

From crshulman@aol.com

To: parsha@parsha.net

Forwarding Efraim Goldstein's collection this week

[From Efraim Goldstein efraimg@aol.com]

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Tzav Shabbos Hagadol 5766

www.torahweb.org

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

The TorahWeb Foundation

True Simcha

Many misunderstand the minhag (custom) of reciting yizkor as representing a solemn few moments of sadness. There is a universal minhag that one who has both parents alive leaves before yizkor. This too is misunderstood as representing the idea of al tiftach peh lasatan. Since those reciting yizkor are participating in an act of aveilus (mourning), we don't want those whose parents are alive even to be present, so as, cholila, to imply as if they too are in mourning. Whenever yizkor is recited the practice in many shuls is that an appeal is made for some charity or another. This minhag too is usually misunderstood. Many assume that since many more people show up for yizkor than on other days of the year, we have a captive audience which presents a better opportunity for an appeal.

All three assumptions are incorrect! Yizkor is always recited on Yom Tov, when there is a mitzvah of simcha. Aveilus and simcha are mutually exclusive. One may not observe any forms of mourning on yom tov.

In the times of the Baalei haTosafos, when the tfillah of yizkor was instituted, the same number of people would be present in shul on the weekdays as on Shabbos and yom tov[1].

The Yizkor appeal was not instituted "after the fact", because so many people were reciting the yizkor prayer, but rather as an expression of simchas yom tov, an appeal for the poor was introduced on yomim tovim. Rambam writes (Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18) that one who eats and drinks on yom tov and doesn't share with the poor is merely engaging in "simchas kreiso - the rejoicing of his stomach". The Torah defines simcha as one who is mesameach others who are less fortunate, such as orphans, widows, and converts. The yom tov appeal was always for the poor and needy. Once people were pledging for tzedaka, as a method of fulfilling simchas yom tov, the yizkor prayer was introduced: let this pledge be considered as a zechus (merit) for one's parent(s) who raised a child with proper attitudes and values regarding sharing of their assets with others. And the reason those who didn't recite yizkor leave the shul is because the Talmud mentions[2] that it doesn't look right when everyone in shul is praying and one individual abstains. The mistaken impression conveyed is that perhaps that individual doesn't believe in the power of tfillah.

We just celebrated Purim. Two of the special mitzvos of that holiday are mishloach manos and matanos laevyonim. Rambam writes (Hilchos Megillah 2:17) that if one can afford to go above and beyond the basic obligation of these two mitzvos, it would be preferable to give extra matanos laevyonim as opposed to placing the extra emphasis on the mishloach manos.

"There is no more glorified form of simcha than to cheer up the hearts of the orphans, widows, and converts; the one who cheers up the hearts of these unfortunate individuals is to be compared to G-d Himself"

In recent years some have started a new and most meaningful and beautiful minhag: when spending lots of money here in America on our bar mitzvas or weddings, in order to enhance the simcha, they will sponsor a bar mitzvah or wedding on behalf of those who can not afford to make one on their own[3] (or, alternatively, contribute in another way to tzedaka). This is the most glorious method of engaging in simcha.

1 This fact even affected observance of halacha. See Tosafofs Gittin (59b) s.v. aval.

2 Brachos (20b). See Nefesh Horav p.153

3 One of the organizations that facilitates such sponsorships is Yad Eliezer - see <http://www.yadeliezer.org/> for details

Jerusalem Post Apr 04 2006

LATE RAINS Rabbi Berel Wein

This past week we here in Jerusalem had the experience of late rains falling upon our protected or unprotected heads. In the Torah these rains coming as they did at the end of the winter season are called malkosh. These late rains are seen as a blessing, fortifying and nurturing the soil for the long hot dry summer that lies ahead. Rain in our part of the world is an especially treasured commodity. Coming from the United States where rain is pretty much a weekly event, or from England where it is almost a daily event, we Anglos are always surprised by the fact that it does not rain here from May till October.

The great prophet Shmuel impressed his Godly message on the people of Israel by having it rain upon them in the midst of the summer wheat harvest. So the late rains that we experienced served to remind us of what a gift rain is and how dependent we are on it for food and life itself. From the way the Torah writes about yoreh – the first rains of the fall season – and malkosh – these recent late rains – it seems that these rains are especially viewed as an extra and special blessing from God, since they are, so to speak, out of season. These recent late rains come to fill the deficit of a below average rainy winter season. It is symbolic of the truism that it is never too late to be a recipient of God's blessings.

The Torah in describing the Land of Israel to the Jewish people, before their actual entry, warned that the Land of Israel was not like the land of Egypt that they had left forty years earlier. Egypt has the great Nile River that waters its crops and provides irrigation to its fields – and therefore is not directly beholden to rains for its prosperity and survival. Primitively, the Egyptians worshipped the god of the Nile to thank the river for its sustenance of life.

In contradistinction to Egypt, the Torah pointed out that the Land of Israel possesses no great rivers. The Jordan is no comparison to the Nile in size, content and volume. The Jews would have to rely upon rain for the sustenance of their land. And relying upon rain meant relying upon God. Not the god of a particular river but upon the unseen and unfathomable God that sustains the universe and all that it contains. As Jews turned their eyes heavenward to search for rain clouds they looked to their God- the one who alone would sustain them and their land.

The Mishna makes this point clear when it discusses how the Jews triumphed over Amalek when Moshe raised his hands. It was not the upraised hands of Moshe that sealed the triumph but rather it was the fact that the Jews looked heavenward, higher than the upraised hands of Moshe, which brought them God's aid and eventual victory. The same idea is true regarding heaven sent rain. By looking upward to the Creator, Who is the source of all blessings, and realizing what a blessing the rains are, we place otherwise natural phenomena in the proper perspective.

In Jewish tradition, Pesach is the transitional time when we cease praying for rain and instead now ask for the blessings of the morning dew to sustain our land during the summer. Every season has its particular

blessings. The beautiful prayer of Tal – the prayer for dew – is an integral part of the Pesach liturgy. It acknowledges once more our realization of our reliance upon God’s bounty and special care regarding the welfare and prosperity of the Land of Israel. It is a reiteration of our realization that God, so to speak, is our Nile River. While rain and dew can be taken for granted as natural events in many parts of the world, not so here in the Land of Israel. Here prayer and belief are necessary requirements for sustenance and prosperity. Nature by itself is very stingy with its blessings in our country. The additional ingredient of God’s special blessing is necessary in order for us to enjoy the bounty of our blessed land. The late rains that fell remind us of all of these truths. Thus the late rains should be seen as a timely reinforcement and message as to our duties and responsibilities and as to our relationship with the source of all of our blessings, the Creator Himself. Shabat shalom

<http://www.torah.org/learning/rabbiwein/>
Weekly Parsha TZAV Rabbi Berel Wein

One of the artifacts of any synagogue is its ner tamid – the eternal light placed near the Holy Ark that contains the scrolls of the Torah. The origin of the ner tamid is found in this week’s parsha of Tzav. Here the Jewish people are commanded by God to have an eternal flame constantly burning on the altar of the Mishkan and later in the temple in Jerusalem. The Midrash teaches us that the flame on the altar resembles a crouching lion and was miraculous in the fact that even when the altar was covered with its protective cloth, while being transported in the desert, the flame was not extinguished nor did it burn the cloth.

This miraculous permanent flame is a further symbol of God’s eternal presence amongst Israel. But the flame symbolizes more than that. It is the symbol of the light of the Torah and the warmth that traditional Jewish life always represents. It teaches the lesson of eternity - of the long view of life and events, and of the unquenchable love between God and His people and of the Jewish people and their Torah. King Solomon in Shir Hashirim describes it: “[Even] the great waters cannot quench [the fire of] love” that exists between God and Israel and Israel and the Torah. That fire is a crouching lion always ready to burst forth and pounce on the opportunity to show its love and tenacity regarding God and His Torah. It is truly the fire of eternity that has preserved Israel till this very day.

