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### **Erev Pesach that Falls on Shabbos**

**Written by Rabbi Aaron Kraft, Dayan, cRc Beis Din**

Date: March 6, 2025

When Erev Pesach coincides with Shabbos, we benefit from having a restful and spiritually uplifting day leading into the Seder night. However, this infrequent calendrical occurrence also raises practical questions relating to the halachos of Erev Pesach[1] as well as to the proper fulfillment of the mitzvos of Shabbos. This article will address these concerns.

#### **TAANIS BECHOROS**

While on a regular Erev Pesach, firstborn males customarily fast, fasting is prohibited on Shabbos, either because it detracts from the mitzvah of one Shabbos, or because an obligation to eat three meals exists (OC 288:1 and Beur Halacha). Therefore, the Beis Yosef (OC 470) cites opposing positions whether to observe the taanis on Thursday or not at all this year. Although the Shulchan Aruch (OC 470:2) favors omitting the fast this year, Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yechaveh Daas 1:91) suggests that even firstborns who follow the Shulchan Aruch participate in a seudas siyum to exempt themselves from any obligation to fast. Ashkenazim follow the Rama (OC 470:2) who rules that firstborns should fast on Thursday (or participate in a siyum to exempt themselves from any obligation).

#### **BEDIKAS CHAMETZ AND BIUR CHAMETZ**

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 444:1) instructs us to perform bedikas chametz on Thursday night (13th of Nissan; this year, April 10, 2025), preceded by the regular bracha[2] and followed by the recitation of kol chamirah (see Mishna Berura 444:1). For the text of the bracha and kol chamirah, see "The Days Before Pesach" article.

The Talmud (Pesachim 49a) records a dispute about the proper time to destroy chametz when Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos – Friday (13th of Nissan; this year, April 11, 2025) or Shabbos (Erev Pesach; this year, April 12, 2025)? The Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) says to burn most of the chametz on Friday, leaving some for the Shabbos meals (see next section). Whatever chametz remains after the meals should be broken into small crumbs and disposed of in a manner that destroys it completely but does not violate the laws of Shabbos. Preferred methods include flushing the crumbs down the

toilet, feeding them to a pet, or throwing them into a garbage outside of the house. Larger quantities may also be given to a non-Jew (but you should not directly ask the non-Jew to remove more than a meal's worth of chametz from your house – see Shulchan Aruch 444:4 and Mishna Berura 444:18-20). According to the Shulchan Aruch (OC 444:2), the burning that takes place on Friday should preferably take place before the end of the fifth halachic hour[3] of the day, 11:33 AM in the Chicago area [11:51 in NYC according to the GRA], like it would on a regular year (to avoid confusion). If you plan on eating chametz on Shabbos, postpone your recitation of the kol chamirah to Shabbos by the end of the fifth halachic hour (Rama ibid. and Mishna Berura 444:22) (11:33 AM in the Chicago area [11:51 in NYC according to the GRA]). If, however, you destroyed all your chametz on Friday and do not plan to eat any chametz on Shabbos Erev Pesach, the Mishna Berura (OC 444:10) implies that you do recite the kol chamirah on Friday at the time of biur.

#### **SEUDOS SHABBOS**

The most challenging issue to navigate on Shabbos Erev Pesach is how to fulfill the mitzvah of seudos Shabbos in their ideal form. The Talmud (Shabbos 117b) rules, based on the appearance of "hayom" three times in the pasuk (Shemos 16:25), that we must consume three meals on Shabbos. Generally, halacha requires us to wash and consume at least a kizayis of bread at each meal. How can this be accomplished on Shabbos Erev Pesach when the prohibition to eat chametz begins at the end of the fourth halachic hour of the day (see OC 443:1), this year 10:15 AM in the Chicago area [10:45 in NYC according to the GRA]?

To avoid any last minute chametz complications and fulfill the mitzvah of eating bread during the Shabbos meals, the simplest solution would be to use matzah for all of the meals. However, the Shulchan Aruch and Rama (OC 471:2) forbid matzah consumption on Erev Pesach as a way of distinguishing the matzah eaten later that night at the Seder as matzas mitzvah. This renders using regular matzah for hamotzi at your Shabbos meals an impossibility.[4]

#### **MATZAH ASHIRA**

One potential solution is to use matzah ashira (made from dough containing fruit juice instead of water). The Shulchan Aruch (462:1) follows the opinion of the Rambam, Rosh and Rabbeinu Tam that matzah ashira is not considered chametz and can be consumed on Pesach but does not fulfill the mitzvah of matzah at the Seder. This would permit its consumption on Erev Pesach. The Rama (462:4), however, rules stringently out of concern for the position of Rashi that matzah ashira might be considered chametz if some water was mixed in during the baking process and should not be eaten on Pesach unless there is a great need (like to treat an ill or elderly individual). This is the position adopted by Ashkenazim.

Later authorities debate whether the Rama's prohibition of matzah ashira extends to Erev Pesach or if it is limited to Pesach itself. While the Aruch Hashulchan (444:5) maintains that the Rama's stringency does not apply to Erev Pesach, Rav Moshe Feinstein (OC 1:155) and others take a strict approach to this question. Therefore, Ashkenazim should only view matzah ashira as a potential solution for the Shabbos night and Shabbos day meals (before the time that chametz consumption becomes forbidden).

We must consider an additional factor regarding matzah ashira, namely the proper bracha to recite. As pas haba'ah b'kisnin,[5] the Acharonim argue whether to recite the bracha of mezonos or the bracha of hamotzi on matzah ashira. According to most authorities, when consuming a significant amount (exact quantity subject to debate) or in the context of a meal, you recite hamotzi. Rav Moshe Feinstein (ibid.) rules that one should say hamotzi when consumed in the context of a meal such as seudas Shabbos. Many Ashkenazim rely on this to use matzah ashira for Shabbos night and Shabbos day (prior to the time that chametz becomes forbidden after the fourth halachic hour of the day). Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yechaveh Daas, 1:91) expresses hesitation with regard to the proper bracha on matzah ashira and, therefore, advocates using matzah mevushales (boiled matzah that has not lost the form of matzah but is not suitable for the Seder).

#### **BREAD**

Due to the complications noted above, many prefer using actual bread for the Shabbos seudos as much as possible. In this instance, you must exercise caution to ensure that the chametz consumption takes place only in one designated area, (in proximity to your Shabbos table, to fulfill the requirement of kiddush bimakom seudah, but not too close as to risk getting chametz on your kosher-for-Pesach dishes), preferably eating the chametz with disposable dishes and/or utensils.[6] Like matzah ashira for Ashkenazim, this option works for the Shabbos night and Shabbos day seudos (although will necessarily entail rising and davening early on Shabbos morning to ensure finishing the chametz before the latest time for chametz consumption), but seudah shlishis raises additional complications. Both the timing of seudah shlishis and the requirement for eating bread during this meal are debated by the Rishonim, but the Shulchan Aruch (291:2,5) rules that seudah shlishis cannot be eaten until after the time for Mincha (6.5 halachic hours into the day) and that it should ideally include eating bread. Fulfilling both of these conditions is obviously an impossibility on Shabbos Erev Pesach, as bread is forbidden after the fourth halachic hour. Several solutions appear in the writings of the poskim:

According to the opinions that we are not concerned about matzah ashira's being chametz on Erev Pesach and that its bracha is hamotzi, you can use matzah ashira (Shulchan Aruch OC 444:1) and eat the meal during its regular time (after Mincha).

According to the view that the Rama prohibits matzah ashira on Erev Pesach as well, one should fulfill the mitzvah of seudah shlishis with fruits and/or fish and meat (relying on the positions quoted by the Shulchan Aruch [OC 291:5] that even fruits suffice).

The Mishna Berura (OC 444:8) suggests getting an early start to the day and splitting the morning meal into two separate meals. In this way, you fulfill the obligation to consume bread during both the Shabbos day and seudah shlishis meals before chametz becomes forbidden. To do this effectively, you should make kiddush, wash, make hamotzi and have one course of your Shabbos meal. Then recite birkas hamazon, take a short break (learn, play a board game, or go on a short walk) and then return to the table, wash and make hamotzi again, and finish your Shabbos meal. The only concession here is that your third meal is not eaten in the ideal timeframe. If you would like to be extra meticulous in fulfilling the obligation of seudah shlishis, you can have fish/meat and/or fruits in the afternoon after the time for Mincha (Sefer Tashbetz Katan, 23 in the name of the Maharam). This allows you to cover your bases by also fulfilling the third meal of Shabbos at the ideal time (albeit without bread). If you chose to have this additional "meal" in the afternoon, make sure not to eat too much, so that you enter the Seder with an appetite (Mishna Berura ibid.).

#### DIVREI TORAH

The Magen Avraham (444:2) records the practice of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who learned in lieu of eating seudah shlishis on Shabbos Erev Pesach. Based on this practice, some authorities (see Gra ibid. and Aruch Hashulchan 444:6) posit that if bread cannot be consumed, there is no obligation for seudah shlishis on Shabbos Erev Pesach. Others (Kaf Hachaim 444:18) maintain that there is an obligation and, in some way, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's learning either fulfilled the obligation or had the same spiritual impact that a meal with bread would have on a normal Shabbos. Whereas Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's learning may have had this effect, we assume that as important as our learning is, it does not serve as an adequate replacement for seudah shlishis.

Whichever method we employ to best navigate the complicated issues of fulfilling this important mitzvah on Shabbos Erev Pesach, we should definitely make an effort to include extra learning and divrei Torah at our seudah shlishis (especially considering that in any event it promises to be a smaller meal in anticipation of the Seder night).

Although the halachos associated with Shabbos Erev Pesach are complex, we appreciate that the very commitment to punctilious halachic observance is part and parcel of the Pesach celebration, which commemorates Hashem taking us out of Egypt, transforming us into His nation and privileging us to enter His covenant.

#### Endnotes:

[1] In fact, feeling confused on Erev Pesach that falls on Shabbos is not a new phenomenon; the Talmud (Pesachim 66a) records that in the times of the Temple, Erev Pesach fell out on Shabbos, and the sages forgot whether the paschal offering should be offered or if the laws of Shabbos prevented its sacrifice.

[2] Normally you do not recite a bracha on a bedikah performed earlier than the 14th of Nissan, such as when leaving your house for the duration of Pesach prior to the 14th of Nissan. The Beur Halacha (OC 436:1) explains that only when the bedikah is the first step in the burning that will take place the next morning, is it considered part of the mitzvah of tashbisu (requirement to destroy chametz) and, therefore, requires a blessing. When carried out well in advance of the burning for tashbisu, it is not being done as a part of the positive commandment, but rather to prevent you from owning chametz on Pesach. However, this year because the biur will take place the next morning, you do recite a bracha, because the bedikah constitutes the first step in the mitzvah of tashbisu (despite its performance on the 13th of Nissan).

[3] Halachic hours, known as shaos z'manios, are essentially calculated by determining total daylight hours and dividing by twelve. The exact method of calculating halachic hours is beyond the scope of this article.

[4] Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yechaveh Daas, 1:91) permits regular matzah consumption on Shabbos night, but forbids it on Shabbos day. For Ashkenazim, on the other hand, Rav Moshe Feinstein (OC 1:155) rules that matzah should not be used at all on Shabbos Erev Pesach.

[5] term used in the Talmud to describe food made from dough, but differing from bread in that it is hard, filled or sweetened. The exact definition of pas haba'ah b'kisin and the halachos thereof are beyond the scope of this article.

[6] Rav Ovadia Yosef's preference for matzah mevushales is due to his concern that using chametz constitutes an unnecessary risk, as you may make a mistake in cleaning it up and/or disposing of it.

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from: **TorahWeb** <torahweb@torahweb.org> date: Apr 10, 2025, 12:37 PM  
subject: **Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky - Eternity of Shabbos; Renewal of Pesach**

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky Eternity of Shabbos; Renewal of Pesach This year there is a unique configuration of Pesach, in that Shabbos is the day immediately before Pesach. Although this creates certain halachic challenges, I would like to ponder the unusual day known as "Shabbos Hagadol".

The Shabbos before Pesach is famously referred to as Shabbos Hagadol (Tosfos, Shabbos 87b, Tur Orach Chaim 430). It is celebrated as such in commemoration of the mesiras nefesh of the Jewish people in Egypt. They were commanded to take a sheep on the tenth day of Nissan and keep it until they bring it as a sacrifice on the fourteenth day of Nissan. Since this was dangerous, as the Egyptians saw in the sheep their deity, it was an act of strength and heroism on the part of the Jewish people to prepare that sheep. What makes this format of commemoration unusual is that all holidays are linked specifically to the date of the month when the event they commemorate occurred. What is significant is the date, not the day of the week. For instance, even though everyone holds that the Torah was given on Shabbos (Shabbos 86b), yet we celebrate Shavuot not on a Shabbos but rather on the sixth day of Sivan. The only 'day' that is marked as being significant in this sense is Shabbos Hagadol.

