* (#6 above) – the *halachos* and *minhagim*; and *The Historical Haggadah* (#10 above) – the historical and contextual explanations.

We were slaves. It was because Egypt was so enmeshed in carnality that in Egypt the Jews were told (see *Sotah* 12a, *Hoshivah B'Aperion*) to marry their wives with *chuppah*. *Chuppah*, in which the bride and groom are sequestered in a private place, symbolizes the togetherness of the couple and their constancy, and thus separated the Jews from the Egyptians, who were renowned for their marital laxity.

(My friend, *Gavriel Iseon n'y*, pointed out that historically the Egyptians were the first to use yeast to prepare bread. This fits with their history of immorality, for the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, is compared by *Chazal* to yeast in dough.)

Nishmas. The *Machzor Vitri* (*Seder Leil Pesach L'Rashi*, quoted in *Siddur Otzar HaTefillos*, *Tikkun Tefillah*) writes that some claim that *Nishmas* was written by *Shimon Kipah* or *Keifa* (whom the Christians know as the apostle *Saint Peter*); this is followed by the emphatic statement that it is not so, and that anyone who repeats the story will be obligated to bring a sin-offering when the *Beis HaMikdash* is rebuilt.

The *Machzor Vitri* is referring to the popular legend that *Shimon [Peter]* was actually a *Tanna* who, in order to distance a nascent Christianity from Judaism, pretended to become a Christian, and instituted laws for Christians designed to accentuate the break from Judaism, so that no Jew would find any similarity between the two religions and be fooled by it (see *Jellinek's Beis HaMedrash*,

Volume VI). It is evident that the Machzor Vitri disbelieved the tale; however, R' Yehudah HeChassid (Sefer Chassidim #91) refers to Shimon Keifa as a righteous tzaddik who had followers who were evil, indicating that R' Yehudah held the story to have basis in fact. Some say that he was known not as Shimon Keifa, Simon the Rock, but Shimon Kipa, Simon of the Dome, because he confined himself to a dome (or basilica) to avoid desecrating Shabbos, and lived on bread and water.

From the Gemara (Pesachim 118a) we can deduce that Nishmas dates from the time of the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah, the members of the Great Assembly, for we find Nishmas mentioned as part of the Haggadah (according to R' Yochanan), whose precise text was probably established by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah...

...It is very odd that on weekdays we recite only the Yishtabach portion of Nishmas. The source for this division is unclear, for the Gemara mentions only Nishmas in its entirety.

13. The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and comments. Edited by Rabbi Menachem Davis Mesorah Publications, 2005

Finally, last, but certainly not least, we would be remiss were we not to mention this superb tool – part of the series of Interlinear tracts that Rabbi Davis has compiled and continues to compile. He and Mesorah Publications deserve much credit for this truly ingenious format. It not only enhances the understanding of the beginner, but even that of the "scholar," who may not generally "take the time" to glance at a translation that is on the opposing page or even line – after all, that is time consuming and beneath his dignity to boot! I myself have had my davening enhanced by Rabbi Davis' work, and highly recommend it.

Posted by YGB at Wednesday, May 02, 2007 1 comments Links to this post

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Four Who Are One Harav Yosef Carmel

In the past, we have discussed the "four sons" of the seder based on the passages in the Torah that relate to them. We explained that the rasha asks about the Korban Pesach's relevance because he is unwilling to renew the covenant with Hashem. The chacham is an intellectual, who investigates everything with his logic and is willing to accept only that which makes sense to him. He is only one step above the rasha. The meaning of tam in the Torah is of one with complete righteousness. Yet even the tam has questions about the redemption of the first-born donkey. The greatest tzaddik is he who does not ask at all. Even he has to open his mouth to eat matza, known as lechem ohni, the bread upon which much is said. All four sons are invited to our seder.

Let us take a look at a new approach based on the above principles. One of the concepts related to the Korban Pesach is the partnership and unity that surround it. From the fact that everyone is described as shechting it we learn that one's agent is considered as if the appointer did the action (Rashi to Shemot 12:6). The Pesach is also eaten within a group setting known as a chabura, which is big enough to finish the animal in one night.

On the other hand, any attempt to blur the differences between different Jews is artificial and harms the richness that flows from the distinctions. The following approach allows us to "have our matza and eat it too." It is possible that every Jew includes within him all of the four sons. Everyone has some type of inkling of a doubt or question on some matter of belief. The road to full and unquestioned belief is a long one, which has emotional difficulties along the way. The theoretical thought of lack of belief is something that everyone has dealt with, meaning that there is some rasha in all of us. Every Jew is required to use healthy logic to analyze his steps in life. At the end of the process we realize that we need to rely on Chazal to provide ultimate guidance, but "only to a drunk does the world seem straight." Everyone sometimes acts with unquestioned faith. The question is only how frequently. He overcomes his physical weaknesses and brings expression to the fact that he is created in Hashem's image. His tam element, even if often dormant, is always present. On rare occasions one can even serve Hashem with a "lofty silence" or a "thunderous noiselessness," thus reaching the level of one who does not know to ask.

If all Jews have all of these elements then we are all connected in a real unity despite our apparent differences. Only if we actualize a strong unity in the style of "go assemble all of the Jews" (Esther 4:16), as we read thirty days before Pesach, is it possible to celebrate the festival properly. Let us hope that this message will help increase unity and a meeting of the hearts this coming seder night

Ask the Rabbi

Question: What do you suggest we do on Erev Pesach this year, which is on Shabbat, regarding when and what to eat?

Answer: People must determine the most practical solutions among the valid solutions to the challenges of Erev Pesach on Shabbat, according to the halachic possibilities their rabbis present. One practical assumption is that people will use only Pesachdik and/or disposable utensils, keeping remaining chametz separate. Some form of bread is needed for the first two Shabbat meals and is preferred for seuda shlishit (Shulchan Aruch, OC 291:5), which should be held in the afternoon (ibid.:2). Since the prohibition to eat chametz begins after "four hours" (around two hours before halachic midday- consult a local calendar) something must give. Let's take a meal-by-meal look.