The kohanim –the priests, the descendants of Aharon – were responsible for the maintenance of the eternal fire. Today, we are all responsible for the preservation of that eternal flame within our families, communities and the Jewish people as a whole. There is no doubt that we are aided in this task by the Divine Will that has always fueled that eternal flame. But Heaven’s aid in no way diminishes our responsibility towards the preservation of that flame. The rabbis of the Talmud long ago warned us that ein somchin al haness – it is forbidden to rely upon miracles to save and preserve us. It is our tenacity to tradition and Torah that creates the miracles, so to speak, which guarantee our continued survival, creativity and vitality.

The eternal flame marches with us through all of our history. It has the great quality of warming and comforting us and yet does not burn or singe us. The Torah emphatically warns us lo tichbeh – do not allow that fire to be extinguished. Study, Torah education, observance, moral behavior, and an optimistic view are all the means to preserve this fire and not allow it to be extinguished. In a world that contains vast patches of darkness and despair, the crouching lion flame of Jewish tradition lights our way towards a better future and a more meaningful present. Our success in preserving this flame and passing it on to future generations is the true challenge and test of our generation. We cannot in any way fail this test. Shabat shalom. Chag sameach.

TORAH WEEKLY - Parshat Tzav
For the week ending 8 April 2006 / 10 Nisan 5766
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

OVERVIEW

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the korban olah - the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night - are to be removed from the area by the kohen after he changes his special linen clothing. The olah is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The kohen retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The korban mincha is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a kohen eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special korbanot to be offered by the Kohen Gadol each day, and by Aharon’s sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The chatat, the korban brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the asham guilt-korban. The details of shelamim, various peace korbanot, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the todah, the thanks-korban. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, korbanot may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a korban when he is ritually impure. Blood and chelev, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every korban shelamim. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

INSIGHTS

Kaballa-Wallah

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, “This is the law of the elevation-offering.” (6:2)

One of the great confusions of our age is to mistake feeling spiritual with being spiritual.

The other day, someone showed me an ad for “Kabala Water.” Judging from the photograph, “Kabala Water” bares an amazing similarity to a regular bottle of mineral water. However, since its price is more than five times that of a six-pack of regular bottled water, obviously it must contain some pretty heavy-duty ingredients.

Kaballa means literally receiving. You can’t buy kaballa. You can’t “learn” kaballa. You can’t even drink kaballa. You can only receive. How do you receive kaballa? You make yourself into a vessel pure enough to hold its secrets.

Kaballa is received through the medium of seemingly anodyne tales. No golem-building instructions here. If the disciple is worthy, he will be able to remove the “garments” that clothe the secret and penetrate to its core. To the less worthy, kaballa will seem either bland or unintelligible. Everything depends on the purity of the receiver.

The more spiritual something is the more it requires covering. The more sacred something is the more it needs to be wrapped in seeming ordinariness and blandness. In fact, spirituality can only survive in this way. Spirituality is like a piece of unexposed film that can be fogged by the bright light of the sun.

The most spiritual place in the world was the Beit HaMikdash, and yet to the physical eye it looked like a giant abattoir. The very physicality of the process of bringing korbanot sacrifices masked and obscured its sublime spirituality. Moreover, the fact that much of the korban was eaten or utilized by the kohanim and the person who brought the korban increased the appearance of its physicality.

However, in the case of the korban olah - the “elevation-offering”-where nothing was eaten and it all rose up in smoke on the altar, the fact that it was “elevated” created a certain lacking to its mask of physicality.

“Command Aharon and his sons.” (6:2)

Rashi comments that the word “command” here implies a higher level of alacrity.”Rabbi Shimon says the Torah requires a greater decree of alacrity where there is a lack of cover.” It is for this reason specifically that with regards to the korban olah the kohanim are instructed to work more quickly. For when interior spirituality is lacking its protective cover it requires much greater care.

<http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/parsha/peninim>
Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
PARSHAS TZAV

This is the law of the Sin-offering... An earthenware vessel in which it was cooked shall be broken; but if it was cooked in a copper vessel, that should be purged and rinsed in water. (6:18,21)

The taam k'ikar, taste particles, of the Sin-offering remain forever embedded in the earthenware vessel, rendering the vessel forbidden after one day and night, after which the korban becomes nosar, leftover. Just as the korban must now be burnt, the taste-permeated earthenware vessel must also be destroyed. This occurs when the vessel is broken. Since this rule applies to all korbanos, we wonder why the Torah chose to write about it in connection with the Korban Chatas, Sin-offering?

The Kli Yakar suggests a parallel between the purification process of a contaminated vessel and the purification ritual of one who has sinned. Certain vessels absorb the forbidden food in such a manner that they cannot be purged through intense rinsing. These keilim, vessels, must be broken. There are also such vessels that can be purified through vigorous rinsing. Likewise, there are sinners whose sin has permeated him, so that it is ingrained in him. The sinful behavior has become a matter of habit, a lifestyle that is accepted and validated. Such a sin must be purged through shivron lev, a broken heart, with complete regret for the past and a resolute, positive commitment for the future. There is also the individual who has sinned by performing a simple indiscretion. While no sin is to be viewed as "simple" or light, if it has not become ingrained, it is much easier to purge. Indeed, we find that one who has spoken lashon hora, evil speech, should study Torah. If he is not able to study, he should lower himself and work on developing his humility.

Now that we no longer have a Bais Hamikdash to atone for our sins, a clear distinction exists between the Torah scholar who can effect his atonement through Torah study and the common person who must reflect on his behavior, employing the medium of shivron lev to bring about his atonement. It is not that Torah study is the panacea for all sin. It is just that by studying Torah properly one will ultimately neutralize his negative character traits which comprise the root of all sins.

This is why the Torah writes the laws concerning vessels that are ritually contaminated near the laws of the Korban Chatas. This conveys to us that when there will no longer be a Bais Hamikdash with its korbanos, an individual's path towards atoning his sins will be similar to that of a vessel that needs to be purified. One who is proficient in Torah study, who is willing and prepared to devote himself to learning, parallels the copper vessel which only needs intense rinsing, inside and out. This is accomplished by his total immersion in the sea of Torah, which is compared to water which is clear. Thus, tocho k'baro, its external image reflects its inner essence. Torah study does that to a person, cleansing and purifying him from within and from without. The individual to whom Torah study is a distant and unfamiliar venture will have to resort to shivron lev, a broken heart, and a renewed sense of humility. When he realizes his lowliness, his sinful behavior becomes more apparent, and his repentance and atonement will necessarily follow.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:12)

One who has survived a life-threatening crisis brings a Korban Todah, Thanksgiving-offering, out of gratitude to Hashem for His beneficence. Regrettably, many of us wait for that crisis to occur before we realize that our obligation to offer gratitude to the Almighty is an ongoing one. One who is not cognizant of this obligation ignores one of the primary character traits that a human being must develop. How does one offer gratitude to the Almighty? What can we give to Him? Let me cite a famous story that occurred concerning the saintly Horav Moshe Leib Sassover, zl, which will shed light on this question.