If we ask ourselves about the meaning of Pesach or the nature of the geula that will be coming in the future, we think of a new beginning, a new era without suffering and with great good being offered to us. It is almost as if getting rid of the old and ushering in the new. However, this is the furthest from what redemption actually means. If we look at the Rambam in the beginning of Hilchos Avoda Zara, at the end of the first chapter, he describes the great discovery of Avraham Avinu, how that had descended on through his children, how that had been quashed in Egypt to the point of almost total extinction, and then due to the promise of Hashem to the avos, He brought

that seed out of Egypt and took it to the land of Israel and gave it the Torah. In other words, the redemption was not a new beginning, rather a blossoming of the old seed, a resurrection of the almost dead.

When we read the haftorah of Shabbos Hagadol, we read about Israel's pushing back against the covenant, and finally Hashem's promise to redeem us. It is summed up as the "return of the hearts of the fathers to the sons", and the "heart of the sons to their fathers" (Malachi 3:24). This means that redemption is the reconnection of the old and the new. The new is only different in its format, but the essence, the heart of it, is the same.

In the laws regarding mashiach (Hilchos Melachim 11), the Rambam describes mashiach and the era of mashiach as the reconstruction of the Jewish nation. Everything that had happened before and had been destroyed will now be rebuilt once again: monarchy, nationhood, Beis Hamikdash, and the Sanhedrin and the laws that they enact. So it is not about a new incarnation, but rather a resurrection of that which was, in a way which removes the flaws that crept in, and lasts eternally.

And yet, we do understand that something new will arise. The navi (Yirmiyahu 31:30) describes what will happen as a new covenant. This means that despite the fact that the exterior is new, the interior, the heart, so to speak, will remain the same. There is a phrase in Pirkei Avos (4:20) describing "old wine in new vessels". This means that although every generation has new tools and new resources, the content will remain the same.

Perhaps this is why Shabbos Hagadol is specifically celebrated on the day of the week, rather than the date in the month. The week, and its component days, were set by Hashem. We have no jurisdiction over them. Shabbos is referred to in halachic literature (Chullin 101b) as set and given (kvia vkayma). This means that it does not require any act on our part to create Shabbos. It is and always will be the seventh day; every seventh day from creation onward. Not so the yomim tovim. Yom tov is set by us on the day of the month which, in turn, is determined by us. Thus, if the Sanhedrin moves the month up a day or takes away a day, or adds a month, that changes the day that Yom tov is celebrated on. It is the Yom tov of Pesach that especially expresses this. The halachos of Pesach are preceded by the laws of setting the calendar. The concept of a month, called "chodesh" (also meaning 'new') is introduced here. Indeed, the first day of Pesach really is the beginning of all things new. Pesach is the first Yomtov on the calendar and is the beginning of the process of renewal. Shabbos, on the other hand, is the firm and exact day set for eternity, at the very root of creation. The two coming together give us a sense of how the eternal and permanent feed each new and renewed Yomtov.

There is another fascinating law associated with Pesach, and that is "chodosh". Eating from the new crop of grain is prohibited. This is called 'chodosh'. On the second day of Pesach it transitions to 'yoshon', and is now permitted to eat. Somehow, the transformation of the 'new' to the old, is the domain of Pesach!

Each and every generation has new tools, new challenges, new failures, and new achievements. But the content of it is all the same.

I'm not referring here only to the strict letter of halacha. I think it also refers to the spirit behind it. People can be sitting with modern editions of gemara. They can even be using a device to see it on. They can be listening to a Zoom shiur thousands of miles away. They can have videos available showing and explaining many parts of the sugya. But the heart and soul of learning must remain the same. A person sitting down with a sefer to learn needs to feel the same sense of connectivity to Hashem, the same sense of kedusha, the same sense of the spiritual, as was sensed by all the generations that preceded us, linking us to Moshe and the Torah given at Sinai.

This year the eternity of Shabbos Breishis joins the renewal of Pesach in a unique way. May we merit to speedily renew ourselves, reestablishing that link to all that was.

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**Who is Really Free?**

**by Jonathan Rosenblum**

Mishpacha Magazine

April 10, 2025

I have told this story before. But every family has its own favorite divrei Torah for the Seder table — so if not now, when?

A number of years ago, Reb Yakov Brachfeld shared at Aish.com ("Passover in Hell") something that his grandfather said over every year at the Seder. Five weeks before Pesach 5703, the Nazis yemach shemam liquidated the Krakow Ghetto. A small number of Jews, however, escaped their clutches and managed to forage in the ruins, including the brothers Mendel and Moshe Brachfeld. As Pesach approached, the two brothers found a blech, which they managed to heat using flammable paint, to bake a few matzos. As Pesach approached, Moshe Brachfeld, the younger brother, told his older brother that there was no way he could participate in a Seder. "The Seder is to celebrate our freedom, our going out of a house of slavery," he said. "But our family is gone — our parents, our sister, and her children were all killed. The city is up in flames. The Nazis are hunting for us with killer dogs, and won't rest until every Jew is dead. What kind of freedom are we celebrating tonight?"

Mendel replied, "Every night in Maariv, in the brachah after Krias Shema, we praise Hashem for having 'removed His nation Israel from their midst [i.e., the Egyptians] to cheirus olam' — eternal freedom. The freedom referred to is not physical freedom — it's spiritual freedom. Pesach celebrates going from being Egyptian slaves to becoming a newborn nation, a nation that Hashem calls His own. When we sit down at the Seder table, we celebrate becoming a G-dly nation. That is something that cannot be taken away from us. No matter how much they beat, torture, and kill our physical bodies, our souls remain free to serve Hashem."

The distinction between physical and spiritual freedom is an important one. The former can be taken away, but the latter dwells within, in a place no one can access besides the possessor of the soul himself. One who is aware of himself as a spiritual being, brought into the world by a loving G-d for a specific reason, is far more powerful than the one who merely controls him physically. Our history books — and not just ours — are filled with examples of those who triumphed over their torturers and murderers even in death. Every Jewish child knows the story of Chanah (or in some versions Miriam) and her seven sons and the humiliation they inflicted on the Seleucid ruler by refusing to bow down to him, or even to appear to bow down, on pain of death.

STANDING IN the Umschlagplatz in Warsaw five years ago, Rabbi Ilan Segal read from an account in the Bais Yaakov Journal (Sivan 5721) of the last weeks in the Warsaw Ghetto of a group of about 70 Gerrer chassidim. Even as the Nazis swept through the ghetto setting every building on fire, they somehow passed by the Gerrer chassidim's building, where they were hiding in the attic and where they celebrated Pesach that year, together with about 20 other Jews. Though all the Gerrer men retained their beards, which were strictly forbidden even before the destruction of the ghetto, they were not discovered until they had finished davening Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh Iyar.

Rabbi Segal showed us a photo of the leader of the Gerrer chassidim, Rav Hirsch Rappaport, as he stood facing Jurgen Stroop, the SS commander charged with putting down the ghetto revolt. Rabbi Rappaport's face betrays no fear — indeed, he appears to be laughing at the much larger Stroop, dressed in full battle array.

In our own time, Jimmy Lai, the richest man in Hong Kong, a self-made billionaire from a dirt-poor rural background, is held in solitary confinement

for his efforts as head of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, which seeks to hold China to its promise to preserve democracy when it took over Hong Kong from the British. Lai could have gone to live anywhere in the world in luxury, but he chose to stay and go to prison in order to highlight the cruelty and deceit of the Chinese regime. His wife Teresa told his biographer, "He is living in complete freedom."

Similarly free was Alexei Navalny, leader of the Russian opposition, whom the KGB nearly succeeded in poisoning while abroad. Despite that near brush with death, he returned to Russia knowing that he would be subjected to a show trial and sentenced to a long term in the Gulag, where he "died" under mysterious circumstances. He was 47.

BUT IN ADDITION to the freedom of recognizing oneself primarily as a spiritual being with a Divine soul, there is a unique aspect of *cheirus olam* planted in every Jewish soul by virtue of being part of "His nation," a unique connection to Hashem. In the Haggadah, we read that the Egyptian firstborn were killed by *gilui haShechinah* — the revelation of Divine presence. Only the Jews were spared that death because they were uniquely bound to Hashem and part of Him. "Bni bechori Yisrael — Israel is My son, My firstborn son."

The Nesivos expands on this unique aspect of being part of "His nation." He begins his commentary wondering how a downtrodden Jewish people can proclaim themselves *bnei chorin*, despite their oppressed state. He asks: Would someone celebrate annually his release from prison if he found himself once again imprisoned on a subsequent anniversary of that initial release?

He answers that just as we were once redeemed from Egypt, so do we know that we will be redeemed from any subsequent *galus*. And therefore we can celebrate no matter what our current state: Hashem took us as His nation in front of the entire world, revealing His glory to an unprecedented extent. And He will rescue us from all subsequent exiles, whether we are deserving or not, so that His Name not be desecrated. It is that assurance, which is a direct consequence of the great miracles Hashem performed on our behalf in Egypt, that we gather to celebrate.

Rav Hirsch Rappaport, the leader of the Gerrer group mentioned above, addressed the eternity of the Jewish People in his final *drashah*: "We have nothing to fear, *chalilah*, with regard to the existence of *Klal Yisrael*. After the Spanish Inquisition, *Klal Yisrael* remained. The main thing is for us to devote ourselves to dying al *Kiddush Hashem*. And in that merit will *Klal Yisrael* continue to exist."

THE NESIVOS'S STATEMENT that Hashem will rescue us from all future exiles, whether we are deserving or not, bears further exploration. The *din* is that in a year that has two *Adars*, we read the *Megillah* in *Adar Sheini*, in order to connect *geulah l'geulah* (*Megillah*6b). But the two redemptions are completely different. The exodus from *Mitzrayim* came about with open miracles revealing Hashem to the world. And as the Ramban explains at length at the end of *parshas Bo*, those miracles form the basis of our *emunah*. The salvation from the decree of Haman, however, takes place entirely within the realm of nature. Hashem's Name is not even mentioned in the *Megillah*.

And yet ironically, Chazal tell us, all the festivals commemorating the exodus from *Mitzrayim* will in the future become *batul* compared to the open miracles of the ultimate redemption (*Berachos*12b). But the celebration of the hidden miracle of Purim, a miracle entirely within the realm of nature, will never pass from among the Jewish People (*Midrash Mishlei* 9). Rabbi Yaakov Emden famously writes in his *Siddur* that in his eyes, the continued existence of the Jewish People, despite the determination of so many enemies to wipe us out, is a greater miracle than all the wonders Hashem performed for us in redeeming us from Egypt and bringing us to the Land. The miracle of Purim took place at a time the Jewish People were in a very lowly state — intermarriage was rampant, many bowed to the idol of *Nevuchadnetzar*, and the Jews of *Shushan* participated in a feast meant to celebrate the apparent failure of the prophecy of return to *Eretz Yisrael* after 70 years to be realized. And yet Hashem, in a completely hidden fashion,

revealed that they were not forgotten or abandoned, and that His arm is still outstretched toward us (*Chagigah*5).

And that is the connection between the two redemptions, one with signs and wonders, and the other concealed within nature. As long as we grasp that internal point of the Jewish People, that which remains ever unsullied, we have hope for Hashem's redemption, no matter far we have sunk. And that *nekudas ha'emes* was implanted in us with the going out from *Mitzrayim*, as the *Nesivos* explains. It is the source of our eternal freedom.

On Purim, my dear friend Rabbi Gavriel Rubin sent me a *devar Torah* that bears on this point. Haman, he began, is related to the word *hamon*, a crowd or multitude, which makes a large noise in the world. Opposed to Haman was Esther, whose very name reflects her modesty and hiddenness. And she is a descendant of Shaul *Hamelech*, who was also outstanding in his modesty and did not share with anyone that he had been anointed until instructed to do so.

Esther's triumph, indeed the triumph of the Jewish People in every generation and against every adversary, came from developing that inner point of connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that He implanted in us with the Redemption from *Mitzrayim*.

May we never forget the source of our strength and the key to not only surviving our enemies, but to defeating them, rooted in *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. *Chag kosher v'samei'ach*.