Friday night meal - Halachically, almost anything goes. Those who don't want to worry about keeping chametz around can eat matza according to most poskim. If one has the minhag not to eat matza from the beginning of Nisan, matza ashira, often called "egg matza," is an alternative. Shabbat morning meal - If one finishes eating the chametz part of the meal by the end of the 4th hour, accomplished by davening early, matters are halachically simple. (How to get rid of crumbs or leftovers by the end of the 5th hour is beyond our present scope.) Matza is desirable for situations when it is hard or nerve-racking to deal with chametz. However, Chazal forbade eating matza on Erev Pesach, according to most, from the beginning of the morning, so that when we eat it at the seder, it will be clear that it is for the mitzva (see Rambam, Chametz U' matza 6:12). However, one may eat matza that cannot be used for the mitzva (Shulchan Aruch 471:2), primarily, matza ashira, which is kneaded with liquids other than water (see Pesachim 35a). If it contains no water, most Rishonim rule that it cannot become chametz, and one would seemingly not need to rush. Yet there are two issues. Firstly, as Ashkenazim are stringent to treat matza ashira as possible chametz and are permitted to eat it on Pesach only in cases of great need (Rama 462:4), the time issue reawakens. (Some poskim rely on the Noda B'yehuda (I, OC 21) that it is sufficient to be wary of matza ashira only after midday of Erev Pesach). Secondly, matza ashira may have a status of pat haba'ah b'kisin, similar to cake, making it a questionable substitute for challa. (Igrot Moshe OC I, 155 explains that this is not a problem on Shabbat but still seems to prefer challa when convenient. To see Rav O. Yosef's preferred solution, see Yechave Da'at I, 91). Seuda shlishit (ss)- Two preferred opinions about how normally to perform ss conflict this Shabbat. One is to eat bread at ss. The other is to have ss after midday, at which time chametz and matza are forbidden, and matza ashira is problematic for Ashkenazim. The Rama (444:1) says that we eat other foods such as fruit or meat at this ss. The Mishna Berura (444:8) cites another solution: divide the morning meal into two so that one can fulfill ss on challah or matza ashira at that time. He requires a break between the two meals to avoid a problem of an unnecessary beracha, but he does not say how long it should be. Opinions range from a few minutes to half an hour; some suggest taking a short walk in between (see Piskei Teshuvot 444:6). One who is not usually careful to have challa at ss throughout the year need not consider this idea. He can eat a normal ss for him (no bread) in the afternoon, preferably earlier than usual to leave a good appetite for the seder. Even those who are stringent about ss may follow the Rama over the Mishna Berura's suggestion, which is somewhat counter-intuitive and not without halachic problems. Sephardim, who can use matza ashira, must do so before three hours before sunset (Shulchan Aruch, OC 471:2).

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"THE SEDER GUEST"

by Stewart Weiss

* * *

Time, it's been said, is often like a sharp gust of wind that can move you and turn you with its invisible force, and then disappear as quickly as it came. But time, it seems to me, is also like a river, flowing from one end of eternity to the other, winding through ages and places in unstoppable regularity. And while one current passes by and is soon beyond our grasp, the river of time stays right where it is, and you can step right up to its banks any time you feel like it, just by closing your eyes and dipping in. Right about now, every spring before Passover, I smile with sweet mystery at my Seder with Reb Pinchas.

I was a junior in college back in 1975, part of that mixed-up generation that had soured on the idealism of the sixties but hadn't yet caught the Yuppie Fever of the eighties. I was going to school in northern Pennsylvania, changing majors as fast as best friends, undergoing that rite of passage known as "finding yourself."

When spring vacation approached, I thought about going home, like I usually did, but eventually decided against it. My folks were going to Palm Springs, I had plenty of work to catch up on, and I kind of liked the way Pennsylvania changed its seasons right before your eyes. So I opted to spend the break at school, and I looked for some part-time work to pass the time. I noticed an interesting ad on the campus bulletin exchange, "Jewish student wanted for spring work," and I gave them a call.

It turned out I was applying for work at a matzah factory. Now, about all I knew concerning matzah was that you eat it on Passover, that it tastes only slightly better than the box it comes in, and that cream cheese and jelly is the best way to disguise it. But they told me I didn't have to know a whole lot in order to get the job, and I soon found out why.

* * *

They put me to work cleaning the dough out of the huge vats where it was kneaded and prepared for baking, making sure that every last particle of flour was removed before the vats were scoured. This plant was like one giant bakery, where time was of the essence.

There were three main areas of the factory. First, there was a mixing room, where the matzah ingredients were blended together by large kneading machines, quickly turning the flour and water into a doughy consistency that would produce the flat, unleavened bread.

Then there was the cutting room, where the dough was taken automatically to be cut and shaped into squares, flattened and then perforated with dozens of tiny holes that would spread the heat evenly and quickly during baking.

Finally, conveyer belts brought the sections of dough through large ovens, where intense heat baked them as they passed through, emerging as the finished product: matzah, the bread of affliction, "poor bread," the key reminiscence of the Exodus from Egypt. They were grouped eight together, sealed in cellophane, and boxed and labeled as soon as they cooled.

I marveled at the efficiency of it all. I had always pictured matzah-making as a painstakingly slow and involved process, performed by hand by elderly scholars in long, black coats. This factory was completely automated, a mass of whirring machines that combined age-old ritual law with the modern need to supply thousands of homes with fresh matzah for Passover. While much matzah was still made by hand, I was told, the majority of Jews in America ate machine-baked matzah, which was both cheaper and more plentiful than the personally-baked product.

The foreman, one Paul Thom (I never did figure out if he was Jewish or not, but he sure knew his matzah) explained to me that the most crucial aspect of the production was time. He cautioned that the whole baking process could not exceed eighteen minutes, because after that time the dough starts to leaven and is impermissible for Passover. The entire line had to be completed before the eighteen minutes, and, like clockwork, the machines automatically shut down before the deadline. A series of staccato bells would sound, the kneaders would stop kneading, the mixers would stop mixing, the rollers would stop rolling, the ovens would shut down and cool off. The workers had a ten-minute break, while I and a few other hardy workers got down to business.

We climbed into the vats, and scraped every last piece of dough out. We cleaned the hooks, and the trays, and even the conveyer belts. We had only seven minutes to do it, because there was a two-minute steam cleaning that preceded each new cycle. Between our scouring and the steam, not even an infinitesimal particle of dough remained that might have become chametz, that forbidden leaven that was our principal enemy...

* * *

I worked hard for those two weeks of vacation, as Passover approached. I had never been very religious, but it felt good being part of something Jewish, knowing that in hundreds of homes in the days ahead, other Jews would be depending on my work to eat these unusual flat breads. I thought about writing up the whole thing for my student paper, a kind of culture-clash piece about how religion keeps up with modern times.