It was revealed to Rav Moshe Leib from Heaven that in a small village in Hungary there was to be found a young neshamah, soul, who was of an

exemplary character, both morally and spiritually. He needed to go there to retrieve this soul and give it the opportunity to develop spiritually in a proper environment. The Rebbe immediately prepared for the journey. He traveled through towns and forests, finally arriving at a meadow. In the middle of this meadow was a hill upon which geese were roaming. A young boy, who was not more than ten years old, was watching over the geese. The boy beheld these geese, the lush, green meadow; the calm, blue sky; and he became enraptured. He lifted his eyes Heavenward and proclaimed, "Ribono Shel Olam! I love You so much! Thank You for everything! Thank you for the shining sun, for the flowing breeze. Thank you for granting me life and health. Thank you for giving me the ability to see all of the beauty that You created."

The young boy continued, and Rav Moshe Leib just sat there in pleasant shock, listening attentively: "Ribono Shel Olam! How can I repay You for all of Your kindness? How can I thank You for inspiring the people of this community to select me to watch their geese? Now I have a means of supporting my widowed mother. Hashem, if You would have geese - I would watch them for nothing!"

Rav Moshe Leib sensed that this boy was truly at a loss to express his full gratitude to Hashem. He wanted to do so much - but he was limited. Then he said, "Ribono Shel Olam, You certainly are aware that if I knew how to daven, I would pray my heart out to You in gratitude, but, alas, I cannot. If I knew how to study Torah, I would gratefully do so incessantly. Regrettably, I can neither daven, nor can I learn." A few moments went by, during which the young boy seemed to be lost in thought. Then, suddenly, he jumped up and exclaimed, "I know something that I can do to show my appreciation. There is something in which I am more proficient than anyone my age in the village. I can somersault! I will somersault in Your honor. This will be my gratitude."

The young boy began a series of acrobatic moves, somersaulting all over the meadow, ultimately landing at Rav Moshe Leib's feet. The Rebbe warmly embraced the boy. With tears rolling down his face, he implored the boy to gather the geese and come with him. They went together to the boy's home, where Rav Moshe Leib asked the mother to allow her son to come with him. "I will pay all of your expenses for the following year, but please permit me to teach your son Torah," entreated the Rebbe.

The mother agreed, and the young boy went with the Sassover Rebbe. He was as bright and diligent as he was sweet and innocent. In a short while, he became proficient in his Torah studies. It was not long before the young boy became a young man with a following. People flocked to him from all over, as his fame as a tzaddik v'kadosh, righteous and holy person, spread. Yes, this was the genesis of the holy Horav Yitzchak Aizik, zl, the Kaliver Rebbe.

It all began with a young boy's desire to express his gratitude to Hashem. He understood the need, because he was cognizant of all of the ways in which he benefited from Hashem. He was overwhelmed with a love and desire to express his feelings of indebtedness to Hashem in some way, to acknowledge and demonstrate how thankful he was. He lacked, however, the medium for conveying this feeling. He could not daven; he could not learn. So, he did what he did best: he somersaulted. Gratitude borne from innocence - that is what he manifest.

We do not have to do this. We can daven; we can learn. What would it take? An hour per day of dedicated learning to Hashem or davening with the proper kavanah, devotion and concentration, or just davening with meaning and feeling. We know that we cannot possibly repay Hashem for all that we receive, but it would be nice if we would try to do so with all of our hearts.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:12)

It is at a time when a person is spared from a life-threatening situation that he perceives and realizes that Hashem watches over him at all times. Under ordinary conditions, however, we tend to forget the Hashem factor in our lives. Therefore, if things just happen to go right, we lose sight of our obligation to pay gratitude to the Almighty for our continued existence. In truth, our life should be replete with an overwhelming urge to thank Hashem, for we know not how our life might have been shortened at every juncture in time. The Gaon, zl, m'Vilna interprets this idea into the words

of the Baal Haggadah,; Tzei u'l'mad mah bikeish Lavan, "Go out and study that which Lavan sought to do against our ancestor, Yaakov." When we take a cursory view of Lavan and his behavior towards Yaakov, we do not really discover anything so drastic or evil. We see a tough, unscrupulous businessman who would do anything to gain a dollar. Cheating and underhandedness were ways of life for him, but we do not see Lavan trying to destroy Yaakov, as claimed by the Baal Haggadah. This threat does not surface throughout the narrative.

The answer is that we do not look with "both eyes," perceiving with depth and clarity, in an attempt to realize all of Hashem's hidden favors. The simple act of our daily endeavor may be fraught with danger - if we think about it. This is the message concerning Yaakov and Lavan: Yes, superficially it does not appear that there was anything sinister about Lavan's behavior. When one is tzei u'l'mad, "go out, and study," however, when we delve deeply into the story, we realize that all of Lavan's machinations and trickery were not merely corrupt business practice - he was actually out to destroy Yaakov. Hashem shielded Yaakov and smoothed out the bumps in the road, making it appear as if everything was fine. He allowed Yaakov to live in relative peace and tranquility. This does not mean that there is nothing for which to be thankful. On the contrary, having health, peace and tranquility is the greatest indication of Divine supervision. We just have to "go out and study."

Many of us go through life with our eyes closed. We do not take notice until something hits us squarely in the face. There are those that read and study ethical works, but have no clue that it might be addressing them. Then, there are those who look, see, study and learn from every experience. The following story portrays how a great man perceives even the most mundane occurrence, deriving a valuable lesson from it.

Horav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zl, the Bais HaLevi, was once walking with a group of his students on the road, when they passed a procession of three horse-drawn wagons of hay one behind the other. The Bais HaLevi turned to his students and said, "If you will note, the horse pulling the third wagon is eating hay from the wagon in front of him. The lead horse has nothing to eat from, but benefits from the fact that the second horse eats from his wagon, thereby lightening his load. The middle horse benefits the most, since his load is being diminished by the third horse, and he gets to eat from the wagon of the first horse.

"This scene supports the idea that either extreme of anything is rarely beneficial. The Rambam lauds the mean of virtue, choosing the middle road, pointing out that in most instances moderation is superior to extremism."

While this forum is not the place to discuss the issue of moderation versus extremism, we do observe how one can view an everyday experience and learn a meaningful lesson from it.

This is the law of the Elevation-offering, the Meal-offering, the Sin-offering, and the Guilt-offering; and the inauguration-offerings, and the Peace-offering. (7:37)

In the Talmud Menachos 110a, Reish Lakish asks why does the Torah say: "This is the Torah, law, of the Elevation-offering..." Why is the word "Torah" used to describe the halachos applying to the various korbanos? This teaches us that if someone studies the laws pertaining to a korban, it is viewed as if he had actually offered that korban. Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, cites a Midrash from which he infers that there are three types of attitudes which prevail when one offers a korban. Likewise, there are three coinciding attitudes which manifest themselves in one's approach to Torah study.

The Midrash relates that King Agrippas once wanted to sacrifice 1000 Korbanos Olah. He instructed the Kohen Gadol that on that day no other korbanos were to be accepted from anyone. A poor man approached the Kohen. In his hands he had two turtledoves, the fowl that is usually used by a poor man. "Please sacrifice these for me," he asked. "I am sorry," replied the Kohen, "I have been ordered by the king not to accept any other korbanos today." "Please, my master, Kohen Gadol, you must listen to me," the poor man countered. "Everyday, I capture four turtledoves; two I sacrifice, and two I sell. If you do not sacrifice them for me, you will be cutting into my livelihood."

The Kohen Gadol took the two birds and sacrificed them. That night King Agrippas had a dream in which a Heavenly message was conveyed to him. "A poor man's sacrifice preceded your sacrifices today." When the king heard this, he went to the Kohen Gadol and asked for an explanation. "Did I not instruct you not to offer any other korbanos?" the king asked the Kohen Gadol.

"Yes, my king, you did, but this poor man came and begged me, saying that I was impeding his livelihood. I had no other recourse but to offer his birds," explained the Kohen Gadol.