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<https://yated.com/a-simple-yet-profound-belief/>

## A Simple Yet Profound Belief

**Rabbi Yaakov Feitman**

April 2, 2025

I hesitated at first to retell a story that is probably well known, but then I saw that Rav Moshe Shternbuch (*Teshuvos Vehanhagos*, *Pesach*, p. 1,057) writes that his father also used to retell this story every *Pesach*.

It was the summer of 5683 (1923), just after the vicious *Kishinev pogroms*. The *Chofetz Chaim* needed the services of a certain dentist, who was extremely traumatized by the attacks and expressed his pain to the *Chofetz Chaim*.

"*Rebbe*," he nearly cried, "believe me, I am beginning to have doubts about the existence of a Creator."

It should be noted that, similar to the recent *Hamas atrocities*, many people were shaken to the core by the barbaric anti-Semitism, and it seems that little has changed. Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin used to recall that seventy years after those massacres, when he was learning in *Slutzk* under the *Ridbaz*, the memories were still raw and painful (see *Yeshurun*, 20:131, "The *Mara D'Asra* of America").

However, the *Chofetz Chaim* knew exactly how to respond.

The great author of the *Mishnah Berurah* looked sharply at the dentist and said, "And I am beginning to doubt whether or not you are really a doctor." The offended man proudly led the *Chofetz Chaim* to his wall of certificates, pointing to his diploma from a prestigious dental school. After examining it carefully, the wise *tzaddik* commented, "I see that this is dated forty years ago. Perhaps you were once properly validated in this field, but who says that you are still capable of functioning in this capacity?"

Now the dentist was truly outraged. "Do I have to obtain new certification every year? It is sufficient that four decades ago I took the tests and passed with flying colors."

Now it was the *Chofetz Chaim's* turn to be triumphant. "The Creator, too," he patiently explained, "has proven Who He is long ago. After many years of 'hiding His face,' He demonstrated that He created the world and that it is still under His providence. He took us out of *Mitzrayim* with numerous open miracles. In the process, He overturned all the laws of nature and clearly proved that He is still in charge. That is His certificate, which is infinitely greater than yours. Now He, for His own reasons, has decided to hide His face once again. But He doesn't need to reestablish that He runs the world any more than you have to return to dental school."

Rav Shternbuch concludes that this is exactly what we do on Pesach night when we tell our children and grandchildren about Yetzias Mitzrayim. Since this once happened to all of us—"as if we ourselves left Mitzrayim"—it needn't be proven again and again.

This follows a lesson he quotes elsewhere (Teshuvos Vehanhagos, p. 1,082) from the Baal Shem Tov. Although a proud descendant and follower of the Gra, Rav Shternbuch cites the founder of Chassidus' emphasis on emunah peshutah, simple faith. He cites the halacha that even if two great Torah scholars are sharing the Seder, they must ask each other the Four Questions of the Mah Nishtanah.

"Why," he asks, "is it necessary for such outstanding talmidei chachomim to descend to such elementary queries?" The answer, he explains, is that even the greatest—and perhaps especially the most intellectual—must return to the most basic act of faith.

One of the poignant proofs he cites is the well-known insight of the Chossid Yaavetz, one of those expelled from Spain in 1492. He writes painfully that while the "simple folks" readily gave up their lives rather than submit to the threats of the Church and bow down to idols, it was the so-called superior scholars who rationalized committing one of the cardinal sins.

Indeed, Rav Shternbuch notes that while many of the early greats—such as the Moreh Nevuchim, Chovos Halevavos, Akeidas Yitzchos, and, we may add, the Kuzari—offered proofs of the existence of Hashem, for the average Yid this evidence is totally unnecessary. It has been embedded in our bones and DNA. One of the goals of the Seder night is to once again ensure that our faith is pure and doesn't require any new validation.

I would like to suggest that perhaps this is one reason why the Haggadah focuses on the Four Sons to whom we address the saga of the Exodus. First of all, we must all prepare to become children once again—children who believe in the most essential and fundamental of ways. But more amazingly, the Haggadah stresses that every child, even the one who cannot formulate questions, let alone know the answers, can be taught about our past glories and the certainty that we will once again experience those and even greater miracles.

It is both wonderful and notable that all those completing Maseches Sanhedrin just in time for Pesach have spent the month preparing for the Seder learning about the miracles that will occur when Moshiach arrives. Despite various approaches, the Gemara and commentaries make clear that the novi (Micha 7:15) reassures us that the future redemption will mirror Yetzias Mitzrayim. This merges our full belief in the nissim of the Exodus with our equally powerful faith that Moshiach will surely arrive to redeem us as well.

This twinning of Yetzias Mitzrayim with Moshiach is readily seen in the conclusion of the Haggadah, which brings us forward to the End of Days, when we will finally understand everything that has transpired throughout the millennia. But there is another proof of this connection as well.

The Belzer Rebbe, Rav Aharon, noted what at first seems like a strange discrepancy in the Haggadah. When we are about to perform Korech, eating the matzah and maror together in accordance with the ruling of Hillel, we recite the posuk of "al matzos umerorim yochluhu." The problem is that this posuk appears in the Torah (Bamidbar 9:11) regarding the Pesach Sheini, which is reserved for people who were unable to offer the regular Korban Pesach. The posuk from the first Korban Pesach (Shemos 12:8) is the less familiar "umatzos al merorim yochluhu."

The obvious question is: Why has Klal Yisroel recited the verse from the second Korban Pesach for thousands of years rather than the one from the first?

The Belzer Rebbe answers brilliantly but plainly: By the time we recite the Haggadah, even if, G-d willing, Moshiach arrives in the middle, it will be too late to bring the regular Korban Pesach. Therefore, being practical, at the Seder, we set our sights on doing the next best thing—bringing the Pesach Sheini. In any case, this helps us understand why, as we move toward the end of the Seder and Haggadah, we turn our attention to the future, when we will, G-d willing, offer the Pesach Sheini immediately after Yom Tov. This

inspires us to reflect on the events that will then take place and reminds us that our faith is strong and firm that Moshiach will soon come to redeem us. We are now in a position to better understand many aspects of Pesach and the Seder. Matzah is called michla demehemnusa—the food of belief (Zohar 2:183). In other words, simply eating the matzah helps bring us to complete faith.

In fact, Rav Mendel Riminover (Divrei Menachem, Likkutim, Pesach 34b) writes: "On the night of Pesach, a person can arrive at complete knowledge and belief in Hashem if he guards his thoughts on this night, keeping all his thoughts holy, just as those who actually left Mitzrayim long ago. This promise will hold true for all eternity."

Rav Tzadok Hakohein of Lublin (Pri Tzaddik, Maamorei Pesach 9), the Bnei Yissoschor (Maamorei Nissan 8), and many others reflect this same view about the power of Pesach and matzah. Rav Yonasan David, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Pachad Yitzchok (Maamorei Pesach 9:11, p. 57), adds that "matzah opens hearts, creates faith, and removes barriers."

Many of us just learned in Daf Yomi (Sanhedrin 90a) that Hashem both punishes and rewards middah keneged middah, measure for measure. Thus, the Haggadah teaches us that if the wicked son, the rasha, had been in Mitzrayim, he would not have been redeemed because he did not believe in the coming geulah. Conversely, since Klal Yisroel believed what Moshe Rabbeinu told them (Shemos 4:31), they were redeemed.

We, too, can, G-d willing, merit the long-awaited geulah by strengthening our faith, eating the matzah with that goal in mind, and thereby—hopefully—living to see Moshiach Tzidkeinu, bimeheirah beyomeinu.

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Shabbat Hagadol: Shiur - **Mesirat Nefesh**

(based on Shabbat U'Moed, by **Harav Yitzchok Kossowsky**, zt"l)

**Rabbi Nisson E. Shulman.**

Questions about the Korban Pesach; Why in advance? "Hen yiskelunu"?

Why roasted by fire? Why no bone could be broken?

Why the importance of "habura"? Why Rabban Gamliel and Todos ish Romi wanted to retain form of "korban Pesach" despite Chachamim objection?

Why time of bama when you could bring sacrifices personally, the Pesach was an exception? Public, not merely private Judaism... Jewish pride.

Mesirat nefesh... Answering all questions with this premise...

SHABBAT HAGADOL: SHIUR - MESIRAT NEFESH

[This is a Shiur, longer and more detailed than a sermon, which you will have to work on to adapt to your own style and congregation. The idea comes from Shabbat Umoed, a wonderful two volume sefer in the old style of shiurim and drush written by my wife's grandfather, Rav Yitzchok Kossowsky zt"l, who was the Volkovisker Rav and in 1933 accepted the call of the Federation of Synagogues of South Africa to be their Rav and Av Bet Din.]

Much is made about questions on Pesach. The mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzrayim can only be fulfilled if it is told to another, in dialogue form, and that is why questions on Pesach are so important. I have some questions about the korban Pesach about which the original Seder was centered and towards which it was focused. (Here it is appropriate to explain how the four questions were changed after the destruction of the Temple, using sources such as: Mishnah, Pesachim 116a, Rashbam ad loc., Rambam Hilchot Hametz Umatza 8:2 where he lists all 5 questions, since one of them [tzeli] falls away in galut, and the change in his Nusach haHagada, since the heading of this section is Nusach haHagada shenahagu ba Yisrael bizman hagalut, kach hi.)

My questions are as follows:

1. We were required to separate the Pascal sacrifice four days in advance, ... beasor lachodesh haze veyikchu lachem ish se lebet avot se labayit (Shemot 12:3)... This openly courted danger, since we were to sacrifice and eat the "gods" of Egypt. Why? God does not require us to seek peril! Why put ourselves in danger? Hen nizbach es tovat Mitzrayim velo yiskelunu? Why did God insist? Hayecha, eyn Yisrael yotzeim mikan ad sheyishhatu elohey Mitzrayim leeyneyhem... (Shemot Rabba 16).

2. The offering had to be only roasted by fire. What's wrong with a cooked offering? Furthermore, as Rashi indicates, the Torah gives special importance to this mitzvah by adding a negative prohibition to the positive mitzvah, Veachlu et habasar balayla haze tzeli esh, al tochlu mimenu na ubashel mevushal bamayim ki im tzeli esh (Shemot 12:8-9). Rashi adds, lemaala gazar alav bemitzvat ase, vekan hosif lo taase.

3. No bone could be broken in it. Why is this?

4. This is the only offering where habura plays an important role! In fact, there is no other mitzvah that must be done particularly in a habura. Even for davening, a minyan isn't required! It merely gives us the opportunity to recite added prayers that are in the nature of public proclamations and declarations such as Kaddish and Kedusha and Barchu. But an individual fulfills the basic mitzvah of prayer just a group does. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's prayers are as worthy as those of Kelal Yisroel. But the basic essential mitzvah of korban Pesach can only be fulfilled by a group, and with advance invitations. Why?

5. Finally: The Pesach went out of use when the Bes Hamikdash was destroyed. It appears the Rabbi Gamaliel of Yavneh wanted to retain the form of korban Pesach and the sages refused. In fact, there was an earlier precedent for this discussion. The Talmud relates that Todos ish Romi – Todos of Rome – tried to imitate the korban Pesach for the diaspora Jews of Rome, and our sages almost excommunicated him for attempting to make a private korban Pesach (Pesachim 53). For the korban Pesach, like all other korbanot, depended on the Bet Hamikdash. You couldn't bring an ola, a chatas, a shelamim privately while the Temple stood. After it was destroyed, we declare, Uneshalma parim sefatenu. Our prayers have to take the place of the korban Pesach. We recite in the musaph prayer, Umipne chataenu galinu meartzenu venisrachaknu meal admasenu,... So it was forbidden to duplicate the service in the Holy Temple anywhere else, and now that it is destroyed it is forbidden to duplicate that service anywhere in the world.

What about before the Bet Hamikdash was built? We lived in Israel many years from the time of Joshua's entry into the Promised Land until Solomon finally built the Temple. During all this time, we had a sanctuary in Shiloh, and it was destroyed and moved elsewhere, until finally the Mikdash was built. The sanctuary in Shiloh was the continuation of the Mishkan of the desert. Now what was the status of korbanot during this time? Did they then have to be offered only in Shiloh? All korbanot during that time had an interesting status, because while community korbanot like the tamid of morning and evening were indeed offered only in Shiloh, yet throughout all that time every Jew could also set up his own private altar and bring voluntary offerings such as thank offerings (todah), peace offerings (shelamim), in his own home, in his front or back yard! This special status changed when the Temple was built, and all offerings could only be offered in Jerusalem at the Temple. But until then, it was permissible to sacrifice privately as the heart moved each Jew. What about the Pesach offering? Could a family go out into their front yard and bring the korban Pesach on their private bama? Could they use this bama, or altar, for the Pesach Seder and the Pascal Lamb?