As the day of Passover drew close, the activity at the factory intensified. We were told that, for the first time, there was a chance that the Soviet Union might allow matzah to be brought into the country. Ten thousand pounds of matzah were being prepared nationally, and we were given an allotment of a thousand pounds to contribute. We worked almost around the clock, and when we tired, one of the Rabbis would smile and say, "You'll rest when the ship sails!"

Even the eve of Passover was no exception. We were asked to work as long as possible, with various people leaving throughout the day, depending upon where they lived and their travel time home. I told the foreman that because I lived close by, and had no family to prepare for, I could stay until closing, just a couple hours before the sun set. I volunteered to actually shut down the plant, and lock everything up for the holiday.

As the day progressed, the skies became progressively darker, and a Pennsylvania storm began to move in. This prompted many of the workers to leave even earlier, not wishing to be caught in the rain. When the Rabbi announced that this would be the last run, I was one of only a handful of employees left. I said goodbye and good holiday to my co-workers, and set about to clean the last few vats. "Don't forget to close the lights," said Mr. Thom. "The doors will automatically lock behind you."

There was a strange silence when everyone had left. The huge machines had come to a rest, their reward of sorts for the holidays, after all their hard work in preparation. The lightning outside seemed to silhouette the vastness of the place, created by men but powered by a desire to fulfill an ancient, Divine decree. The sound of the rain on the skylights told me that darkness would be upon me faster than I had anticipated.

I quickly closed all the lights, made sure that every machine had been shut down, and grabbed my coat. But as I made my way for the door, there was a tremendous clap of thunder, and a stunning bolt of lightning lit up the room. Suddenly I heard a crash, almost like a tree falling over my head, and the whole factory seemed to shake for just a second.

Determined now to get back to the relative safety of my dorm room, I rushed to the door and pushed on the exit bar. Nothing happened. The lock remained frozen in place. I pushed again, and still no response. And then it dawned on me; all the doors were electrically locked, automatically operated! I flipped the light switch by the door; the darkness remained. The storm had knocked out all the power in the plant, including the power to open the doors.

I spent a few frantic, futile minutes trying other doors, looking for low, open windows, searching for an escape. There was none. Even the phones had been rendered useless. As I pondered my situation, trapped alone in the factory with several hundred remaining boxes of matzahs, I could only think of that novel I was assigned to read, 'No Way Out.'

* * *

About two hours into my ordeal, I heard a strange tapping noise coming from somewhere in the plant. At first I was just slightly terrified, imagining that certain reptilian creatures were now asserting their hours of supremacy, and challenging my intrusion on their time. But as the tap, tap, tapping continued, and as my frustration grew, I decided to look for the source of the noise. A hero, I knew, was someone too tired or cold to care much about the risks.

It was now pitch dark in the plant, except for the flashes of lightning which illuminated the place at regular intervals. With each brilliant burst of light, I proceeded to make my way slowly toward the source of the noise. As I got closer, I perceived that it was coming from somewhere above me, perhaps from the storage rooms near the roof. I had only been back there once, and then by elevator, but I remembered seeing a staircase at the very rear of the plant. I gingerly felt my way there, totally unprepared for what I would find.

As I climbed the stairs, holding on to the rail for dear life, I no longer heard the tapping sound. Now, however, I heard a low, humming noise, almost an imperceptible singsong. When I reached the top of the landing, afraid to go on but even more scared to back down those stairs (I counted 112), I saw a dim light coming from beneath one of the rooms at the end of the hall. I gathered up my courage and pushed open the door.

I almost fainted with surprise, and no little relief, to be greeted by an elderly man with a broad smile on his face. "Come in," he bellowed, with the faintest tinge of an elusive accent. "What a marvelous wonder to find you here!"

By the light of two long candles burning on the table, I beheld an incredible scene. Here was a man, dressed in a flowing white robe, sitting cross-legged upon a pillow. In front of him was a low, oriental-style table, set as if for a banquet. A medley of delicious smells rushed at me, reminding me of how hungry I was, and my appetite moved right in, pushing the fear away completely.

"Who are you?" I asked sheepishly, glad to have a human, any human to talk to.

"My name is Pinchas, young man," he said, "but my friends -- and I think you'll be one -- call me Reb Pinchas. I was just about to begin my Passover Seder, and I would be honored if you would join me. Like a lot of things," and now he winked with a grin, "it goes better with two."

"But who are you? What are you doing here? I've never seen you. Do you work here? Does the foreman know...?"

"Relax, son. Mr. Thom knows all about me. You see, I used to be the foreman here, a long time ago, before they decided to make the matzahs by machine. Then, it was all hand-crafted, a real art, and I was the supervisor. But when they automated the place, I became kind of obsolete, and had to retire. But they gave me this place to live, as a kind of good deed to an old man who had served the company well. Now, since I'm the one with seniority here, I want you to be my guest. Tell me about yourself."

I told him my name, and how I had come to be stuck in the factory -- he smiled at the wonders of automation -- and how I had followed the tapping noise.

"Oh, that was just me, chopping walnuts for the charoses, the mortar-like food that we eat at the Seder. I've got to do all my preparation myself, you know, from the soup to the grinding of the horseradish root to the mixing of the salt water. But I'll tell you what. Let's try some of your machine matzah tonight, if you can find your way back to retrieve some."

Borrowing one of the candles, I retraced my steps and took a couple boxes of matzah. I was fairly overwhelmed by the whole scene, but, on the whole, it seemed better than spending what could be a couple of days alone in the

dark. I knew that the foreman would return in two days, when the first days of the holiday were over, but that could be an eternity without food and companionship.

* * *

When I returned, I saw that the old man had set a place for me at his table. I sat down next to a large pillow, relaxed, and we began to talk.

"Have you been to many Seders?" asked Reb Pinchas.

"Oh, I've been to a lot, but mostly they were just eat-fests, huge banquets of great food with a few vague prayers and blessings thrown in for good measure."

The old man smiled. "This may be a new experience for you, then."

And we proceeded to talk about, well, to talk about life, for a very long time. Reb Pinchas asked me about freedom, and what it means to me. I told him it means independence, and making my own decisions. He agreed with that, but he pointed out that true freedom is based on law and routine, moving from anarchy to established patterns of behavior in a civilized setting.