King Agrippas replied, "Yafeh asissa, you did the right thing." Regarding the korban of that poor man, David Hamelech says in Tehillim 22:25, "For He has neither despised or loathed the supplication of the poor."

We find another type of korban which Kayin offered, "And Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground" (Bereishis 4:3). From the contrast between the simple description of Kayin's offering and the more specific description of Hevel's offering, "And as for Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest" (Bereishis 4:4), Chazal derive that Kayin's offering was from the inferior portions of his crop, from the surplus - not from the choicest, as his brother saw fit to offer.

We have before us three divergent attitudes: the korban of Agrippas, the korban of the poor man, and the korban of Kayin. Apparently, Agrippas' korban was one of choice. He offered his best in quality, and quantity was not an issue. On the other hand, it was not much of a challenge for Agrippas to make this commitment. Certainly, he did not have to undertake any major financial responsibility to afford this korban. It did not entail borrowing money from anyone. Surely, he must have had thousands of animals left over after this korban was offered. Then there was the korban of the poor man who believed be'emunah sheleimah, total trust, that if his korban was not accepted, it would hinder his livelihood. Then there was Kayin's korban, from his leftovers, from his inferior crops.

We find a distinct parallel in our commitment to Torah study. There are those who are kovea itim, establish and set aside time every day to study Torah, with the belief that their well-being and the well-being of their families are dependent upon this devotion. Their livelihood hinges upon their Torah study. The merit that they accrue will be their advocate for receiving Hashem's favor. It takes overcoming challenge; it involves incredible commitment, but he understands the score: Torah study gains him access to success, both material and spiritual.

There are also those individuals who devote a set amount of time to Torah study, but not if it means overcoming obstacles and challenges to their time and lifestyle. They set up Torah study around their schedules; they do not fit it into their schedules. The commitment is there, but it has to work in harmony with their "comfort level."

The third form of commitment is the one manifest by Kayin. After everything has been done: he has returned from work; he has eaten a filling supper; he has read the paper or engaged in any other form of media communication; after he has satisfied all of his personal physical and mundane diversions, he reminds himself that he has to attend a shiur, lecture, which lasts for an hour. He, of course, shows up for the last fifteen minutes, because he mimics Kayin by offering his surplus. To that type of korban, the reaction is, "But to Kayin and his offering He did not turn" (Bereishis 4:5).

An individual who, with regard to appeasing his spiritual dimension, is assuaged with a minimum achievement is what Rav Elyashiv calls a Yehudi dayeinu, a dayeinu Jew. He is the kind of person who views the Baal Haggadah's statement, "If He would have brought us close to Har Sinai, and not given us the Torah - Dayeinu - it would have been enough," as a relief or a form of "Why did He have to do it?" We would have been just as happy without the Torah - without the Shabbos - without the Bais Hamikdash. Dayeinu - the bare minimum would have sufficed our needs.

A person should take the attitude that if he does not fulfill his part of the commitment, he is endangering his livelihood. One who is satisfied with the minimum in one area of the Torah, will, over time, become increasingly satisfied with a minimalist approach to the rest of the Torah.

When he realizes that his life, both physical and spiritual, is contingent on carrying out his commitment, he will see success in all of his endeavors.

Va'ani Tefillah

Hashem he'elisa min she'ol nafshi - Hashem, You have raised up my soul from the Lower World.

The Radak explains she'ol as the Lower World, a reference to Gehinom, Purgatory. David Hamelech's terminology is questionable. David was still alive when he made this statement. Surely, he had not already descended to Gehinom, a place reserved for punishing sinners. Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl, derives from here that suffering in Gehinom is possible even during one's lifetime. How?

In the Talmud Nedarim 22a, Chazal say, "Whoever becomes angry is subject to all forms of Gehinom." What do Chazal mean? Rav Yerucham explains that the flames of frustration, anguish and despair which fester within the heart of he who is depressed are the equivalent of the fires of Gehinom. Throughout Sefer Tehillim, most references to the Lower World refer to this form of conflagration. David pays gratitude to Hashem for lifting his spirits from the raging purgatory that consumes one who is depressed. By instilling his heart with joy, he was enjoying the equivalent of Gan Eden.

Gehinom is self-inflicted. Whether it is the result of a lack of emunah, faith in Hashem, which leads to an all-encompassing depression or it is sinful behavior, resulting also from a lack of recognizing that there is a Supreme Being to Whom we must answer, we do it to ourselves. Likewise, the joy inherent in Paradise is something that we can attempt to experience even in This World. It just takes adopting the proper attitude.

In loving memory of FRANK ALTMAN by his family

<http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Eparasha/>

Bar-Ilan University's Parashat Hashavua Study Center

Shabbat Hagadol 5766/ April 8, 2006

Four Sons, Four Redemptions *

Rabbi Dr. Haniel Farber - The College of Judea and Samaria

The upcoming holiday has four names: the Spring Festival, Passover, the Festival of Freedom and the Festival of Matzot. These are indeed fitting names for Passover, a holiday unequalled in all the Jewish festivals and first in the biblical calendar. Passover is the most elaborate of all the festivals, replete with commandments to be performed. This is the holiday celebrating our liberation from bondage, the transition from enslavement to redemption, from darkness to light.

The Bible uses four expressions to describe our redemption from Egypt:

Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the Lord. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be My people (Ex. 6:6-7).

Actually, the text goes on to use a fifth verb, "I will bring you into the land" (Ex. 6:8), but the rabbis were doubtful whether this word should be considered one of the expressions of redemption: perhaps redemption is complete when the people are taken out of Egypt, and not only when they reach the land of Israel.

On account of these four expressions the rabbis, in establishing the Haggadah ritual, stipulated that we drink four cups of wine, one for each of the certain expressions of redemption; to handle the doubtful case they added a fifth cup which is not actually drunk at the Seder. This arrangement will continue until the prophet Elijah comes and settles the question. Therefore the fifth cup is called the Cup of Elijah.

Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, proclaim these four expressions of redemption? Would not one such expression have sufficed? The rabbis asked a similar question in Tractate Avot (5.1): "With ten Sayings the world was created. Could it not have been created with a single Saying?" In other words, like the creation of the world, so too, the Exodus from Egypt could have been accomplished with a single word. But, just as the rabbis found a reason for a multiplicity of divine utterances in creating the world, "to requite the wicked and bestow a goodly reward on the

righteous," so too, there is a hidden purpose here: to strengthen the faith of the Israelites in the Holy One, blessed be He, Who overturned the natural order of things to hasten their redemption.

From the above we learn that the Sages, who formulated the Haggadah, placed the number four in the center. There are four expressions of redemption, [1] four sons, four questions in the Mah Nishtanah, four cups of wine, four times that one eats a token quantity of matzah, a four-fold repetition of the word Barukh, blessed, in the phrase, "Blessed is the Omnipresent, Blessed is He, Blessed is He who gave the Torah to His people Israel, Blessed is He," and four foods that had symbolic import during the time that the Temple existed – the Pascal sacrifice, matzah, bitter herbs, and haroset.

To answer the question why there is more than one expression of redemption and to explain the difference between each of the four expressions, we must pose an additional question: The Torah obliges us to recount the story of the exodus from Egypt to our children, insofar as the word ve-higgadeta, "you shall tell," appears four times in the Torah in this connection (Ex. 12:24, 13:8, 13:14, and Deut. 10:20), from which comes the idea of the Torah speaking of four sons, "one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who knows not to ask." We are commanded to tell them about the history of their people, whether they ask or not, whether their question attests to their being wise or, heaven forbid, wicked. That being the case, why did the Haggadah not command us to tell all our children about the exodus from Egypt, without going into the details of different sorts of children?