The answer is, that while all other kinds of sacrifices could be brought on this type of private altar, the korban Pesach was different. It could not be brought privately, but like the community offerings could only be brought in Shilo, (or Nov, or Givon), wherever the sanctuary was located at that particular time. And finally, when the sanctuary moved to Jerusalem, it could be offered only in Jerusalem. Now it seems reasonable that a community offering like the daily tamid offering, which stood for the entire people of Israel, surely should have its place only in the central sanctuary such as Shiloh. But the Pesach offering was a family gathering. It was not one offering for the whole people of Israel, but rather that each family or group of families brought its own. Why then couldn't they bring it on the private bama? [Note: At the end of this shiur is a very brief outline of the history of the sanctuaries and bama gedolah and ketana since our entry into the Promised Land and until the Bet Hamikdash was built].

I believe the answer to this last question will also answer all our previous questions as well.

At the beginning of the 19th and through the 20th centuries there was a movement called Haskala, which gained great strength at that time. Its motto, coined by Yehuda Leib Gordon, was "Be a man in the street, and a Jew at home." Its creed was to live Judaism in a way that did not bring it to the attention of the non-Jews amongst whom we dwelt.

This movement did not consider Judaism a matter of pride, but something private, and all too often something of which to be ashamed. To our Synagogue members, many of whom escaped or survived the holocaust, and all of whom know a great deal of Jewish history, I need not describe how quickly members of that movement slid into assimilation. In fact, the founder of the movement, Moses Mendelssohn, though observant of Mitzvot himself, had no Jewish grandchildren, since all but one of his children converted and in the second generation they were all Christian. In Germany, there was established a "Society for Suiting Judaism to Higher German Culture" and all the members ended by deciding by vote to convert to Christianity, which they all did.

Our Jewish people are required to be Jews, and human beings, Yiden and Mentchen, both at home and in the street. We say this in our prayers and we know this in Jewish history especially in the character of the heroes we most admire. Leolam yehey adam yere shamayim baseser ubagaluy.

The most admired moment of Joseph's story is when he declares Ivri anochi, vees Elokey hashamayim ani yare.

Jacob did not hide his Jewishness. Im Lavan garti... "vetaryag mitzvot shamarti" (see Rashi) Ve'et Yehuda shalach lefanav... "letaken lo bes talmud shemisham tetze horaah". In fact, Yaakov read kriat shema before the highest officials in Egypt when he beheld his son Joseph after the many years of separation. And in Tehilim, we read Vaadabra edosecha neged melachim velo evosh (Psalms 150).

The Shulchan Aruch gives the Jewish motto at the very beginning. It is actually a quote from the More Nevuchim. Veal yevosh mipne hamaligim alav beavodas hashem yisbarach.

Jewish pride is more than an admirable quality. It leads directly to kiddush Hashem. The Yarmulkes on the street are only small ways of demonstration of pride. There are much larger ways. The Russian Jews could have had ample justification to be like the Marannos! Their pride in Jewishness, even of those who were not observant of mitzvot, was the most powerful weapon with which they opened the doors of Russia to their emigration. Now, when we see latent anti-Semitism coming out into the open, we need Jewish pride more than ever. We in America have led lives sheltered from real anti-Semitism, but Europe today is a hotbed of hate towards Jews. France especially, even Switzerland, and England too, have grown so anti-Semitic as to produce for many Jews a "trapped" feeling. Those who are not driven into assimilation by this feeling; those who will not be cowed into retreat and practicing Judaism quietly and away from public view, but who retain pride in Judaism, courage and backbone; deserve our admiration and encouragement. Russian Jews, for instance did not have to give up their lives for small matters of Jewish pride and demonstration, yet that is what many of them did! And those with such pride were ready to start all over again, with challenges of a new language, a new culture, new problems and fears – and yet that is what so many did!

Another example: Think back to the war. There was a holocaust report in America prepared by a man by the name of Finger, called the Finger Report. The net result of that report was to create a feeling that American Jews will have to give a reckoning for every public demonstration they failed to make for the sake of saving our brothers and sisters in Europe!

If we only had true Jewish pride, at that time; if we had only learned it from our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph who was in Egypt and who was publicly faithful to his faith and fathers. But the Jews in Egypt after Joseph began to forget this. In the course of the decades and centuries of persecution, they began to hide the fact that they were Jewish if they could. Or at least, they would act like Jews only where it was safe to do so. It was to restore this pride in public worship and demonstration of Judaism for which the laws of the Pesach offering were made.

Thus:

Veyikhu ish se lebet avot, se labayit... (Shemot 12:3.6) is a demand for a public demonstration. Vehaya lachem lemishmeres ad arba asar yom... The pride must be sustained.

Tzli esh. Zevach Pesach hu laHashem (Ibid., 12:9-11,27). The most distinctive feature of roasting the korban Pesach over an open fire is the aroma. It is not hidden in a pot, nor inside the house, but roasted on an open fire outside for all to see and there is no mistaking the aroma! Everyone is to see what is being done and what it is!

Vetzem lo tishberu bo (Ibid., 12:46), ... Rosho al keraav veal kirbo (Ibid., 12:10) .... It must remain whole so that everyone can identify what it is, and there should be no mistake.

Therefore it was to be eaten in a public feast. Velachach hu ushechenu hakarov el beso bemichsas nefashos (Ibid., 12:4). It is not enough to eat it as families. It had to be eaten publicly, by appointment, outside, with neighbors.

Vehaya ki tomru alechem benechem ma haavoda hazos lachem (Ibid., 12:26), They are really asking, "Why the public demonstration?"

And you shall say, Vaamartem zevach Pesach hu laHashem. (Ibid., 12:27) That's why bamas yachid is fine for all other worship. But Pesach worship is public and cannot be offered on a bamas yachid. For it must be a public demonstration of our pride in our Judaism and Jewish heritage.

It is interesting that our sages give extra emphasis to the roasting of the Pesach. Rashi, on the pasuk, Veachlu et habasar balayla haze, tzeli esh, al tochlu mimenu na ubashel mevushal bamayim, ki im tzeli esh, (Shemot 12:8,9) comments and says: lemaala gazar alav bemitzvat ase, ve kan hosif alav lo taase, al tochlu mimenu ki im tzeli esh. Rashi thus points out the extra importance given to the roasting mitzvah. It is emphasized by the repetition of the passage and by the Lo Taase after the Ase.

The Midrash explains the added emphasis on Tzeli, and says that it was because of Abraham who was himself thrown by Nimrod into the burning fiery furnace, Bishvil Avraham shehitzaltiv mikivshan haesh. (Shemot Rabbah, 15.)

The Midrash actually is making a pun. tzeli-hatzala. It is clear that our rabbis understood a clear and direct connection between the Pascal offering and the episode of Abraham saved from Nimrod's fiery furnace.

This connection is expressed by our sages in the Midrash: Beshaa sheamar Hakadosh Baruch Hu leMoshe lishhot hapesach, amar lo Moshe; Ribon Haolam, davar ze heach ani yachol laasoto,.... Sheneemar et toavat mitzrayim nizbach leeynehem velo yiskelunu? Amar lo Hakadosh Baruch Hu, hayecha, eyn Yisrael yotzim mikaan at sheyishhatu elohe Mitzrayim leeyneyhem. (Shemot Rabbah 16).

God required the mesirat nefesh of defying death at the hands of the Egyptians by slaughtering their god, in order for us to prove that we were worth redeeming. On this account we were found worthy of being taken to God as a people. Sinai was our reward.

Pesach, then, is the symbol and the foundation of the fierce pride in our people and faith, which leads to mesirat nefesh. And so it was commanded to be eaten, burned on the fire, in order to remind us of the mesirat nefesh of the Jew, represented by the readiness of Abraham our forefather to sacrifice himself. The lesson is that just as Abraham withstood the test, so must we. The mitzvah of tzeli esh has since that time become the symbol of mesirat nefesh for our people. It has enabled us to survive through the centuries of hardship and persecution. And Israel has given it a special place in the significance of its mitzvot.

The people of Israel have called the holiday of the korban Pesach by the name of that korban. The mitzvoh of matzah is commanded for all the days of Passover, whereas the sacrifice of the Pascal lamb is only the first night. Yet we call it hag haPesach, and only rarely hag hamatzot. In the Torah the name of the holiday is almost always hag hamatzot, and it is only called the holiday of Pesach once. Yet we insist on calling it hag haPesach, not hag hamatzot. Even after the Temple was destroyed and we were exiled from our land, although we no longer had the korban Pesach but only matzah, we nevertheless insisted on continuing to call the holiday after the Pascal Lamb.

Furthermore: when on Passover night we indicate that anyone who has not explained the three basic items of Passover has not fulfilled his obligation of the Hagaddah, we place Pesach first, then Matzah Umaror.

The intention of our sages is clear. It is to plant deep in our hearts the spirit of devotion to God and the awareness of the importance of the readiness to sacrifice for our faith. It is to emphasize the actions of Abraham in this connection, and the willingness of our fathers even before they were to be redeemed from Egypt, to sacrifice themselves for the sake of heaven. Now we can understand an interesting episode in our history. Todos ish Romi hinhig et beney Romi leechol gedayim mekulasim beleyley Pesachim. Shalhu lo, ilmale Todos ata, gozartanu alecha niduy. Sheata maachil et Yisrael kodshim bahutz. (Pesachim 53).

The Talmud then asks what is meant by the fact that Todos was a big man; does that mean a powerful man, intimidating the sages, or a great man, whom they respected, and the Talmud answers that he was a great and respected man. And they bring evidence from another statement of Todos, Od zu darash Todos ish Romi, ma rau Hananya Mishael veAzaria shemasru nafsham al kedushat hashem lekivshan haesh? Nasu kal vahomer leatzmam mitzefardeim....

If Todos was such a great man, why was he so stubborn? Didn't he realize that he was violating a great prohibition, kodshim bahutz? And furthermore, he must have made other statements if he was a great man, why did they select the quotation from Hananiah Mishael and Azarya as the most important evidence of his greatness?

Let us glance at the period in which he lived. The same story is brought elsewhere in the Talmud, (Berachot 19), and there it is brought with the statement Shalach lo Shimon ben Shetach. Shimon ben Shetach lived at the time the Temple stood. So Todos was actually alive before the destruction of the Temple.

(You can insert here a discussion of the origins of the settlement of the Jews in Rome, the trade and the travel that caused a community to be created there... etc.) These settlers of Judea who lived in Rome were in terrible danger of assimilation.

They needed some kind of strengthening, both their faith and especially their willingness to sacrifice themselves for their faith. That was the purpose of Todos ish Romi. And the symbol by which he taught willingness to sacrifice oneself for faith was the korban Pesach. His great strength lay in his inspiration, and the chief inspiration was Hanania Mishael and Azaria who had shown our people the way to self-sacrifice, like Abraham of old. The sages who opposed him agreed with his purpose, merely disagreeing with his method.

In fact, Rabban Gameliel of Yavne, after the destruction of the Temple, attempted to do the same thing that Todos did. Hinhig laasot gedi mekulas beleyley Pesachim – (Betza, 22b). See also Hagahot Rashash to Pesachim 74a) – Zecher lemikdash, shekatuv bo al keraav veal kirbo (Rashi).

The sages disagreed with him too – and for the same reason. Why did he seek to do this? For the same motive of Todos ish Romi; to teach the people Kiddush Hashem, courage, fortitude, mesirat nefesh. He knew that the sages had chided Todos and rejected his method, requiring him to inspire with other lessons, since it appeared as if kodshim bachutz were being offered. But he reasoned that this might apply only while the Temple stood. Now that the Temple was destroyed, people would realize that he was not actually offering a korban but rather teaching a lesson that was sorely needed. The people had been demoralized by the destruction of the Temple, the desolation of the Land, and the rule of Rome with all its idolatry. The Shekalim which had been offered uninterruptedly since the time of Koresh's decree that Jews could return from Babylonia, and which had continued even after the destruction of the Temple, could no longer be offered, and in fact the Romans required that they be offered to one of their pagan gods, Jupiter. Rabban Gameliel deeply felt that the people desperately needed the lesson of pride and mesirat nefesh that was the essence of the korban Pesach.