"I'll bet America has more laws than any other country around," he said, "and yet look how free a place this is. Laws don't stifle freedom, they protect it."

"Judaism isn't so different, either. Why, some people look at the Torah and all its commandments and feel suppressed, when they should really feel liberated. After all, it was the Ten Commandments that freed the whole world from lawlessness and injustice. It brought seder, order, to civilization."

A lot of what he had to say made sense. We talked a lot about the matzah, and how the rabbis debated whether or not it stood for slavery (the bread of affliction) or was a symbol of freedom to lean back and eat in luxury.

"Matzah is like life," Reb Pinchas said, "it all depends upon your perspective, as to whether it's a blessing or a burden. The minute you start taking it for granted, you may as well be under the taskmaster's whip again."

He asked me what my goals and future plans were, but, like most college students, I didn't have too clear an answer.

"You know, son," he said, between bites of the unleavened bread, "when we say 'Next year in Jerusalem' we aren't only speaking in the geographical sense. Every person has to have a dream, an ultimate Jerusalem where they hope to end up. You have to plot your life's journey as soon as you can, set a course and follow it. Like matzah, as you well know, if you wait too long it begins to leaven and is no longer suitable or fulfilling. The clocks are running, and none of us can afford to waste precious minutes."

I enjoyed reading from the Haggadah that Reb Pinchas gave me. I could still sing the Four Questions -- that much I had retained -- and I ended up doing most of the narration. We stopped all along the way to ask questions of each other and discuss. I think that's how you really get to know someone, by asking them questions.

"You know, it's a mitzvah to ask questions at the Seder," Reb Pinchas said. "Most years, I have to ask myself the questions, and that sounds pretty senile. So I'm beholden to you for sharing this night with me and letting us really ask the questions."

I remember so vividly discussing the four sons. "Some people think this is about four separate people," said Reb Pinchas, "but I say it's about four sides of the same person. After all, at different times in our life, we're wise, or rebellious, uninformed, even apathetic. But as long as we know we have the capacity to be wise, that's half the battle in getting there."

There was a lot of that upbeat philosophy at the table. I remarked that the mix of symbols at the Seder, the bitterness of the horseradish and the sweetness of the wine, seemed to show that life contains all the elements of emotion, from deep depression and the feeling of being trapped to unbridled song and the sensory satisfaction of spring. It was just a question of making some kind of seder, order, of it all.

"There's that chacham in you!" smiled my friend. "You're talking like a scholar now!"

* * *

Even the matzah tasted good that night. Most of all, though, the taste that remains with me still is the wine. From a dusty, round bottle, we poured cup after cup of the delicious grape wine. I poured for him, and he for me, and I know I've never tasted anything so sweet and satisfying before. "Been brewing this since Egypt," Reb Pinchas said with a twinkle in his eyes, and it must have been the wine that made those songs sound so on key and pleasant, even from my lips.

After talking long into the night, and eating and drinking our fill, we awoke barely in time to begin preparing for the second Seder. "I insist you stay," my new friend urged. "We haven't quite finished explaining all the mysteries of the universe yet!"

And so for two nights and two days, in the upper room of a dark factory, we lit up our little world with a friendship and a sharing that taught me more than any professor has, or will. I not only learned about a heritage I hardly knew I had, but I learned that I fit in, that I wasn't an outsider, but a valuable, real player in this game of life, Jewish life. When I put on Reb Pinchas's white robe the second night -- he said it was my turn to be the leader -- I really felt royal, as a leader should. I never knew -- until then -- that I had it in me.

"For about four thousand years you've had it in you," said Reb Pinchas. "It just took a little wine and song to get it out!"

The wine was something out of this world. I fell asleep clutching a bottle of it in my hand, and I must have slept the better part of a day, because I awakened to the sound of voices downstairs. Rushing to the lower level, I saw Mr. Thom, who realized only once he saw me that I had been locked inside for the last forty-eight hours.

"I've heard of devotion to work," said the foreman, "but this is beyond the call of duty. You must be famished, scared!"

"Not really," I explained. You see, I found the old man upstairs. We had two wonderful Seders together. He taught me a lot about Passover, and about myself. All in all, I'd say it changed my life!"

Mr. Thom had a confused look on his face, but smiled when he saw the bottle of wine in my hand. "You must have been drinking one l'chaim too many," he said. "I don't know what old man you're talking about."

He seemed to be totally unaware of Reb Pinchas, and his association with the company, so I insisted he come upstairs and meet him for himself. But when I threw open the door to our little banquet hall, the room was completely transformed. No table or pillows or Reb Pinchas remained. Only boxes of matzah supplies, and machine parts, piled in a corner of the room. I looked at the boxes, searching in vain for a trace of the Seder, and I looked at Mr. Thom, who, after all, I hoped would re-hire me next spring.

I just kind of shrugged my shoulders and said, "You're right; it must have been the wine." And then I remembered the wine, still in my hand, and I smiled a knowing smile that none in the world could have erased.

The years have passed since that fateful Passover. Now, I conduct my own Seder with my own children gathered around the table. They ask good questions, those little chachamim, the kind my wife and I are hard-pressed to answer. But every time we're just about stumped, I pour the tiniest bit of Reb Pinchas's wine into our cups and, somehow, we seem to find all the right answers.

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www.tzemachdavid.org/gedolim/jo/tworld/rziemba.html

Martyred Rav of the Warsaw Ghetto loyal chassid of the late Gerer Rebbe, giant of Torah scholars hip in his own right - Reb Menachem Ziemba
by Moshe Ziemba

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Reb Menachem Ziemba 5643/1883 - 5703/1943

"Shabbos, the third day of Chol Hamoed Pesach 5703.

All the houses around Kupiecka 7 are burning. The tongues of flame are licking at our hideout. Inside there is a quiet but desperate struggle. Because of the heavy smoke and immediate danger of fire, there are some who want to leave. The Rav, however, does not want to leave and asks us to try and put out the flames. He begins carrying the water himself. We listen to him and do not leave.

By noon, the entire building is engulfed in flames. The air in our hideout is so thick with smoke that it is nearly impossible to breathe. The fire has already reached the stairwell and if the stairs collapse we would be trapped in our attic as had happened to so many others. We leave with the Rav. But where do we go? The murderous SS are most certainly standing in the street waiting for the flames to flush their victims out into their arms. We go down into the cellar knowing beforehand that we can't stay there long. We decide to try to get across the street to the building where the Volia Rav, Rav Ber, is hiding.