Passover (Pesah) is the holiday of peh-sah, "the mouth speaks," i.e., of educating. The obligation of telling on Passover is unique to the Seder eve; there is no similar obligation on the eve of the Feast of Weeks, nor on the eve of Tabernacles, even though these festivals also commemorate the exodus from Egypt. The Seder eve is unique in that the Torah set this night aside for educating our children, and especial importance applies to treating all children equally; one must not despair of the wicked ones, nor of those who know not to ask. The simpleton should be treated with patience, and the wise child should not be especially favored.

Similarly the four expressions of redemption express four stages or conditions along the way to redemption. Rabbi Ephraim of Luntschitz, author of *Kli Yakar*, wrote the following on the four expressions:

The Holy One, blessed be He, saw fit to deliver them gradually, step by step. First he delivered them from the most dangerous thing, which is oppression; in this regard it is said, "I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians." Then He delivered them from bondage; in this regard it is said, "and deliver you from their bondage." Afterwards he delivered them from the easiest of all, which is being a ger, the state of apostasy, in which regard it is said, "I will redeem you," for in doing away with their apostasy they would merit the Divine Presence staying with them, in which regard it is said, "and I will take you to be My people and I will be your G-d."

This progression particularly illustrates the way one should relate to the "four sons." They should be stimulated according to their intellectual ability and character, and should be brought from the state of the evil one or simpleton and the one who knows not to ask to the state of the wise one. Such a drastic change is possible only if one acts with patience, proceeding step by step, with perseverance and understanding between parents and children. Just as Redemption occurs gradually, proceeding from the easy to the hard, so too parents should help their children gradually along the steep ascent, relating properly and wisely to each child's abilities and inclinations, in a manner consonant with the saying, "Train a lad according to his inclinations" (Prov. 22:6).

It follows that the four stages correspond to the four sons, from the easy son to the difficult one. The most dangerous stage is that of oppression, which corresponds to the son who knows not to ask. The condition of such a son is extremely grave, since he does not know how to worship the Lord and lack all skills of learning Torah. He must be drawn out of his state of depression, extricated from his lack of all interest in anything sacred.

The educational advice for such a son is: “You open the subject to him” – approach him with patience and rouse him from his stupor. This is a sacred obligation on this important night.

A higher intellectual level is evinced by the wicked son. He displays hostility and reservations, but one can see that he is clever and understanding. However, he uses his intelligence for negative ends. He must be delivered from bondage – from being enslaved to his evil inclination. With proper direction, one can succeed and be saved from “their bondage.”

The condition of the simpleton corresponds to being a ger. Such a person has a good character, innocence and naivete, but his intelligence is not sufficiently developed. This is the condition of the ger who has a thirst for knowledge, yet knows nothing. This son, too, must be “redeemed” and patiently given wisdom commensurate with his ability to comprehend. The ideal condition is that of the wise son. He seeks closeness to G-d. He should be “taken” in hand, and his great wisdom and honest desire to worship the Creator should be put to good use, explaining him the minutest details of the law. Such a procedure will bring him closer to the sublime in worshipping the Lord, and thus he will adhere to the ways of the Lord, and “I will be your G-d.”

Thus we see that the Torah took the trouble to use four expressions of redemption in order to have them correspond to the four sons. The Haggadah seeks to arrange the Passover Seder on the theme of the number four as part of a didactic method of inspiring unity and good fellowship among brothers. Only by showing loving understanding between parents and children is there a chance of educating the next generation successfully.

* Dedicated to the memory of my father-in-law, Rabbi Meir Meir, z”l.

[1] Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, Ba’al ha-Turim, finds a connection hinted at between the four terms of redemption and the four cups. The gematria of these four verbs equals the numerical value of the Mishnaic statement that the poorest Jewish should not have fewer than four cups [of wine].

Last Update: April 04, 2006

From: RavKookList@gmail.com

Rav Kook on Passover

A Fatal Mistake

Baruch Duvdevani served as the Executive Director of the Jewish Agency’s “Aliyah” department. He recounted this frightful story:

It was the winter of 5716 (1956), immediately following the Sinai Campaign. Poland and the USSR had just signed a treaty allowing all Polish citizens who had fled to Russia during World War II to return to Poland. Jewish or not, they had the right to return, as long as they were Polish citizens on September 1, 1939, the day the War broke out. As a result of this treaty, thousands of Jews throughout Russia returned to Poland, and the majority of them subsequently immigrated to Israel.

I was privileged to spend that year, and the next, in Poland, helping organize this mass “aliyah” to Israel.

One December morning, when the temperature in Warsaw reached 19 degrees below zero (Celsius), I arrived at the Israeli embassy where we were stationed for our immigration work. The courtyard was filled with scores of people who had come from Russia to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael. I stopped and talked to each and every one of them at length. Our hearts were so filled with joy that we did not feel the cold.

I noticed an old Jew standing in the corner of the courtyard. He was bone-thin, with practically no flesh on his body. His dim eyes lacked any spark of life; his cheekbones protruded profusely; and his clothes were tattered and torn, despite the bitter cold. I realized immediately that the man wanted to speak with me and that he was simply waiting for me to finish talking to the others.

When I finished, the man approached me and asked if I was from Jerusalem. I told him that I was, and then he asked me if I knew Rav Kook, of blessed memory. I answered that I had been privileged to benefit from his exalted Torah and inspiring discourses. At that moment, the man burst

into tears and said, “What a shame! What a shame that I did not listen to him.”

He continued to sob for a while, and when he finally calmed down a bit, he told me his story.

Lack of “Da’at”

‘In the early 1920’s, I was a big manufacturer in one of Poland’s famous industrial cities. One day, I decided to take a trip to Eretz Yisrael and spend Passover there. Being a religious Jew, I visited Rav Kook zt”l immediately upon my arrival. He welcomed me warmly and encouraged me to seek out the good of the Land and consider settling there. After a few weeks of touring, I returned to the Rav and asked him, among other things, what I should do regarding the second day of “yom-tov”, seeing that I was a tourist. The Rav answered with a smile: Decide right now to bring your family here and to build a factory in the Land. Then, you can keep one day of “yom-tov” already this Passover, like all inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael.’

‘I took his answer jovially, and since the holiday was still a few weeks away, I decided to return at a later date and pose the question again, when it was more practical.’

‘A few days before Passover, I went to Rav Kook and asked him the question once more. This time, the Rav answered sternly: I already told you that you should move here; then you may keep one day of “yom-tov” starting now, even if you must return to Poland after Passover to settle your affairs.’

‘I said to him: Excuse me, dear rabbi, I have thought about it at great length; but in the end, my intention (“da’at”) is to return to the Diaspora. How, then, can I celebrate like the residents of Eretz Yisrael?’

‘The Rav banged his hand on the table and said with great emotion:

Your “da’at” (intention) is to return? That is nothing but lack of “da’at” (sense)!’

The man continued in a broken voice: ‘I did not listen to the Rav. I returned to the Diaspora and remained there. I lost my wife, my children, and my grandchildren in the Holocaust, and here I am today, lonely and desolate. I have come back here with nothing, after wandering for years through Russia. And I constantly recall Rav Kook’s prophetic words: “That is nothing but lack of da’at!”’

[from ‘An Angel Among Men’ by R. Simcha Raz, translated by R. Moshe Lichtman, pp. 257-259]

for any inquiries and comments, write to <mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com>

<http://www.yutorah.org/>

The Weekly Halacha Overview

by Rabbi Josh Flug

The Mitzvah of Haseibah

The Mishna, Pesachim 99b, states that there are certain activities at the Seder that must be performed in the reclined position. This is known as the mitzvah of haseibah. This article will discuss the nature of the mitzvah and the practical applications that emerge from this discussion.