While he too was stopped from going so far as to use the korban Pesach as the tool of his education and musar to the people, he and his colleagues used other methods instead. The lesson of these sages, of mesirat nefesh, was

taught well during the subsequent generations and for all time... They stressed that the way to mesirat nefesh is through constant daily disciplines, not only by means of occasional performances like the korban Pesach would be.

When Rabbi Akiva was martyred, he declared that all his life he was wondering how he could serve Hashem with all his heart, with his very life, until now the time had come.... The disciplines he practiced all his life led to the supreme sacrifice he was called upon to make.

This discipline was symbolized in the ceremony of the korban Pesach by the requirement that veetzem lo tishberu bo.

Every age has its challenges. We in America know the many challenges before us, creating loyalty and developing learning etc. And today a particular challenge of demonstrating united loyalty to Israel. Particularly and especially demonstrate to visit Israel now, a challenge of mesirat nefesh which American Jews in particular can meet. May we all merit, through our mesirat nefesh, the geula viyeshua we so desperately need, the binyan Beth Hamikdash bimhera beyamenu venomar amen.

[Following is a synopsis of the status of the sanctuaries as they existed from the time we entered the Promised Land under Joshua until the first Beth Hamikdash was built.

Three places had bama gedola, Gilgal, Nov and Givon [Rashi Zevachim 112b]. Gilgal was the place of the Aron during 14 years of conquest and division of the land; then to Shilo, and bama gedola in Gilgal, since the aron was not yet in Shilo but in Gilgal, to go to war... When Shilo was destroyed and they came to Nov, the aron was not there because it was captured by Pelishtim, and even when it was returned it was not restored to Nov but was 20 years in Kiryat Yearim. Afterwards it was a short time in the house of Oved Edom Hagiti, till David took it up to Jerusalem. So Nov was also just a bama gedola. When Saul destroyed Nov, they placed the Ohel Moed in Givon, and the aron was not brought there. So it was also only a bama gedola. But Shiloh was called Mishkan or Bayit because the aron was in the Ohel Moed. And they were forbidden to take it out, so when they took it out it was captured. Until the Mishkan was erected bama was permitted, and when the Mishkan was erected the bama was forbidden. This continued all through the desert. When they entered the land, bama was permitted. But only nedarim unedavot. When they came to Shilo the bamot were forbidden, Menuha zu Shilo, nahala zu Yerushalayim. (Rav Shimon holds even there, bama was permitted till Yerushalayim.) When the aron was taken captive, the bamot were permitted even in the time of Shiloh (that was in question). After the destruction of Shiloh, through time of Nov and Givon, since the aron was not in the Ohel Moed, the bamot were permitted... When they came to Yerushalayim, the bamot were forbidden and there was no longer any heter... Bama gedola, karbenot tzibbur and yahid. Bama ketana, only yahid. Pesach is a korban tzibbur...

[Submitted by Nisson Shulman]

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/amen/2025/04/10/>

Amen!

By **Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** - 12 Nisan 5785 – April 10, 2025

At our Pesach seder and also in the Torah reading on the seventh day of Pesach, we read the pasuk (Shemos 14:31), “and they [the Jewish nation] believed in Hashem and in Moshe,” (after seeing the Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea).

HaGaon R’ Elchonon Wasserman observes that one of the reasons for the Ten Plagues was, “so that you will repeat [it] into the ears of your children and your children’s children ... and you will know that I am Hashem (Shemos 10:2).” He questions this statement, as we already learned earlier, before the Ten Plagues, (Shemos 4:31) that “the nation believed.”

In a similar vein, the Torah tells us concerning Avraham Avinu, “he believed in Hashem, and He considered it as righteousness (Bereishis 15:6).” Rashi tells us that it was Hashem who considered Avraham’s belief as an act of righteousness, because he demonstrated his complete faith in Hashem’s promise.

The Ramban however does not subscribe to Rashi’s interpretation. The Ramban asks: How could it be considered a level of righteousness for Avraham to believe what Hashem said when he personally heard it directly from Hashem? This was the same Avraham who was ready immediately when Hashem called upon him to sacrifice his son; Avraham was the greatest of all believers.

The Ramban offers another explanation. Avraham Avinu regarded highly Hashem’s promise; he was a humble righteous individual. However, because of his deep humility, he did not believe that he was worthy of Hashem’s blessing.

Similarly, R’ Elchonon cites the incident at the end of Makkos (24b) when Rabban Gamliel, R’ Elazar ben Azaryah, R’ Yehoshua, and R’ Akiva were walking towards Yerushalayim. As they arrived at the Har HaBayis they saw a fox emerge from the site of the Kodosh Kodoshim. R’ Gamliel, R’ Elazar and R’ Yehoshua began to cry; R’ Akiva, however, laughed. When he was asked why he laughed, he explained that when Hashem revealed the future to the prophet Yeshaya, He took as witnesses Zechariah and Uriah (Yeshayah 8:2). What is their connection? In the prophecy of Uriah it is written “Tzion will be plowed over like a field ... will become heaps of rubble ... like stone heaps in the forest (Micha 3:12).” In the prophecy to Zechariah Hashem said (8:4), “Old men and old women will once again sit in the streets of Yerushalayim ...” R’ Akiva concluded, “Now that I see that the prophecy to Uriah has been fulfilled, I am certain that the prophecy of Zechariah will be realized as well.” The other sages confirmed that they were indeed comforted. R’ Elchonon asks: Surely R’ Akiva believed the words of Hashem!?

R’ Elchonon responds that concerning matters of faith there are no simple yes and no answers. There are many levels of emunah. Contrary to our assumption that if one perceives Hashem’s presence through his senses that would constitute the highest level of recognizing Hashem, our senses can, in fact, deceive us. Sincere and pure emunah is more elevated than experiencing a miracle.

The Torah uses the words “they believed in Hashem,” implying a level of emunah ordinarily unachievable by a common human being. So too, R’ Akiva certainly believed in all the prophecies cited in Tanach. However, when he saw the fox emerge from the Holy of Holies, he reached an even higher level in his emunah.

The lesson is clear. We are all believers. We believe in Hashem and all the Thirteen Principles of Faith. However, we are “a work in progress,” growing our emunah every moment of every day.

One of the strongest manifestations of emunah is when we answer amen to any bracha every day. Our sages tell us that the word amen is an abbreviation for kel melech ne’eman – Hashem is a faithful king. We are expressing our belief in Hashem in that which was stated in the bracha that was made. In fact, the word amen completes the bracha.

Rebbetzin Kanievsky, z”l. told of a young girl who had come to inform her that her mother had passed on and, as a zechus for her mother’s neshama, she had resolved not to eat or drink unless someone was present to answer amen to her bracha. When the rebbetzin repeated this matter to her renowned husband, R’ Chaim, he responded that the girl had accepted upon herself a very difficult kabbalah (resolve).

This young girl later told the rebbetzin that one night she was extremely hungry and very much wanted to take something to eat. All the people in the house were fast asleep. She waited a long time to see if anyone would stir, or wake up, but soon realized that everyone was down for the night. She eventually went to sleep still very hungry.

That night, the girl’s mother appeared to her in a dream and said, “You cannot imagine the effect of your good deed. This display of great stamina and fortitude created a great commotion in Shamayim. You should know that your friend \_\_\_\_\_, who attends one of your classes, and has become very ill will now merit a refuah sheleima.” With those words, her mother disappeared.

In the morning, the girl awoke in shock. She had not known that her friend was ill. Impulsively, she approached her friend in school and told her about



the dream. The friend was stunned because it had been decided that her illness would be kept a secret and absolutely no one had been told that she was ill. The girl confided to her friend that it was her mother who had told her this good news. Her family was thrilled, though, to learn that she would merit a complete recovery, which she did.

Word of this great miracle reached the ears of the great R' Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman, one of the gedolei hador. He proclaimed that he wanted to establish the custom in his shul that the congregants should come early so that they could answer amen to each other's brachos. In this way, each bracha would be a complete bracha, and they would merit besuros tovos (good tidings) within Klal Yisrael.

<https://jewishlink.news/something-for-your-seder-2/>

### **Something for Your Seder**

**By Rabbi Mark Wildes**

| April 9, 2025

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik told the story of a Seder he remembered from his early childhood. He was about six or seven years old when he was sitting with his family on the Seder night. They had just made the Kiddush when in walks the Rav's grandfather, the revered Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, wearing a pot on his head. Little Yosef Dov, looks up and asks: "Zaide, why are you wearing a pot on your head?" To which Rav Chaim answered: "Because tonight, my dear grandson, is different from all other nights. Tonight our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt. Rav Chaim then proceeded to engage the entire family, which included small children, women and older men in a conversation about the story of the Exodus.

Rav Chaim did something strange to connect not only with his son, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, who was also a great sage, but also with his 6-year-old grandson, his wife, children and grandchildren. Rav Chaim made certain that everyone at the table was involved in the conversation because that is the mitzvah of the Seder Night — for everyone, no matter what age or background, to relate to the story of the Exodus of our people. The discussion must therefore be tailored to all those assembled, and we ensure everyone is engaged and everyone's attention is aroused, even if it means wearing a pot on our heads.

The idea of tailoring the Seder to whoever is present is most dramatically demonstrated through the famous Fours Sons. The Haggadah speaks about four types of children: the wise son, the rebellious son, the simple son and the child who cannot even ask. These different personalities each ask different questions and receive different answers. In doing so, our Sages teach us a fundamental principle in education: "Teach your son according to his way" (Proverbs 22:6). Based on this verse, our Sages learn that children of different dispositions, tendencies and abilities need to receive different answers and approaches, even to the same question or event.

This idea is echoed in the Tanchumah which comments on the verse: "Moses spoke and God answered with a voice" (Exodus 19:19). At the Revelation at Sinai, God spoke with a "voice" that Moshe could handle. Similarly, God's "voice," says the Tanchumah, came to each Jew according to his or her capacity: "The elders heard the voice according to their capacity, the young men according to theirs, the children according to their capacity, the infants according to theirs, the women, all according to their own capacity." In the same vein, the Haggadah has four different parent-child dialogues, to teach how the Torah recognizes different types of children with different interests and questions all concerning the same Exodus from Egypt. Each child receives attention. Each child is given an answer. And although the wise son's question is posed in a more sophisticated way than the simple son's is, this does not mean that only he receives an answer. Both the wise and simple sons bring their own special talents and strengths to the dialogue. The wise son brings his profound and inquisitive mind and the simple son — his readiness and purity of faith. As the Brurei Hamidot, a commentary on the Mechilta, writes, the opposite of the wicked son is not the wise son but really the simple son. For the simple son is ready and willing to serve God in his utter simplicity and faith, to accept every aspect of the Torah, even the non-rational parts, which the rebellious son mocks. The rebellious son, after

denying the foundation of our faith and removing himself from the community, still gets an answer. Finally, in regard to the child who knows not even how to ask, the Haggadah teaches "You must open" — the parent must begin a dialogue since this child does not even know enough to question. If you happen to have such a person, young or old, at your table, you must initiate the conversation to ensure everyone is engaged in the discussion.

All four sons must be commended for at least being present. The most problematic child is not the rebellious son for at least he showed up! It is the "fifth son" — a term coined by the late Lubavitcher Rebbe — the child who never came to the Seder in the first place for whom we must be concerned, the child who never joined because Passover, the Exodus and all of Judaism simply has no meaning or value to him. I believe, however, that there will be more people at the Seder this year than last. MJE (Manhattan Jewish Experience) and other outreach programs are all reporting larger numbers of attendance since October 7t.(MJE is up by 37 %!) Years ago Alan Dershowitz once remarked to me: "Rabbi, a little antisemitism wouldn't be bad for your business," and he was right. Antisemitism on campus and elsewhere has awoken many Jews from their slumber, and we must welcome them to our Seders and Shabbat tables.

But we must learn how to embrace all Jews for an even more fundamental reason: to engage our own children in Yiddishkeit. There are some who view the four sons not as representing four different types of Jews, but as one individual at different stages of his life. A child is born as someone who cannot even ask. The small child grows and can now ask, but he is simple minded — his perspective of the world is black and white. As the child continues to mature into his adolescent years, he goes through a period of rebellion, questioning the values in which he was raised. We pray our sons and daughters continue on to the final phase of development, to that of the wise son, someone sincerely interested in wisdom and knowledge.