During a momentary lull in the shooting, when it seemed safe, Reb Menachem Ziemba's daughter Rebbetzin Rosa Weidenfeld (daughter-in-law of the Tshubin Rav) is able to peer out of the cellar. Not noticing any police, she calls for us to follow her across to the neighboring house. She runs across first and then motions with her arm. Tragically we misunderstand the signal. Believing it to be safe, we begin running across. The Rav is first, holding his five year old grandson Yankele Ber (also grandson of the Ozehev Rav) by the hand. We follow. Suddenly we hear wild screams and gunfire coming from the ruins of Naleuki 39. For a moment we couldn't orient ourselves to what was happening. We see the Gaon only a few steps ahead of us, falling down. We can't go any further. The gunfire is becoming heavier and we are forced back into our cellar.

Until the late afternoon hours we can't tell for certain what has occurred. We find his holy body at the courtyard gate. The catastrophe has befallen us.

The terrible news is with incredible speed spread to all neighboring hideouts. In spite of the great danger, a number of minyanim gather. A beis din is set up and decides to bury the Rav temporarily in a grave in the courtyard of Kupiecka 4.

In the middle of the night, eerily lit by the dark light of the smoke covered flumes, we buried the Rav.

(From an article by Rabbi Avraham Ziemba.)

Early Years

Reb Menachem was born in Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, on 13 Elul, 5643 (1883). His father, Reb Elazar, passed away while Menachem was still a young boy and the orphan was brought up in Warsaw by his grandfather Rabbi Avraham Ziemba. Reb Avraham had been a chassid of the Kotzker Rebbe and a student of the Chiddushei Harim, and now was a follower of the Sfas Emes. He was totally committed to the philosophy of Kotzk - that is, a passion for truth. This he instilled in his grandson. He taught Reb Menachem not to become involved in pilpul or dialectics but to strive constantly to understand the core of the problem at hand.

At the same time that Reb Menachem was charting his own course in the "sea of the Talmud," he was being saturated with Chassidus, of the Gerer genre. He was constantly brought to Ger by his grandfather. There he found a way of life that he cherished his entire life. Although he was also a gaon in chassidic thought, he always remained a simple chassid. Even in later years when he was world-renowned, in Ger he was just one of the many thousands that came to learn from the Gerer Rebbe, and to absorb the kedushah they felt in his presence. World-famous and idolized by others, in Ger he was never put on a pedestal. He was called by his first name by everyone, as though all who came to Ger were his equals. But that was exactly how he felt. For years he refused to sit at the Rebbe's table, an honor usually reserved for the gedolim who would come to Ger. After he became a Rav in Warsaw, some of his friends felt that the dignity of his position demanded that he be addressed with the title "Rav." When Reb Menachem heard the plan, he spoke against it. He felt that it would effectively cut him out of the fellowship of the chassidim. A compromise was

reached. Among "foreigners" he would be given the honor due him. But among his own - the chassidim of Ger - he would remain simply "Menachem."

The Warsaw Connection

Living in Warsaw enabled Reb Menachem to come in contact with all the great Torah personalities of the day, both those that lived there and those that were passing through the capital city of Poland. He made it his business to talk to every gadol he could reach, whether from Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, or Galicia, to discern and comprehend their method of study. Indeed, from the few sefarim he left, we see how he incorporates and synthesizes different methods into a synergistic whole that is uniquely his own. In the words of Rabbi Mendel Kasher (written in a eulogy upon learning of Reb Menachem's death): his bekius (encyclopedic knowledge) was similar to that of the Gaon of Rogatchov, his amkus (depth) similar to that of the Avnei Neizer, his clarity to that of the Ohr Some'ach, his ingenuity to that of the Chiddushei Harim, his pilpul to that of the Beis Yitzchak and his creativity to that of Rabbi Yosef Engel.

His relations with the gedolim were those of mutual respect. For example, the Gaon of Rogatchov, who was not known for his patience with younger students, had a special love for Reb Menachem. They exchanged hundreds of letters and whenever the Gaon was in Warsaw he asked that Reb Menachem come and talk with him so that "I don't forget how to speak the language."

Youthful Years of Growth

When he turned eighteen, he married Mindel, the only daughter of Reb Chaim Yeshaya Tzederbaum, a wealthy merchant from Praga. As a condition of the marriage, his father-in-law promised to support him for twenty years in order to allow him to devote his entire time to the study of Torah. These twenty years were always remembered by Reb Menachem as the happiest time of his life. All his needs were cared for and he was able to study for twenty hours a day, seven days a week, interrupted only for krias haTorah on Mondays, Thursdays and Shabbos. He once confided that during those twenty years, he wrote more than 10,000 pages of chiddushei Torah. When his father-in-law died in 5680, he wrote and published a sefer, Totzaas Kcaim, on the laws pertaining to carrying on Shabbos, in his honor.

Even during this time of relative quiet, Reb Menachem's fame began to spread. Rabbi Meier Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, so astounded by Reb Menachem's genius, begged him to befriend his own son-in-law, Rabbi Avraham Luftbier, who lived in Warsaw. Reb Menachem agreed, and the two young men soon became fast friends. They constantly corresponded and exchanged chiddushei Torah. When Reb Avraham Luftbier died at a tragically young age, Reb Menachem published the correspondence exchanged between the two friends. The volume was called Zera Avraham (Seed of Avraham), and was dedicated to his friend who had left no children of his own.

When his father-in-law died, Reb Menachem's wife tried to continue the hardware business left her by her father. Reb Menachem was soon forced to help out in the store. Many towns and cities offered him a position as Rav but he refused them all, saying that he had more time to study working in the store than as a Rav. When someone mentioned that between customers Reb Menachem takes a moment to study a piece of Talmud Yerushalmi, Reb Menachem corrected him saying that while studying the Talmud Yerushalmi he takes a moment to wait on a customer. Every young talmid chacham who came to Warsaw felt it incumbent upon himself to take the time to travel to Praga and visit Reb Menachem in his store so that when he went home he could say that he spoke divrei Torah with Reb Menachem.