Which Mitzvot Require Haseibah?

The Gemara, Pesachim 108b, states that the mitzvah of eating matzah requires haseibah and the mitzvah of maror does not require haseibah. With regards to the mitzvah of drinking four cups of wine, there is a dispute as to whether haseibah is required for the first two cups or the last two cups. The Gemara concludes that since there is a dispute, one should recline for all four cups. Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U’Matzah 7:8, states that one who reclines for all other eating and drinking activities of the evening is considered praiseworthy.

Rabbeinu Asher, Pesachim 10:20, rules that if haseibah is omitted from the eating of the matzah or from the drinking of the four cups of wine, the mitzvah must be performed again in a reclined position. Rabbeinu Asher notes that there is a reluctance to require repetition of drinking the third and fourth cups of wine because by doing so, it gives the impression that more than four cups of wine are required. That concern notwithstanding, Rabbeinu Asher concludes that if one omitted haseibah from the third and fourth cups, one should repeat drinking those cups in a reclined position.

Rabbeinu Asher's opinion is codified by Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 480:1.

Rama, Orach Chaim 472:7, presents a different approach to the situation where one omitted haseibah from the third or fourth cup of wine. Ra'aviah, no. 525, states that nowadays people do not normally eat in a reclined fashion and therefore the mitzvah of haseibah does not apply. While most Rishonim do not accept the opinion of Ra'aviah, Rama (based on Agudah, Pesachim 10:92) factors in the opinion of Ra'aviah in certain situations. Therefore, in general, if one omits haseibah, that activity must be repeated. However, regarding the third and fourth cups, since there is a concern that repeating the third or fourth cup will give the impression that there is a requirement to drink more than four cups, one may rely on the opinion of Ra'aviah, and one should not repeat drinking the third or fourth cup.

Are Women Obligated to Recline?

There is another instance where Rama relies on the opinion of Ra'aviah. Rama, Orach Chaim 472:4, notes that although women should be obligated in the mitzvah of haseibah, the common practice of many women is to refrain from performing haseibah. Rama proposes that women rely on the opinion of Ra'aviah that nowadays the mitzvah of haseibah does not apply. One can question the Rama's ruling. If in fact, one can rely on the opinion of Ra'aviah, men should rely on this opinion as well. If one cannot rely on the Ra'aviah, why should women rely on this opinion?

It has been suggested that the answer lies in the nature of a woman's obligation in the mitzvah of haseibah. [See the article by R. Mordechai Willig in Zichron HaRav pp. 77-78. The suggestion is based on an idea developed by R. Moshe Soloveitchik, but the specific application to haseibah is from an unknown source.] Haseibah, like all other mitzvot performed at the Seder, is a mitzvah aseh shehaz'man gerama (time bound positive mitzvah). Women are normally exempt from mitzvot aseh shehaz'man gerama. However, there is a concept of af hen hayu b'oto hanes (women were also part of miracle, Pesachim 108b) which obligates women to observe all mitzvot that commemorate a miracle that women were a part of. Therefore, women are obligated to observe all of the mitzvot of the Seder. R. Moshe Soloveitchik opines that there are two aspects to the commemoration of a miracle. There is the pirsumei nissa aspect, which serves to publicize the miracle. Additionally there is the zecheh lanes aspect which serves to remember the miracle. The concept of af hen hayu b'oto hanes only obligates women in the pirsumei nissa aspect, and not the zecheh lanes aspect.

One can then explain that the dispute between Ra'aviah and the other Rishonim is based on the nature of haseibah. Ra'aviah is of the opinion that the purpose of haseibah is pirsumei nissa. Therefore, nowadays, since people do not eat in a reclined fashion, one cannot fulfill pirsumei nissa. The other Rishonim agree that one can no longer fulfill pirsumei nissa, but they maintain that there is a zecheh lanes component to haseibah. By reclining, one remembers the miracle even though nowadays most people don't eat in a reclined fashion.

Now it is possible to understand the basis for women to rely on the opinion of Ra'aviah. A woman's obligation is limited to pirsumei nissa. She is exempt from the zecheh lanes aspect of haseibah. Therefore, since nowadays, the pirsumei nissa aspect cannot be fulfilled, women are exempt from haseibah. However, men – who are still obligated in the zecheh lanes aspect of haseibah – must still recline in order to remember the miracle.

Haseibah for Left-Handed Individuals

The Gemara, *ibid*, states that one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of haseibah by leaning forward or backward. Rather one must lean on one's side. The Gemara states further that if one leans on his right side it is not considered haseibah. Additionally there is a concern that leaning on one's right side may cause choking. Rashbam, *ad loc.*, s.v. Haseibat, explains that the reason why leaning on the right side is not considered haseibah is because it is difficult to eat with one's right hand while leaning to the right. Rashbam *ad loc.*, s.v. Shema, explains that the reason why leaning to the right presents a choking hazard is because leaning to the right causes the epiglottis to open, allowing food to enter the windpipe (see also Rashi, *ad loc.*, s.v. Shema).

R. Yisrael Isserelin, *Terumat HaDeshen*, 1:136, discusses which side a left-handed individual should lean on. He notes that if the reason why one can't lean to the right is because it is difficult to eat while leaning on one's right, a left-handed individual – who eats with his left hand – should lean to his right. However, based on the concern for choking, it would be equally dangerous for a left-handed individual to lean on his right side. *Terumat HaDeshen* concludes that the concern for danger overrides the concern that it is difficult to eat while leaning to the left. Therefore, a left handed individual should lean on his left side. This ruling is codified by Rama, Orach Chaim 472:3.

One can question this ruling. A left-handed individual who leans to his left cannot eat comfortably. As such, if he leans to his left, there should no fulfillment of the mitzvah of haseibah. While there is a concern that leaning to the right presents a danger, leaning to the left ostensibly serves no purpose. If so, why didn't *Terumat HaDeshen* simply rule that a left-handed individual is exempt from the mitzvah because the method in which he can fulfill the mitzvah presents a danger? [Mishna Berurah, *Biur Halacha*, 472:3 s.v. V'Ain, applies this logic to an amputee who doesn't have a right arm. The amputee cannot possibly eat while leaning on his left side and he is exempt from haseibah.]

Perhaps the answer is based on the aforementioned suggestion that there are two aspects to the mitzvah of haseibah. A left-handed individual cannot fulfill pirsumei nissa by reclining on his left side because it is uncomfortable for him to eat in that manner. However, reclining on his left side is preferable to eating in the upright position because he can still fulfill the zecheh lanes aspect by reclining on his left side.

Please address all comments and requests to
HAMELAKET@hotmail.com

Addendum

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

Pesach

Aish.com

Passover Cleaning Made Easy

Is Passover cleaning a chore? Find out what exactly you have to clean and what you don't. Plus with these handy tips, you'll actually enjoy it!

INTRODUCTION

God took the Jewish people out of Egypt in the springtime. The Talmud notes that God was very thoughtful. Not only was He interested in redeeming the nation, He wanted to do so at a time when the weather was just right. Not too hot, not too cold.

Everything about the Passover season is beautiful. The whole idea of redoing your house -- your environment -- for the holiday should be a beautiful experience. For some reason, though, the burden of all that cleaning often hangs heavy over us, and as a result we lose much of the joy of Passover.

I'd like to not only make Passover cleaning a little easier, but above all to change the attitude once and for all to stop being frightened. Passover is not a monster. It's the most beautiful time of the year.