Ultimately, this is the goal of parenthood: to raise children who will one day be interested not only in questioning, but also in finding the answers. The great Rav Eisel Charif of Slonim was looking to marry off his daughter to a Torah scholar, and so he traveled to the world famous Yeshiva of Volozhin where the brightest Talmudic students were enrolled. Upon his arrival, he informed the head of the Yeshiva that he would present an involved Torah question to the students and whoever could give a suitable answer would be given his daughter's hand in marriage. Rav Eisel posed the question. The question was so difficult that no one could answer it right away. He therefore stipulated he would give the students one day to come up with an answer. The day came and went and no one came forward. Rav Eisel got onto his coach and proceeded back home. Suddenly the coach driver heard a voice crying: "Stop, stop!" Turning around, he saw one of the students from the yeshiva running, desperately trying to catch up with the coach. The driver began to slow down but Rav Eisel told him to keep going: "It's too late for him to answer now." The coach driver pleaded with the Rabbi: "Have pity on this young man, look how he's running with all his strength to catch up to us." Rav Eisel relented, and the driver stopped the horses. As soon as the young man caught up, the Rabbi told him: "It's too late to be considered for my daughter." "I realize that," the student said, "but I want to know the answer to your question. Can you please tell me?"

The Rabbi was so impressed with the student's desire to know the answer to the Torah question that he brought him to meet his daughter. They eventually married and that young man became the legendary Rav Yossele of Slonim, the Slonimer Rebbe.

How far are we willing to go, how fast are we prepared to run to learn more and to grow in our Judaism? Pesach is a holiday that requires us to learn and observe more. It inspires us to never be content with where we are now, but to keep acquiring greater wisdom. This is why the Haggadah records how the greatest sages of the Talmud — Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yeshoshua and Rabbi Akiva... stayed up all night discussing Yetziat Mitzrayim. I am sure they knew the story of the Exodus, but they remained awake because they wanted to know more. They desired a more penetrating understanding of God and of Torah. May this Pesach inspire us all to recommit ourselves to learn and

study more Torah, to grow in our observance and commitment, and in doing so, bring the ultimate redemption.

Rabbi Mark Wildes, founder, Manhattan Jewish Experience (MJE), a highly successful Jewish outreach program which engages 20's/30's in Jewish life and which has facilitated 383 marriages

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From: Aish.com <today@aish.com>

reply-to: newsletterserver@aish.com

date: Apr 10, 2025, 7:33 AM

subject: **Matzah's Deeper Meaning; Spiritual Prep for Passover  
Warren Buffet and the Secret of Matzah**

**Rabbi Efreim Goldberg**

The meaning of matzah and the freedom of simplicity.

Matzah, the most important food at the Seder, seems straightforward but if you think about it, it's actually somewhat complicated.

On the one hand, it symbolizes and celebrates freedom; it's the bread over which we recline like aristocrats and tell the story of our liberation.

On the other hand, it's called "lechem oni," the bread of affliction. Moreover, for a bread meant to be a sign of royalty, it's rather bland. The recipe is flour and water, period. Any additional ingredient would invalidate it. In food competitions, the taste is only part of the story; presentation, texture and appearance are all also important. Matzah is asymmetrical, imperfect, basically a bland cracker, dull and simple even in its presentation and appearance. This is the food of royalty and wealth?

The Maharal, in answering this question, explains the fundamental theme of matzah and how in fact it symbolizes freedom, wealth, and royalty.

We tend to think the more things we have, the more complex and complicated our portfolio, the more intricate and sophisticated our possessions, the more elaborate and extravagant, the more it reflects wealth, freedom, and affluence. In fact, says the Maharal, the opposite is true. The more we depend on fancy things, fancy experiences, and even fancy ideas, the more we are beholden to them and reliant on them.

To truly be free is to embrace simplicity. The less we are dependent on externals, on what an object or experience can provide, the freer we are from them.

Lechem oni, typically translated as the bread of affliction, doesn't mean that those who eat it are suffering. The Maharal translates it as bread of oni, of living without. It doesn't lead to affliction and suffering; it leads to freedom and liberation. When you are dependent on something – material things, superficial experiences, exciting stimulation, you are not at free. Freedom is a return to simplicity. Only one who can live with oni, without, is free and wealthy because they have no dependency.

We don't eat matzah the whole year. There is nothing wrong with enjoying some yeast, some leaven, from feeding that sourdough. But for one week we demonstrate our freedom from those things so that even when we return to them, we do so by seeing them as luxuries, as external to who we are.

They're not necessities, a part of us. They are something we can live without. Warren Buffet is an incredibly wealthy man. Most would assume I say that because he is worth \$139 billion, but that isn't why. The 93-year-old has lived in the same modest house in Omaha, Nebraska for 66 years. When asked why he never upgraded, he said, "I'm happy there. I'd move if I thought I'd be happier someplace else. This house does just fine. I'm warm in the winter, I'm cool in the summer, it's convenient for me. I couldn't imagine having a better house."

The founder of Berkshire Hathaway, one of the richest men in the entire world, only swapped his flip phone for a smartphone in 2020. Buffett is free not because of his tremendous material wealth but because he doesn't depend on it for happiness.

Others, too, are craving this wealth. There is a movement towards getting rid of smartphones and turning them in for dumbphones. The movement isn't amongst the religious communities in Jerusalem or Lakewood, it is all over America. Sales of flip phones and dumbphones are up with people craving simplicity, plain, simple, bland, back to basics. People are bloated on chametz and looking for more matzah in their lives.

Matzah is freedom because it is a return to simplicity, a break from that which we have grown dependent on and it is the discovery that we can be happier with less than with more.

Passover and matzah remind us that the things that are most simple and straightforward are most true and most valuable, they set us free and make us wealthy. Like Warren Buffett, we shouldn't be attached and dependent on external things, even if we can afford them. Being happy with the simple and plain will set us free.

And lastly, let's let the matzah inspire us to simplify our relationships.

I once attended a funeral of a woman who was clearly complicated. There was a palpable tension among her children and grandchildren and during their eulogies they subtly (and sometimes not so subtly), while offering praise, still communicated that she introduced lots of conflict into the family.

The last speaker was her son. He got up, paused, and said, "Mom was complicated, let's keep things simple. Let's simply love one another, simply be loyal to one another and simply get along with one another," and with that he sat down.

Let's introduce more matzah into our relationships. Instead of making them complicated, keep them simple by simply loving one another, being loyal to one another and getting along with one another.

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg is the rabbi of the Boca Raton Synagogue.]

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from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Apr 10, 2025, 3:07 AM

subject: **Rav Kook on Pesach: Destroy Chametz, Gain Freedom**  
"By the first day [of Passover] you must clear out your homes of all leaven."  
(Exodus 12:15)

Why Clear Out Chametz?

Why does the Torah command us to destroy all chametz (leaven) found in our homes during Passover? It is logical to eat matzah; this fast-baked food has a historical connection to the Exodus, recalling our hurried escape from Egyptian slavery. But how does clearing out leaven from our homes relate to the Passover theme of freedom and independence?

Freedom of Spirit

There are two aspects to attaining true freedom. First, one needs to be physically independent of all foreign subjugation. But complete freedom also requires freedom of the spirit. The soul is not free if it is subjected to external demands that prevent it from following the path of its inner truth.

The difference between a slave and a free person is not just a matter of social standing. One may find an educated slave whose spirit is free, and a free person with the mindset of a slave. What makes us truly free? When we are able to be faithful to our inner self, to the truth of our Divine image — then we can live a fulfilled life, a life focused on our soul's inner goals. One whose spirit is servile, on the other hand, will never experience this sense of self-fulfillment. His happiness will always depend upon the approval of others who dominate over him, whether this control is de jure or de facto.

The Foreign Influence of Leaven

What is chametz? Leaven is a foreign substance added to the dough. The leavening agent makes the dough rise; it changes its natural shape and characteristics. Destruction of all leaven in the house symbolizes the removal of all foreign influences and constraints that prevent us from realizing our spiritual aspirations.

These two levels of independence, physical and spiritual, exist on both the individual and the national level. An independent people must be free not only from external rule, but also from foreign domination in the cultural and spiritual spheres.

For the Israelites in Egypt, it was precisely at the hour of imminent redemption that the dangers of these foreign 'leavening' forces were the greatest. At that time of great upheaval, true permanent emancipation was not a given. Would the Israelites succeed in freeing themselves, not only from Egyptian bondage, but also from the idolatrous culture in which they had lived for hundreds of years? To commemorate their complete liberation from Egypt, the Passover holiday of freedom requires the removal of all foreign 'leavening' agents.

## Cleansing Ourselves of Foreign Influences

In our days too, an analogous era of imminent redemption, we need to purge the impure influences of alien cultures and attitudes that have entered our national spirit during our long exile among the nations.

Freedom is the fulfillment of our inner essence. We need to aspire to the lofty freedom of those who left Egypt. To the Israelites of that generation, God revealed Himself and brought them into His service. This is truly the highest form of freedom, as the Sages taught in Avot (6:2):

“Instead of ‘engraved (charut) on the tablets’ (Ex. 32:16), read it as ‘freedom’ (cheirut). Only one who studies Torah is truly free.”

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 151-153. Adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. II, p. 244.)

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Essay **Pesach/Bo/Vaeschanan**

**Rabbi YY Jacobson**

April 10, 2025 12 Nisan 5785

The 4 Sons—and the 4 Big Questions on Judaism

The Rational Child, the Depressed Child, the Selfish Child, and the Apathetic Child Searching One day, the phone rang, a little boy answered.

"May I speak to your parents?" "They're busy." "Is anybody else there?"

"The police." "Can I speak to them?" "They're busy." "Is anybody else there?" "The firemen." "Can I speak to them?" "They're busy."

"Let me get this straight: Your parents, the police, and the firemen are there, but they're all busy? What are they doing?" "Looking for me."

The Origin of the Four Sons

It is impossible to think about Passover without the four sons occupying a central place. The four sons with their vexing four questions have captured the Jewish imagination for millennia.

The origin of the “four sons” is fascinating. Four times, in four places, does the Torah address our duty to tell the story to our children—three of them in the book of Exodus (Parshat Bo), right after the actual Exodus story, and once in Deuteronomy, at the end of the forty years in the desert.

The first is in Exodus 12:25-27:

When you enter the land that G-d will give you as He promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children say to you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to G-d, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'

The second is in Exodus 13:8:

On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what G-d did for me when I came out of Egypt.'

The third is in Exodus 13:14:

In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand, G-d brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.'

The fourth passage is in Deuteronomy 6:20:

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees, and laws the Lord our G-d has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but G-d brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

Why the need for four separate passages?

Our sages, in their attentiveness to nuance, deduced that Moses was addressing four different types of children. We must speak—the Torah is intimating—to each of our children, but we cannot speak in the same way, with the same language, to each child. What modern education techniques have discovered in the last half-a-century, the Torah has articulated 3300 years ago by communicating the story of the Exodus in four passages, in four different ways, addressing four different types of children. Each child requires an individual dialect relating to his or her composition, challenges, and strengths.

In the famous words of the Passover Haggadah:

בְּנֵי אֲרָבָעָה בָּנִים דְּבָרָה תוֹרָה. אֶחָד חָכָם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע, וְאֶחָד טָמ, וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינִי יוֹדֵעַ לְשִׂאוֹל.

“The Torah speaks of four sons: The wise, the rebellious, the simple one, and the one who knows not to ask.”

4 Critical Directives for Education

Listen carefully to these words of the Haggadah. They contain four critical points:

1) We are not dealing with one child; we have at our table four different types of youth. What works for one, may not work for the other. 2) despite their differences, all of them are our beloved children. They are not strangers; they are our flesh and blood. None of them should ever be rejected. 3) The Torah does not speak to one genre of children; rather, it addresses all of them, containing life-messages for each of the four children. If we can't find the words for each of them, it is because we are not accessing the full wisdom of Torah. 4) The Torah message to each child is distinct. You can't speak the same words to two children.

Every communicator knows that before you communicate, you must know your audience well. So Moses—and the Haggadah—are cautioning us: Before you communicate the story of your heritage, history, and faith to the next generation, you must “know your audience.” You need to spend time understanding the unique persona—both strengths and challenges—of your “audience,” of your children, so that you can address each of them appropriately, in a way that might enter their hearts.

Many of us try to speak to our children, on the night of Passover and other nights, but we fail to evaluate the audience properly. I may speak to the child I would have liked him/her to be, or to the child in the way I depict him/her in my imagination. But how can I be effective if I do not understand what you are hearing and experiencing?

Who Are They?

Who are these four children? What's this great hullabaloo about them? Why four and not five, six, or ten? Why are they central to our Passover experience? What are their questions and why are these questions important? The premise to answer all of these questions is that these four children are not external to us; they are within each of us.[1] Each of us asks their four questions.