The Gerer Rebbe's Man

Reb Menachem was totally devoted to the Gerer Rebbe, the Imrei Emes. He would not become involved in the smallest matters without first consulting the Rebbe. The Rebbe, in turn, respected and honored him. When the Rebbe asked him to become involved in kehillah affairs, although it was against his nature since it would disrupt his study time, he at once acceded. He was appointed the representative of Praga to the Kehillah Council in Warsaw. The majority at that time was anti-religious but the respect and esteem in which Reb Menachem was held allowed him to assuage some of the anti-religious feeling in the council.

Asked how he explained his shift into politics, he said, "The last Mishnah in Berachos states that initially all blessings in the Temple were ended with the words 'Blessed is G-d from the world,' but after the heretics began to undermine the people's faith and claimed that there was only one world, the ending was changed to 'Blessed is the G-d of Israel from the world to the world.' Reb Menachem explained that initially the Rabbis and Sages were concerned only with the World-to-Come - the spiritual world. The present world, they felt, would take care of itself. But the heretics came and argued that there is only one world - that is, for each group. Since the Rabbis had chosen the spiritual world as their domain, the heretics would brook no interference in the affairs of this world, which belonged to them. That is when the Rabbis decided to say 'from the world to the world' and not take the present world for granted. Just as Torah and mitzvos are the controlling factors in the World-to-Come, so must they also be in this, the earthly world."

Another time, when asked how a holy man such as himself could sit in the council and constantly listen to diatribes against religion, he answered, "In the Haggadah the Wise Son is placed right next to the Evil Son. Why? Because the Evil Son needs the closest possible surveillance. Letting down one's guard even for a moment might prove fatal."

In 5684 Reb Menachem lost his son, Moshe Yehudah Aryeh, at the age of 19. The young boy was already known as an illui (genius) in the same mold as his father. As a memorial to his son, Reb Menachem published a volume, Gur Aryeh Yehudah, containing the boy's chiddushim together with some correspondence between father and son.

A Reluctant Leader

During the years 5690-95 (1930-35), the world economic depression affected Reb Menachem as well. His store, never very successful, was forced to close. He was offered the position of Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, but, after having secured a visa and a ticket, turned it down saying that he wanted to go to Jerusalem only as a simple Jew. After the untimely passing of Rabbi Meier Shapiro, he was offered the position as his successor as both Rav of Lublin and Rosh HaYeshivah. For unknown reasons, this also never came to pass.

In 5695 he, together with Rabbi Yaakov Meir Biderman, brother-in-law of the Gerer Rebbe, and Rabbi Avraham Weinberg, was appointed to the Warsaw Rabbinate. He now became one of the foremost spokesmen for Orthodox Jewry in Poland. He was not only involved in the day-to-day political activities of the Kehillah, but a new facet of his greatness was uncovered. He became a posek halachah l'ma'asah (a decisor of practical halachah) answering questions in applied Torah law from all over Poland and the world. Although he keenly felt and accepted the responsibility that was thrust upon him, he always regretted that he now had no time to study and write his chiddushei Torah.

From the first moment of the founding of the Agudath Israel movement he took an active part in all its functions. At the first Knessiah Gedolah, he was not yet forty when he was chosen to serve as honorary secretary in the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. At the second Knessiah Gedolah, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski agreed to serve as chairman of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah only if Reb Menachem would continue in his position. At the second Knessiah Reb Menachem was only forty-five years old and therefore felt that he should stay in the background.

At the third Knessiah, Reb Menachem was at the height of his fame. He spoke twice to the full assemblage and each time was greeted with hushed silence and awe. His second speech, in retrospect, seems almost prophetic. He spoke first about the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem - sanctification of the name of G-d. Not only when one is forced to choose between religion and death is there a sanctification, he declared, but also each and every moment that a Jew overcomes adversity and is able thereby to glorify the name of G-d. He then spoke about Eretz Yisrael and how it too can serve as a medium for sanctification of His Name - Kiddush Hashem. He declared that the Sages tell us that if one is to know the glory of Jerusalem let him see what the prophet says: "And I will be for it Ne'um HaShem a wall of fire surrounding it." From this, they say, one can recognize the glory of Jerusalem. Ne'um HaShem is placed here in the middle of the verse, not at the end as is usually the case. Here it translates as the "words of G-d," that is, the words of G-d will be as a wall of fire surrounding Jerusalem. The glory of Jerusalem is not in architectural or technological achievements, but only in the words of G-d.

Light in the Darkness of War

With the outbreak of the war and the tragic events that followed, Reb Menachem pulled all his energies together and became the single most important moral force in the ghetto. In the darkest days of the ghetto, he strove to bring a note of optimism and hope into the lives of the people. He constantly railed against those who seemed to be lost in despair. He was fond of quoting the Sfas Emes: "And I will take you out from under the burdens (Sivlot) of Egypt. Sivlot is from the same root as Savlanut - passive acceptance. The redemption can come only if one refuses to accept the diaspora, refuses to make peace with his circumstances.

He set up secret places for the study of Torah - yeshivas, Talmud Torahs and Bais Yaakovs. At great personal risk, he would constantly visit these holy places in cellars, attics or bomb shelters in order to strengthen those who studied there. He himself continued to write his chiddushim. He wrote an entire work on the laws pertaining to the sanctification of G-d's Name - Kiddush Hashem. One page was introduced with the following notation: "Written on the day my dear wife was taken from me. She always sacrificed herself to bring up our children in the lap of the Torah and allowed me to immerse myself in the holy Torah." Even in the depths of his own despair, he could not stop writing chiddushim.

He was given two opportunities to escape from the ghetto. Once, through the efforts of Reb Chaim Israel together with the Sternbuch family of Switzerland, he was sent a Costa Rican passport and citizenship papers. His last name, however, was misspelled - Ziember instead of Ziembra. This was enough excuse for the authorities to disallow the papers. Another time, he and the only other two surviving members of the Warsaw Rabbinate, Rabbi Shimshon Shtockhammer and Rabbi David Schapiro,

were suddenly summoned to the Judenrat. They were told that the Catholic Church was willing to rescue them. The three refused to go saying that although the Jews in the ghetto do not need the Rabbinate anymore, the mere fact that the Rabbinate is still among them may give the Jews some more strength to carry on.

Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5703 was declared as a public fast for penitence and prayer. Reb Menachem spoke that day to the many people that gathered at his home. He spoke with a fervor that bordered on the unearthly. He again exhorted the people not to lose hope. He interpreted the verse, "Hashem knows the way of the righteous, and the way of the wicked is lost," in a novel manner. It is the way of the righteous to say, "Hashem knows." He knows what He is doing and therefore we must have faith. But the way of evil-doers is to say "All is lost," that is, to sow pessimism and despair.

That Pesach as in previous years, he was concerned that there should be enough matzoh and wine so that all who wanted could partake in the Sedorim. He set up a committee to set aside enough supplies for everyone. As one of the more prominent Jews in the ghetto, he was constantly under the closest observation and therefore could not become personally involved in the underground that organized the uprising. However, when money was needed to obtain ammunition, he was the first to donate, as well as adding his personal blessings to the movement.

The Uprising

The uprising began early on the morning of Erev Pesach. The battle raged the entire day, but Reb Menachem prepared himself for the coming holiday as if nothing was happening. He had a gift from G-d, he once said, of being able to concentrate all his faculties on one thing while at the same time understanding and absorbing everything occurring around him. In the evening, the fighting stopped and Reb Menachem conducted the Seder as though the times were normal.

The next few days were spent in hideouts watching the ghetto being burned. The Nazis, may their names be obliterated, were methodically destroying the ghetto, house by house, in order to break the resistance. Among the burning houses were his manuscripts - the tens of thousands of pages that were destined never to be studied by future talmidei chachamim. He had a treatise on the entire Rambam called Machazeh Hamelech. Another on the Talmud Yerushalmi called Menachem Yerushalaim, as well as hundreds of teshuvos and chiddushim on Bavli, Shulchan Aruch, Midrash and all other parts of the Torah. All these writings were destroyed. When the ghetto was finally liquidated, his entire immediate family was taken to Treblinka where they all perished. Not one survived. May Hashem avenge their blood.

In 5718, learning that the Polish Government was planning to rebuild the area of the ghetto that included Reb Menachem's grave, my father Rabbi Avraham Ziembra and my uncle Rabbi Yitzchok Meir Ziembra (Reb Menachem's brothers - who were with him to the very end and on whose writings this article is based) and others expended great efforts to exhume his body and bring it to Eretz Yisrael. After weeks of work by surveyors and others, his grave was finally located (all landmarks remembered by the survivors had been destroyed in the interim). His body was flown to Eretz Yisrael and after a funeral attended by all the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah and tens of thousands of people, he was finally laid to rest on Har Hamenuchos on Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5718.

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Bittul Chametz and Contemporary Financial Arrangements - Part 3 by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction In the past two issues, we have discussed the many Halachic implications of the financial relationship between husband and wife, including Bittul Chametz. In the first part of this series, we outlined the classic approach to the husband-wife financial relationship in which, simply put, the husband owns all of the marital assets except for the personal property the wife brought into the marriage. Last week, we began to present an intense debate between two great contemporary Dayanim, Rav Shlomo Dichovsky and Rav Avraham Sherman, as to whether Halacha can assimilate Israeli secular community property laws, which mandate evenly splitting marital property in case of divorce or death. Last week, we focused on whether the Tenaim conducted at many weddings constitute a community property agreement (that all marital assets are jointly owned) and whether Dina DeMalchuta Dina applies to Israeli community property laws. We noted that neither of these approaches was particularly successful in proving that Halacha recognizes these laws. This week, we shall focus on whether Israel's secular community property laws can be assimilated into Halacha (regarding Jews who reside in Israel) based on Minhag HaMedinah, common practice in a particular locale.

Minhag HaMedinah In the past two issues, we noted that Halacha grants much flexibility regarding monetary law if both parties consent. Moreover, if a community has adopted a particular practice regarding a monetary matter, common custom, generally speaking, overrides the Halacha (Minhag Mevateil Halacha; see

Yerushalmi Bava Metzia 7:1). A classic example is presented in the Mishnah (Bava Metzia 83a) that states that an employer cannot insist that his employees work from dawn to dusk if the local custom among hired workers is not to work such hours. This rule has particular relevance to the manner of paying the Ketubah in case of death or divorce. The Rambam (Hilchot Ishut 23:12) and the Shulchan Aruch (E.H. 66:11) specifically state that "In all of these matters and those like them, common local custom is a central pillar, and we adjudicate disputes on this basis unless expressly stipulated to the contrary." One may assume that those who marry or enter in any other financial relationship without stipulations intend that the relationship should function in accordance with local customs. Indeed, the Chazon Ish (C.M. Likutum number 16), in an oft-cited comment, states that even in cases where the rule of Dina DeMalchuta Dina does not apply, nonetheless, "The law of the land determines the intentions" of the parties to an agreement. Thus, in dealing with a corporation, one may assume that the parties intend to follow local laws regarding corporations despite the fact that these laws do not conform to Halacha (see a 2005 ruling on this subject made by the Tiberias Beit Din, printed in Techumin 26:357-361). A classic case from the fifteenth century involved a woman from Portugal who claimed that she was entitled to half of her late husband's estate based on the local custom that a widow inherited half the estate. Maharashdam (C.M. 327) ruled in favor of the woman even though Halacha does not allow her to inherit any of the estate (see the series on this subject available at www.koltorah.org). Rav Dichovsky, in turn, argues that the Minhag HaMedinah regards the marital relationship as a full financial partnership. He writes: "The practice, even in Chareidi ('ultra-orthodox') families - including the families of eminent Torah authorities - is to view the wife as an equal to her husband in the family's assets. This is expressed in the listing of both spouses as joint owners of the marital residence, by the fact that marital assets are bought and sold only upon mutual consent, and with the bequeathing of the marital estate to the wife. I have probated thousands of wills [as an Israeli rabbinic judge], including the wills of the most Chareidi families, and I have not found even one of them where the wife has been requested to forego her share in the estate in favor of the Halachic heirs, with the exception of a second marriage and cases where the husband died shortly after the wedding [Rachamana Litzlan]...I do not understand why we must object to enforcing community property laws during the husband's lifetime (i.e. in case of divorce) but consent to it after his death...I believe that the concept of community property has been accepted by Torah-observant families, including the families of practicing Dayanim. Every one of us [Dayanim], and I say this from clear information, views his wife as a full partner in the family's assets. Civil courts have not conceived the idea of communal property based on an ideology that is antithetical to Torah values; rather, [their rulings] reflect the reality of contemporary families, including Chareidi families."