In order to change our attitudes, two things are necessary. The first is to know the halacha. There are so many Passover preparations that are done unnecessarily, where if you want to do them for extra credit, that's fine. But it's important to understand what is necessity and what is voluntary. Secondly, there's practical advice. I want to share some tips that I've picked up over the years. Cleaning for Passover can actually be easy, there's lots of room for creativity, and it's fun.

THE OBLIGATION TO GET RID OF CHAMETZ

In cleaning for Passover, we are first and foremost fulfilling the mitzvah of biur chametz -- getting rid of chametz. Biur chametz is actually quite an easy mitzvah in terms of physical exertion. The Torah says: "tashbisu se'or mibateichem" -- make all your sour dough rest. The Torah commandment is that you can possess all the chametz you want, but in your mind it must be dust -- ownerless and valueless.

Now obviously we are dealing with something subtle and vague. What goes on in your mind, no one knows except you and God. It's quite easy to think you have considered everything "null and void," when in truth you can't wait for Passover to be over so you can partake of all those goodies!

So the Sages instituted a requirement to physically destroy chametz. This mitzvah is known as bedikat chametz. The Sages say it is not enough to emotionally write the chametz off as "dust"; you must actually search out any chametz you can find -- and physically destroy it.

WHEN TO SEARCH

The mitzvah of bedikat chametz is to be done on the night of the 14th of Nissan, the evening prior to the Seder. Why at night? Because in your home there are crevices and corners that have to be illuminated by artificial light -- and artificial light works best at night.

Why the 14th? The Sages said that if some people do it on the 12th and others on the 13th, you'd lose the power of the community reminding and encouraging each other. This way there is a set time; every Jew does bedikat chametz on the night of the 14th.

However, our homes over the years have grown in size, and consequently are more complicated to clean. As a result, the ability to do bedikat chametz in a few hours on the night of the 14th is no longer feasible. Even if you stay up all night, chances are there are parts of your home you'll never get to. So we start our bedikat chametz early. So realize that when you start cleaning for Passover, you are doing bedikat chametz. This is important because there are specific rules for bedikat chametz.

CLEANING DAY OR NIGHT

As we said, bedikat chametz must be done at night, because that's the only time that artificial light is effective. As a result, we have the following rule: You can inspect by daylight anything that does not need artificial light -- i.e. anything moveable that you can hold up near a window, or any part of the house that has sufficient daylight. (If you choose to add artificial light during the daytime, it doesn't hurt.)

On the other hand, any part of the house that needs artificial light -- e.g. closets, corners, insides of cabinets -- these places must be inspected at night. And make sure they are sufficiently lit.

The only time that you cannot do bedikat chametz altogether is in twilight. You don't have enough daylight, and yet it's not dark enough for the artificial light to be effective. Consequently, you could clean at twilight if it's convenient -- as long as you later inspect these cleaned areas (whether in daylight by day, or in artificial light at night).

WHAT ARE WE SEARCHING FOR?

What kind of chametz do we have to get rid of? And what is "chametz" anyway?

The Torah says: Lo yera'eh lecha chametz, velo year'eh lecha se'or bechol gevulecha - "neither chametz nor se'or shall be visible to you in all your boundaries." Chametz is defined as the result of grain that ferments. Se'or is sourdough -- highly fermented dough that is used to make another dough ferment. Instead of using yeast, what they did in the olden days (and many people do today as well) is to take a little piece of old dough, mix that with the fresh dough, and it causes the fresh dough to rise.

So chametz and se'or are the two things the Torah requires us to get rid of. But there's a difference between the two. Chametz is food. It's edible by human standards -- you'd serve it, you'd eat it. If a human being wouldn't eat it, then it's not chametz, because by definition chametz must be food. On the other hand, nobody eats se'or -- non-edible fermented grain which has the function of fermenting other dough.

There's a third category: Non-edible chametz that is not capable of fermenting other dough. That is neither chametz nor se'or. Halachically we call this "garbage" -- and it does not have to be gotten rid of for Passover. Similarly, the Talmud says that se'or which is so bad that even a dog wouldn't eat it -- i.e. it's poisonous -- is halachically not regarded as se'or and is therefore not a problem on Passover.

To review the three categories:

- 1) Chametz is food made of fermented grain.
- 2) Se'or is non-edible sourdough, which has the power to ferment other dough.
- 3) "Garbage" is something that is either incapable of fermenting other dough, or so totally non-edible that a dog wouldn't eat it.

DEODORANTS AND COSMETICS

Let's talk about different products we have around the house -- for example, deodorants and cosmetics which may very well contain some grain products. Of course, you're not going to eat it. Is it therefore automatically disqualified from the category of chametz? And what about se'or? Can deodorant be used to ferment another dough? It cannot, and consequently should not be se'or either.

Some years ago, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein came up with a unique approach that revolutionized the practical applications. He said that even if something in its present state is inedible, but if you can possibly distill it and produce edible chametz, then we would call that "chametz." As a result, he ruled that anything containing grain alcohol (ethyl alcohol) is considered chametz. Even though you would never dream of eating it, nevertheless if you distill it, it would turn into drinkable alcohol. (Ask any alcoholic -- in desperation, they may distill something poisonous like after-

shave and drink it.) Therefore, any liquid cosmetic that has any form of grain alcohol is considered chametz and must be gotten rid of for Passover. This idea only applies to liquids -- because you can't distill a solid. Therefore, any solid substance like stick deodorant or soap which is inedible (i.e. not chametz), and could not ferment a dough (i.e. not se'or), and cannot be distilled -- the halacha is you can own these solid substances on Passover, and you don't have to put them away. Technically, you could even use it on Passover, although the custom is not to use any stuff that has chametz in it as a cosmetic. That's why people buy soaps that are special "Kosher for Passover."

How about beer shampoo or liquid deodorant which contains no grain alcohol but has wheat germ in it. That's not chametz, because you wouldn't eat it. Can it ferment another dough? No. Can you distill it? No. (It's only alcohol that you can get by distilling; you won't get wheat germ vapor by distilling your deodorant.) Consequently, these things are not a problem. You're allowed to keep them around during Passover -- though again the custom is not to use them.

BREAD CRUMBS

What about bread crumbs on your kitchen floor? There are various opinions in halacha, but I'm going to present one in particular that is easier to understand.

We established that the third category -- "garbage" -- is defined as anything that cannot ferment another dough, and is so non-edible that even a dog wouldn't eat it.

According to most halachic authorities, there is one more substance that is defined as "garbage": Chametz that is smaller than a kezayit (about 30 grams) and you would not use it for anything. This is something most people call "garbage" -- you would easily throw it away and in your mind it's nothing. Crumbs fit into this category.

The only kind of crumb that's problematic is one you'd pick up with your finger and put on your tongue. So leftover crumbs from the table are in fact "chametz." Leftover crumbs on the floor, which you wouldn't eat, are garbage. Therefore, any crumb that you would consider dirt (and is smaller than a kezayit) does not have to be gotten rid of.

(The fact that a baby eats it does not turn it into chametz. Because when a baby decides to eat something, it is not a conscious decision that "this is food." If you have non-food around, a baby will eat that, too!)

A QUICK REVIEW

Before we go on, let's make sure we've got it all straight. When we do bedikat chametz, what are we looking for?

One crumb of edible chametz cannot remain in your house and you've got to destroy it. Also, anything that contains ethyl alcohol, since it can be distilled, is called "edible chametz" and must also be disposed of.

We are also looking for something that is more than a kezayit -- regardless of whether you would consider it food or not. If it's less than a kezayit of non-edible chametz, you don't have to get rid of it because you consider it dirt. Also, if it's something even a dog wouldn't eat, then even more than a kezayit is not problematic.