What are the four biggest questions on Judaism? These are the dilemmas raised by each of the four sons. And Passover is the time when we dedicate ourselves to addressing these dilemmas, within our own minds and within the mind of our loved ones.

The Wise Son

We begin our journey with the wise child. This is the first question on Judaism which comes from the person who cherishes wisdom.

הַכֹּהֵן מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מֵה הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתָכֶם? וְאִם אֵתָּה אֶמֶר לֹ. כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח: אֵין מִפְּטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמָן.

The intellectual citizen asks, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees, and laws the Lord our G-d has commanded you?" This child, an attentive student of Judaism is thoughtful, reflective, and inquisitive. He does not mind the rational principles of Judaism. What perturbs him or her are all the different types of laws in Judaism, including the “chukim,” the laws that don't seem to make sense.

Most of us ask this question, in one way or another. Few of us have a serious problem (at least intellectually) with “Thou shall not murder,” or “Thou shall not steal.” Who can argue with Judaism's dedication to charity, justice, education, its injunction to honor your father and mother, and its caution against delaying payment to an employee? But why would any G-d care for black boxes placed on my head and arm? How could a rational Harvard or Oxford graduate in the 21st century believe that eating crunchy matzah on Pesach is a holy act? How about using a mikvah instead of a bathtub? And can shrimp be so bad? Does G-d even know the difference between fake and real crab? Does a logical G-d really care if I cook on Shabbos? Eat a cheeseburger? Mix wool and linen in my garments? Religion should be about ethics, being a good person, decent, kind, and generous. Why all of these strange laws and rituals?

A Bizarre Answer

The answer we give to this “wise” question, at first glance, seems bizarre:

וְאִם אֵתָּה אֶמֶר לֹ. כְּהִלְכוֹת הַפֶּסַח, אֵין מִפְּטִירִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמָן.

Tell him the laws of Pesach, (including the law that) one is not allowed to eat after the Afikoman.

Huh? How does this answer a profound, philosophical angst?

The most profound matters in life are often beyond our rational grasp. After all the amazing discoveries in science and cosmology, is there a single human being who truly understands the mysteries of the universe? Even the untold brilliance of a single genome in a single cell is beyond the grasp of three pounds of grey matter residing in our skulls. Whence the hubris to think that I can wrap my brain around the Creator?

Judaism, to be sure, values rational thinking and the full usage of our brains. Yet toward the end of the Seder, we consume the Afikoman, the humble, flat matzah, representing our internalization of a critical truth: If G-d is real it would be foolish to try and reduce Him to our finite brains. The matzah, with its unleavened humility and lack of posturing, sitting there so flat and innocent, is the quintessential symbol of accepting G-d on His terms, not mine. Of acknowledging that there are things that will sometimes elude our grasp and being okay with that.

Of course, whatever we can grasp intellectually we must strive to grasp, but reality transcends our understanding, and when we limit our lives only to that which we understand, we deprive ourselves of having a relationship with true reality, with ultimate reality, with the infinite source and core of all.

When we discover that it is futile to reduce our relationship with G-d to our limited and narrow perspectives, then we realize that, on the contrary, the greatest delight in life is the ability to do something simply because G-d said so—since this is what allows us to connect with the core of all truth, with the essence of all reality, with the most authentic, transcendent truth.

This is the message we communicate to the wise member of our people: Let the taste of the Afikoman linger in your mouth. Do not eat anything afterward which will obliterate the taste of the matzah. The taste of the Afikoman—the taste of humble submission to G-d—is the sweetest taste in the world. Do not dilute it with any other food. Nothing comes close to it! "Don't eat anything after you digest the matzah!" That is the deepest, most delightful taste in the world.

#### The Atheist

The other day, I met an atheist. He told me he doesn't believe in anything that cannot be proven to him beyond a reasonable doubt.

I told him I don't believe him.

"What don't you believe?" he asked.

"That you don't believe," I answered. "Can you prove that to me—beyond a reasonable doubt?"

"Well, I'm telling you so!" he replied.

"So," I answered, "I'm just supposed to naively believe anything you tell me without proof?"

The truth is, there is no human being without beliefs. Belief is to humankind as sunlight is to the forest. Without belief, there is no life.

If lovers didn't believe "this is the one!" if couples didn't believe "our children will be beautiful!" if parents didn't believe, "one day they'll grow up and it will all pay off"—oh, what a desolate world this would be.

#### The Depressed Child

What's the next child's issue with Judaism? We call this child the "Ben Rasha," the wicked son, or the rebellious son. But a more subtle and accurate translation is the "depressed son," or "the broken son." For, as we shall see, he's not as wicked as we may make him out to be.

Let us listen to what he says:

רשע מה הוא אומר? מה העבודה הזאת לכם? לכם - ולא לו. ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הפלל כפר בעקור. ואף אמה הקהה את שניו נאמר לו: בעבור זה עשה יי לי בצאתי ממצרים. לי - ולא לו. אילו היה שם, לא היה נגאל.

"What is this whole thing you have going on here serving G-d, being in a relationship with Him? As if He has time for you. If you believe in G-d, you have some audacity sitting there pretending that your small little actions can capture His interest and attention!

This child, as is often the case with rebels, cynics, mockers, scoffers, and alienated children—suffers (consciously or unconsciously) from profound internal pain. He cannot bring himself to believe that he has a beauty, a grace, to the extent that G-d Himself wants to connect with him. He asks a profound question: If G-d really exists, and G-d is infinite, it is absurd to

believe that G-d cares about me and my behavior. It is ludicrous to assume that our lives have real, absolute meaning.

And if life is inherently meaningless, then the only way to numb the pain of meaninglessness is through distractions, addictions, gluttony, narcissism, and an obsession with materialism. Not every "rasha" is really a rebel. Often, rebelliousness is born from an internal sense of worthlessness. My life does not matter; I am a random mistake, a speck of dust in an endlessly-ever-expanding universe.

This is a struggle many of us endure. Sometimes we wake up in the morning passionate about life, love, and purpose; sometimes we awake, and we just feel that nothing really matters. How can I celebrate something which is so meaningless?

#### The Problem Is the Solution

The answer to this question is very moving.

Tell him, says the Haggadah, that it is "Because of this for which G-d took me out of Egypt." "Bavur Zeh." Because you are an imperfect being, so small in comparison to an infinite G-d, so easily tempted, so easily distracted, so mortal, flimsy, and weak—that is precisely why G-d chose to forge a relationship with you.

The very basis for the rasha's question is his answer.

You think G-d is interested in the grand and the awesome? He's got enough of that between His infinite Self and His perfect angels! What really captures His attention is when a small, fragile human fraught with troubles and imperfections shows up and says, "I'm here; I want to become Your partner in the work of repairing the world." The very purpose and objective of creation is that G-d wanted a relationship with something (that perceives itself as) "outside" of Himself—something that is not infinite, eternal, perfect, flawless. It is our "smallness" that He finds so attractive and irresistible. It is our simple humaneness that matters most.

Your smallness is your greatness.

#### Look Not at the Teeth

How do we see this in the Haggada's response? The Haggadah says: "Blunt his teeth." [2] This is hardly the paragon of sensitive understanding.

But there is a beautiful message here. Sometimes the bite of our children's teeth hurt. The Haggadah challenges us with this question: Can we look beyond the "teeth?" Can we disregard the scathing bite and listen to the whisper of our children's souls, buried beneath the biting, stinging, cutting, and piercing words? Does your child perhaps need more of your emotional presence? Does he/she need to feel your heart more? Does this child need more understanding and sensitivity? Can you notice the underlying anxiety, depression, or trauma? Can you see the inner hopelessness, despair, and sense of worthlessness in this child's brain?

[The Vilna Gaon teaches:[3] The Hebrew word שניו, "his teeth," is numerically equivalent to 366. The Hebrew word for Rasha (רשע), wicked, is 570. When we "blunt his teeth," subtracting 366 from 570, what we are left with is 204, which equals the word Tzaddik (צדיק). In other words, when you remove the "teeth," the scathing biting words, you will see that inside this child is a Tzaddik, a glowing, beautiful, and sacred person!]

What is more, we must help this child blunt and dull his own biting view of himself or herself. We want to help our children begin celebrating their existence and seeing the value of their souls. Stop "biting" into yourself and viewing yourself as small, valueless, and meaningless. G-d loves you. He needs you. He wants you. He is so proud of you! You are small? Sure, that's exactly why he wants you and cares for you—as the infinite G-d was searching for a relationship with the finite soul who fuses the infinite with the finite.

#### The Selfish Child

We now come to the third child, the "Tam," which literally means "the complete son." He is the exact opposite. If the rebel or cynic thinks he is worthless and G-d would never really care about his actions, the "complete" person represents that internal voice which grows arrogant to the point it feels all success and failure is predicated on human action alone.

תם מה הוא אומר? מה זאת? ואמרת אליו: בהזק יד הוציאנו יי ממצרים, מבית עבדים.

The complete son, or the selfish child, declares, "What's this?" See how well I am doing. I am a success story. Why mix G-d into this? What's this strange behavior of worshipping G-d? We will be just fine without Him.

This mindset does not think we are small and valueless. On the contrary, we are everything. We do not need or have anything above us. We are the masters of our own fate. We owe nothing to anyone.

This is the third question we may have on Judaism. We understand that in the ancient past when people did not understand science, they needed G-d to explain the universe and its insanity. Superstition reigned. But now that we know enough about science and biology, let's stop mixing G-d into the picture.

It's a Gift

The answer the Haggadah presents to this child is: "Bichozeq Yad!" "With a strong hand, G-d took us out of Egypt." On our own, we would not be able to lift a finger. We were liberated from Egypt, not due to our talents, but due to His "strong arm."

When things are going well, we tend to become smug and desensitized to the miracle of life. Is it normal that our universe and our planet continue to follow predictable rules we call the "laws of nature" allowing for the continuity of life? Is it logical that one cell develops into 40 trillion cells, each one containing the program manual for the entire organism? Is it rational that our tiny brain grows 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion connections? Is it sensible that the combination of seed, soil, air, water, and sunlight creates myriads of types of fruits, vegetables, plants, etc?!

At moments of bliss, people often feel that they are on top of the world and they do not need anybody. They forget their humaneness and simplicity. They forget that every breath, heartbeat, every flow of vitality, inspiration, and energy comes from the Creator and source of all life.

The coronavirus has demonstrated to us the absurdity of a smug scientist.

The Bull & the Badge

A DEA officer stopped at a ranch in Texas to speak with an old rancher.

"I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs."

The rancher said, "Okay, but don't go in that field over there."

The DEA officer verbally exploded: "Mister, I have the authority of the Federal Government with me!" Reaching into his rear pants pocket, the arrogant officer removed his badge and proudly displayed it to the rancher.

"See this badge?! This badge means I can go wherever I wish. No questions asked or answers given! Have I made myself clear? Do you understand?!" The rancher nodded politely, apologized, and went about his chores.

A short time later, the old rancher heard loud screams, he looked up and saw the DEA officer running for his life, being chased by the rancher's big Santa Gertrudis bull.

With every step, the bull was gaining ground on the officer, and it seemed likely that he'd, sure enough, get gored before he reached safety. The officer was terrified.

The rancher threw down his tools, ran to the fence, and yelled at the top of his lungs.

"Your badge, show him your BADGE!"

The Son Who Does Not Care to Ask

At last, we arrive at the fourth child, "the one who does not care to ask." [4]

The mindset of this boy doesn't think everything needs to be rational (the wise son), doesn't think life is meaningless and that G-d doesn't treasure his actions (the depressed son), doesn't think all his success and power comes from his own talents and ego (the complete son). What he says is, "Look, my here, you guys mean well, but my heart is just not here. This does not mean anything to me. It's all boring."

וְשָׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשׂאֹל - אֵת פְּתַח לוֹ, שְׂנֵאָמֵר: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבָנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְיָ לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם.

A common enough experience for us, at least at times. This is not a question based on theology or philosophy. It is simply the young man or woman who says: I just don't care. I just have no emotions toward any of this. I do not know what to ask, because I do not care to ask.

So the Haggadah is telling us, "At pisach lo". You must open his or her heart.

You must be the one to inspire them.