Rav Sherman's Response Rav Sherman, in response, notes that the aforementioned Rambam and Shulchan Aruch follow Minhag HaMedinah only in a situation where "that custom has been accepted throughout the community." One may assume that the parties' implicit consent to the common practice applies only if it is indeed common practice. Rav Sherman argues that managing the families' assets as an equal partnership is not a widespread practice. Moreover, involving one's wife in decisions regarding the family's finances does not imply that ownership of half of the assets has been transferred to her. Wives may have an equal say in managing financial matters in a healthy marriage nowadays, but it is quite a leap to claim that this implies that she has been given title to half of the assets. Rav Dichovsky replies that what applied during the marriage cannot be reversed in case of divorce. He bases this on the opinion of the Geonim (cited in the Pitchei Teshuvah E.H. 99:7), who say that if one gives a gift to his wife and the marriage later sours, he is not entitled to recover the gift. The Geonim compare this to one who presents a gift to a friend and the friendship later dissolves; the giver cannot reclaim the gift with the argument that had he known they would become enemies, he never would have gifted him the article. The story that introduced this series, in which almost all the Rabbanim assembled to sell Chametz were astonished that I asked my wife to nullify her Chametz, seems to indicate the inaccuracy of Rav Dichovsky's assertion that all communities accept the notion that husband and wife today are financial partners on an equal footing.

Explicit Agreement to Split Assets Based on Community Property Laws Rav Sherman goes as far to rule that Halacha does not recognize communal property rules even if both husband and wife commit in writing to divide the marital assets based on community property laws. Rav Sherman argues that such an agreement violates the prohibition to adjudicate disputes in civil courts. (For a review of the parameters of this injunction, see my Gray Matter 2 pp. 164-178.) Rav Dichovsky strongly disagrees with this point. In fact, the prenuptial agreement endorsed by the Beit Din of the Rabbinical Council of America and Orthodox Union, based on a ruling of Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg (Lev Mishpat 1:286; for an explanation, see my Gray Matter 2 pp. 170-172), offers the option for a couple about to marry to

agree to divide marital assets based on the community property laws (or equitable distribution laws) at the time of the signing of the document.

The Response of Other Dayanim In a later article (Techumin 26:157), Rav Dichovsky concedes that many Dayanim have not accepted his approach to communal property. Indeed, Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg (cited in HaDaron 70-71:146), considered one of if not the leading Halachic authority regarding monetary matters, does not seem to accept Rav Dichovsky's ruling (unless the couple explicitly accepted common property law in effect on the day of the signing of the agreement). Rav Yaakov Ariel, a leading Halachic authority in the Israeli

Religious Zionist community, also does not accept Rav Dichovsky's approach due to the inequity of communal property laws, although he acknowledges the Halachic ramifications of the change in the manner in which spouses manage their collective finances, as we shall discuss in next week's essay.

Fair Alternatives to Communal Property Laws There are alternative means of dividing marital assets without resorting to secular communal property laws. Indeed, most states in the United States reject the communal property approach due to gross inequities that can result, as we have discussed in last week's essay. Instead, a variation of community property laws, known as equitable distribution, is employed. Equitable distribution means that marital assets are divided fairly, whether that means fifty-fifty or in some other proportion. Among the factors considered (the factors vary from state to state) are duration of the marriage, spousal abuse or marital infidelity, economic fault of one spouse in wasting and dissipating marital property, one spouse having done all the work to acquire the property, the responsibility for providing for children of the marriage, earning power of each party, the contribution of a party as a homemaker, and the extent to which a party deferred achieving his/her career goals in order to better serve the family's interests. Rav Aryeh Yehuda (Ronnie) Warburg, a leading Dayan in the United States, reports that some Dayanim will employ civil equitable distribution laws as criteria to divide marital assets. In addition, we mentioned last week that some Dayanim subscribe to the idea of "divorce compensation," which works somewhat like equitable distribution laws. Rav Warburg also writes (HaDaron 70-71:131) that the prevalent view among Dayanim in Israeli Batei Din is to regard property listed in the name of both spouses as jointly owned property even if the husband's assets financed the purchase. They view a case where the husband financed the purchase of a house and listed his wife as co-owner as a gift from the husband to his wife that is not returned upon divorce (see the aforementioned Pitchei Teshuvah E.H. 99:7). The same applies to joint bank accounts, stock certificates, bonds, mutual funds, etc. Rav Warburg told me that many Dayanim who serve on Batei Din in the United States adopt this approach as well. Accordingly, in many marriages the couple creates a partnership by listing both partners as joint owners of its property. Finally, Rav Hershel Schachter argues that a woman is entitled to the money she earns from a full-time job. Although Halacha states that a wife's earnings belong to her husband (see Shulchan Aruch E.H. 69:3-4), the Dagul MeiRevavah (E.H. 80:1) raises the possibility that a woman is entitled to her earnings acquired through extraordinary efforts, referred to as "Haadafah Al Yedei HaDechak." Rav Schachter adopts the following approach: The wife's earnings that belong to her husband apply to small scale work such as, to use Rav Schachter's example, typing an occasional term paper for students who pay for her services. However, if she works as a full-time worker, she may claim Kim Li (lit. "I follow," see the Bach cited in the Beit Shmuel 80:2) the opinions that rule that Haadafah Al Yedei HaDechak belongs to the wife and that she therefore enjoys the exclusive right to her salary. Rav Schachter applied this approach in an actual case. A husband donated every spare cent in the couple's bank account to Tzedakah, leaving the couple no money to spend on even a very modest vacation. Rav Schachter advised the wife to open a separate account in her own name that would be funded exclusively with the money she earned from her job, which she could later use to pay for a reasonable vacation for the couple. We should note that Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited by his son Rav Reuven Feinstein in an article that appears in the Memorial Volume to Rav Tzvi Tennebaum entitled Sefer Eitz Erez) agrees that a wife's salary belongs to her. He even believes that if a wife travels to a discount outlet and buys an item for a much lower price than she would have had she purchased the item at a local store, the price differential belongs to her.

Conclusion Rav Dichovsky appears to constitute a minority opinion among contemporary Dayanim in regards to Halacha adopting community property law. Nonetheless, most Dayanim strive to insure that in case of divorce, marital assets are divided in a manner that provides for a wife's financial needs. Next week, we shall conclude this series with a discussion of the many Halachic ramifications (including Bittul Chametz) of the changing financial relationship between husband and wife.