There is no such a thing as a child who is truly careless and indifferent. That child does not exist. Rather, it is you who must open his or her heart. You may have not found the right words or the right approach. Perhaps you may have to look deeper into yourself and discover a much deeper and more authentic relationship with G-d. What comes from your heart will enter his/her heart. Work on yourself. Analyze your heart. See where you are coming from—is it from a place of love, or anger; from a place of acceptance, or intolerance; from a place of wholesomeness or insecurity. But one thing is sure: If you put your soul into it, you can open him or her up. Every person wants to live a genuine life. Every person, deep down, craves truth, depth, dignity, and soulfulness. But if we don't work on ourselves to make our Judaism deep and authentic, we may never reach them. It is not their fault; it is ours.

You, says the Haggadah, can open his heart. G-d believes in the youth. You must too! [5]

[1] We can see this from the Hebrew wording: "Echad chacham, echad rashsa..." "One is wise, one is rebellious..." when the Haggadah could have just said, "There are four sons: the wise, the rebel..." The fact that the text says "one is...one is..." before all of them intimates that all the ones are within. When we read it, we must say: "There are four mindsets, one type of mindset I have is wise, one is rebellious," etc.

[2] The translation "knock out his teeth," or "strike his teeth," are inaccurate. The term "hakha" (with a Kuf not a Kaf) means "dull, unsharpen, dilute."

[3] Quoted in Hagadas Hagra.

[4] The common translation is, "the one who does not know to ask." But the Hebrew term for "not knowing" really means "not connected," As in the verse: "And Adam knew Eve." This child feels disconnected. He is unmoved to ask. He is apathetic.

[5] This essay is based on Sefas Emes Pesach 5634 (1874); Sichas Pesach 5721 (Likkutei Sichos vol. 3 p, 961), and other sources.]

## THE NEXT 3 DIVREI TORAH ARE FROM ALLEN KLEIN'S PARSHA COLLECTION

### Home Weekly Parsha TZAV

#### Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This year, as is true in most years of the Jewish calendar, the Torah reading of Tzav coincides with the Shabbat preceding Pesach – Shabbat Hagadol. Since on a deep level of understanding there are really no coincidences in Torah matters, the connection between Tzav and Shabbat Hagoal should be explored and explained.

The word "tzav" is one of a mandatory command. It does not present reasons or explanations and does not brook discussion or argument. It is representative of military discipline, of service to a higher purpose even if all of the participants in the project are not really aware of the workings of that higher purpose. A necessary part of living in society is the mandatory obligations, which are part of everyone's life. If it were not for these rules, mores and practices imposed upon us, life would become so chaotic as to be unlivable. It is the "tzav" part of life that allows all of the other more freedom-of-choice opportunities to be present in our lives. An ordered society demands that there be commands, not only recommendations or suggestions. There is an understandable reflex built into our emotional system that resists and resents commands from others. Any parent of a three-year old can easily testify to the truth of this observation. Nevertheless, the young child must eventually respond to commands in order to grow, mature and become a successful human being. So, "tzav" plays a vital role.

Perhaps there are no two areas of Jewish life and law that are as complexly intertwined with mandatory commands and laws, as are Shabbat and Pesach. The concepts behind these holy days and their observances represent noble values – serenity, leisure, freedom and independence. But noble ideas alone, without detailed instructions as to their realization, are useless in a practical sense. The sons who appear in the Torah and the Haggadah all ask the same question – "What relevance do these laws have in our time?" Is it not sufficient that we honor the ideas that Shabbat and Pesach represent and then ignore all the mandatory commandments that accompany these days, their

values and ideals. Without mandatory commandments no commemorative day, no matter how well meaning and well planned will stand the test of time and changing circumstances. It is the “tzav” component of Shabbat and Pesach that make this Shabbat the Shabbat Hagadol – the great Shabbat that it is.

It is an historical fact that those movements and individuals that ignored or rejected mandatory observances associated with Shabbat or Pesach eventually slipped out of Jewish life and continuity entirely. Again, without “tzav” there can be no Shabbat Hagadol. This is the basic issue that divides much of the Jewish world today. The avoidance of mandatory commandments, attractive and popular as this idea may initially appear, is a sure recipe for Jewish extinction. Shabbat Hagadol comes to remind us of this lesson.

Shabbat shalom and Chag kasher v’sameach

Rabbi Berel Wein

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**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

### **The Thanksgiving Offering**

#### **Tzav**

Among the sacrifices detailed in this week's Parsha is the korban todah, the thanksgiving offering:

If he offers it [the sacrifice] as a thanksgiving offering, then along with this thanksgiving offering he is to offer unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil.

Lev. 7:12

Though we have been without sacrifices for almost two thousand years, a trace of the thanksgiving offering survives to this day, in the form of the blessing known as Hagomel: “Who bestows good things on the unworthy”, said in the synagogue, at the time of reading of the Torah, by one who has survived a hazardous situation.

What constitutes a hazardous situation? The Sages (Brachot 54b) found the answer in Psalm 107, a song on the theme of giving thanks, beginning with the best-known words of religious gratitude in Judaism, Hodu la-Shem ki tov, ki le-olam chasdo, “Give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness is forever” (Psalm 107).

The psalm itself describes four specific situations:

1. Crossing the sea: Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters . . . They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away . . . Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.
2. Crossing a desert: Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
3. Recovery from serious illness: They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.
4. Release from captivity: Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains . . . Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains (Brachot 54b). To this day, these are the situations of hazard (many nowadays include air travel as well as a sea voyage) on which we say Hagomel when we come through them safely.

In his book *A Rumour of Angels*, the American sociologist Peter Berger describes what he calls “signals of transcendence” - phenomena within the human situation that point to something beyond. Among them he includes humour and hope. There is nothing in nature that explains our ability to reframe painful situations in such a way that we can laugh at them; nor is there anything that can explain the human capacity to find meaning even in the depths of suffering.

These are not, in the classic sense, proofs of the existence of God, but they are experiential evidence. They tell us that we are not random concatenations of selfish genes, blindly reproducing themselves. Our bodies may be products of nature (“dust you are, and to dust you will return”), but our minds, our thoughts, our emotions - all that is meant by the word “soul” - are not. There is something within us that reaches out to something beyond us: the soul of the universe, the Divine ‘You’ to which we speak in prayer, and to which our ancestors, when the Temple stood, made their offerings. Though Berger does not include it, one of the “signals of transcendence” is surely the instinctive human wish to give thanks. Often this is merely human. Someone has done us a favour, given us a gift, comforted us in the midst of grief, or rescued us from danger. We feel we owe them something. That ‘something’ is todah, the Hebrew word that means both ‘acknowledgement’ and ‘thanks’.

But often we sense something more. It is not just the pilot we want to thank when we land safely after a hazardous flight; not just the surgeon, when we survive an operation; not just the judge or politician when we are released from prison or captivity. It is as if some larger force was operative, as if the hand that moves the pieces on the human chessboard were thinking of us; as if heaven itself had reached down and come to our aid.

Insurance companies tend to describe natural catastrophes as “acts of God”. Human emotion does the opposite. God is in the good news, the miraculous survival, the escape from catastrophe. That instinct - to offer thanks to a force, a presence, over and above natural circumstances and human intervention - is itself a signal of transcendence. That is what was once expressed in the thanksgiving offering, and still is, in the Hagomel prayer. But it is not just by saying Hagomel that we express our thanks.

Elaine and I were on our honeymoon. It was summer, the sun was shining, the beach glorious and the sea inviting. There was just one problem. I could not swim. But as I looked at the sea, I noticed that near to the shore it was very shallow indeed. There were people several hundred yards from the beach, yet the water only came up to their knees. What could be safer, I thought, than simply to walk out into the sea and stop long before I was out of my depth.

I did. I walked out several hundred yards and, yes, the sea only came up to my knees. I turned and started walking back. To my surprise and shock, I found myself suddenly engulfed by water. Evidently, I had walked into a deep dip in the sand. I was out of my depth. I struggled to swim. I failed. This was dangerous. There was no one nearby. The people swimming were a long way away. I went under, again and again. By the fifth time, I knew I was drowning. My life was about to end. What a way - I thought - to start a honeymoon.

Of course someone did save me, otherwise I would not be writing these lines. To this day I do not know who it was: by then I was more or less unconscious. All I know is that they must have seen me struggling. They swam over, took hold of me, and brought me to safety. Since then, the words we say on waking every day have had a deep meaning for me: “I thank You, living and enduring God, for You have restored my life to me: great is Your faithfulness.” Anyone who has survived great danger knows what it is to feel, not just to be abstractly aware, that life is a gift of God, renewed daily. The first word of this prayer, Modeh, comes from the same Hebrew root as Todah, ‘thanksgiving’. So too does the word Yehudi, ‘Jew’. We acquired the name from Jacob's fourth son, Judah. He in turn received his name from Leah who, on his birth, said “This time I will thank [some translate it, ‘I will praise’] God” (Gen. 29:35).

To be a Jew is to offer thanks. That is the meaning of our name and the constitutive gesture of our faith.

There were Jews who, after the Holocaust, sought to define Jewish identity in terms of suffering, victimhood, survival. One theologian spoke of a 614th commandment: You shall not give Hitler a posthumous victory. The historian Salo Baron called this the ‘lachrymose’ reading of history: a story written in tears. I, for one, cannot agree. Yes, there is Jewish suffering. Yet had this been all, Jews would not have done what in fact most did: hand on their identity to their children as their most precious legacy.

To be a Jew is to feel a sense of gratitude; to see life itself as a gift; to be able to live through suffering without being defined by it; to give hope the victory over fear. To be a Jew is to offer thanks.

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## **Drasha**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Parshas Tzav

Room for a Broom

This week's portion begins with Hashem telling Moshe to teach Ahron and his children a few laws. Hashem does not tell Moshe to speak to Ahron, He does not even tell Moshe to teach Ahron. He tells Moshe "Tzav es Ahron." Command Ahron.

"Tzav," Rashi explains, "is a very powerful word. It means command with a charge that is to be executed with speed and diligence. The word tzav,"

Rashi continues, "is also used only for situations that have eternal ramifications." If we analyze the next few commands, we may be left wondering: why do those charges need the powerful preface Tzav?

The next verse is about the Korban Olah. A Korban Olah is a sacrifice that is committed entirely to Hashem, no part of the animal, save the skin, is left for human benefit or consumption. The person who brings it wants to make sure that it is offered within the highest standards of Halacha. The admonition, tzav surely is appropriate. However, the Torah only spends one verse on the Olah. It proceeds to tell us about the daily cleaning of the ashes of the altar. A Kohen must wear linen vestments, remove the ashes, and place them near the altar.

Why is this menial job mentioned together with the holy Olah? To what end does it merit the powerful command, tzav?

The Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Kanievski, was a paradigm of holiness. The stories about his sanctity were well known throughout the Torah community. At seventeen, he had already survived the Russian army without compromising Shabbos or Kashrut.

The Steipler was not known for lengthy conversation. He had lost his hearing standing as a sentry on freezing Siberian nights during his tenure in the Czar's army. People would write questions to him or beseech him to pray on behalf of the sick or unfortunate. The Steipler would read the note, hardly lift his eyes from the large volume on his old table, and would start to pray. He would often condense his advice into one or two sentences, but it would be potent. People asked, and he gave answers. Within days miraculous salvation came. And so did the people. They stood in lines outside his modest home, and the very old man would find the time to see anyone who walked in with the problems of the world bearing down on his or her shoulder.

An aspiring young man, whose quest was to be as great a scholar as the Steipler himself, came with a problem. The young man felt that this particular predicament was impeding his spiritual growth and surely a man like Rabbi Kanievski, who persevered in the face of life-threatening problems, could relate to his!

The young man had written the situation in detail for the Steipler to grasp its severity. "Every Friday," wrote the young man, "I come home from Yeshiva, and the scene in the house leads me to despair. The table is not set, the kitchen is hardly clean, and the children are not bathed! What should I do? How can I concentrate on my studies when I have such problems?" The aspiring scholar expected the Steipler to advise him how to deal with a wife that was not keeping to his standard.

The Steipler looked up from the paper and made a grave face. The young man smiled. The Steipler must have realized the severity of the situation. Then he spoke in his heavy Russian-accented Yiddish. "You really want to know what to do?" The young man nodded eagerly. The Steipler looked austere.

"TAKE A BROOM!"

Rabbeinu Yonah of Girondi (1180-1263) explains the juxtaposition of the command to sweep ashes with that of the Korban Olah. A person must realize that sometimes what is considered menial work in human eyes merits the highest accord in Hashem's eyes. The mitzvah of sweeping the Altar is prefaced with the word tzav and placed next to the Korban Olah. One must

realize that the little, unglorified acts also yield great sanctity. In the quest for spirituality, one must never demean the simple chores. For no matter how holy one is, there is always room for a broom.