When you're cleaning for Passover, all the goodies in your freezer and cabinets -- bread, cakes, crackers -- all of that is chametz. You have to get rid of it one way or another. But aside from that, you probably won't find much edible chametz in your house. Bedikat chametz, therefore, is not so difficult. In the bedrooms, for example, you don't have to sit with a pin scraping the corners!

Even further: Let's say you have gook stuck to your chametz dishes. If the stuff is non-edible, then you can forget about it -- as long as it does not total a kezayit of gook. But there is no need sit there and scrub the dishes with steel wool. Just make sure there is no edible stuff on them, and no kezayit of gook -- and put them away.

One important point: If you feel like going beyond the limit and scraping the walls and ceiling, go right ahead. Of course it's not required, but the halacha is actually stated in Shulchan Aruch that no one is allowed to laugh at you. In the words of the rabbis, Yisrael kedoshim heim -- "Jews are holy" when they go beyond the letter of the law.

Be careful, however, not to go so far that you develop an antagonistic attitude toward Passover. If all this extra, non-required cleaning is going to make you dread the holiday, then forget about it. And certainly you should not clean so much that you're exhausted for the Passover Seder. Part of being "holy" is appreciating the holiday, too!

THE PROHIBITION OF EATING CHAMETZ

Besides the mitzvah of bedikat chametz, there is a second, more time-consuming aspect of cleaning for Passover. And that revolves around the Torah prohibition of eating any chametz on Passover. In fact, if you intentionally eat even one molecule of chametz on Passover, you're breaking a Torah prohibition.

Furthermore, when it came to Passover, the Sages built "fence around fence." They prohibited things on Passover that we would not otherwise dream of.

Case #1: The Sages said that if one crumb of chametz falls into a huge pot of chicken soup, then -- even if the crumb was removed -- that negligible bit of "bread taste" will still render the whole mixture "chametz."

Case #2: All year long, we know that you're not supposed to use non-kosher dishes or pots. But what if you accidentally use a dish that was used for non-kosher food a long time ago (i.e. not within 24 hours)? The halacha is that your food is still kosher. There are some exceptions, but generally speaking, an "old taste" absorbed into a pot will not ruin your food. However, on Passover, the Sages said that if a dish or pot was ever once used for chametz in its whole long history, and then was used on Passover, the old chametz taste absorbed into the pot will wake up again and give your food the status of chametz.

This rule applies during Passover itself. But if case #2 occurred before Passover -- i.e. if the pot was used ages ago for chametz and you mistakenly cook food in it before Passover -- then the halacha is that your food remains kosher.

With regard to case #1, however, the Sages said that if there may be the tiniest trace of chametz still in your food -- even if it happened before Passover -- the halacha is that your food is considered chametz. (Note: This applies for Ashkenazim.)

As a result, we need special "Kosher for Passover" everything -- pots, pans and even all the ingredients we cook with. Plus, we have to be extremely careful with what's around the house, particularly in the kitchen. If there's any bit of chametz that may make its way into our food, then we've got to get rid of that. And unlike the rules of bedikat chametz, it makes no difference whether there is more or less than a kezayit. Plus we have to make sure that any place that "hot" Passover food will touch (like a countertop) doesn't even have an absorbed chametz taste.

One exception to this rule: Totally non-edible chametz that makes its way into your food is not called chametz and will not ruin your food -- unless you purposely eat it. If it accidentally falls into your food that's not a problem. (However, as we said, if it's edible chametz, then even the tiniest drop in your food will ruin everything.)

CLOTHES

In preventing chametz from coming in contact with food, let's start with some things you'd never think of. Any clothes that you're going to wear to the Passover table, if it has a speck of chametz that may fall into your food, then you've got to get that speck off your clothes before coming to the table.

As a result, when cleaning your clothes closet for Passover, you should select the clothing you plan to wear for Passover -- and these clothes have to be 100 percent clean. Put them in the laundry, send them to the dry cleaners, or at the very least brush them out well to make sure there is no chametz whatsoever.

What about the clothes you're not going to wear during Passover? Just take a quick look, empty the pockets to make sure there's no edible chametz, and put them away. Don't worry about specks.

With regard to closets, try to keep your Passover clothes off the closet floor. And with regard to bed linens, be aware that during Passover you

may get up in the middle of the night and walk to the kitchen. So be sure to change the sheets and blanket covers as close to Passover as possible.

CHILDREN'S TOYS

It's best if children's toys do not come to the table on Passover, but that's wishful thinking. In reality, you never know when toys are going to come in contact with food. As a result, we do the following: First, take the toys that are complicated to clean and put them away. Don't even attempt to clean them for Passover. Just make sure there's no edible chametz on them, or a kezayit of non-edible chametz. That should take a total of two minutes. As far as selling the toys is concerned, the text of the sale document includes any chametz you've got around the house, so you don't need to specify toys; it's covered by the contract anyway.

As for toys that are going to be used on Passover, make sure they are washable. For small pieces, fill up a pillow case and put it in the washing machine. (Make sure to tie it tight or you may ruin your washing machine.) Another option is to put the toys in the bathtub. Let them soak, and give them a quick rinse under pressure. You don't need anything more than that. It's not necessary to wash the toys with ammonia. What about a bicycle? Make sure there's no real chametz on it, and then it can be used during Passover. But the bike should not be ridden around the house on Passover -- because once it's been ridden outside, there's bits of chametz all over the street that gets caught on the tires.

Some people have special Passover toys, and this is good practical advice. Children are fascinated by playing with toys they haven't seen in a year. Even if you have some other toys that you wash, breaking out new toys is a great way to keep children occupied in those days just before Passover when you're busy cooking and preparing.

BOOKS

Any book that will be brought to the table on Passover must be 100 percent clean. How do you do that? It is almost impossible. That's why any books you are going to bring to the Passover table -- like a Haggadah -- should be kept wrapped in plastic or put away all year long so that it is 100 percent chametz-free. If you want to study the Haggadah before Passover, then get a different one which will be your "chametz Haggadah."

As for books that will not be brought to the Passover table, all you have to do is make sure they have no edible chametz or a kezayit of gook. You may have some edible crumbs there, so turn each book upside down and bang it out. That's sufficient to assume that no edible chametz remains.

DINING ROOM - LIVING ROOM

Things in your dining room may certainly come in contact with food.

Table: The table itself will need to be kosher because you put hot food down on it. Of course, this is not always so practical to clean -- even though you can kasher wood by dousing it in boiling water, you don't want to do that to your fine wood table. Besides, tables usually have hard-to-reach crevasses that can be filled with crumbs.

What should you do? Cover the table with something waterproof. Otherwise, if you put a hot dish down on your table, the moisture will penetrate your tablecloth, creating a direct line of moisture going from the table to your food -- making your food chametz! So the table must have a waterproof layer -- either plastic over the tablecloth, or the tablecloth over plastic. If you prefer, corrugated cardboard works, too, because it's so thick that we assume there will not be a direct line of moisture going from your food all the way down to the table. Of course you also have to clean the entire table. You don't have to sit there with a toothpick picking out chametz stuck in a crevasse of the legs. But make sure there's nothing loose that can fall onto the floor and eventually make its way back onto your table on Passover.

Chairs: If you have upholstery, you have to clean that very well. It's best to shampoo the furniture if you can do so without ruining it. If there is a removable part to your chair, check there and you're certain to find lots of crumbs. Check carefully, because chairs get moved up and down, and some crumbs may come off onto someone's clothing and then into the food on Passover.

Couch: Remove the cushions and check there. It is common to find a kezayit of chametz stuck inside the couch. Also clean in any cracks or crevasses. A vacuum cleaner works best for this.

Light switches: Since you often touch light switches during the meal, make sure they're perfectly clean. It is sufficient to dampen a cloth with ammonia or any strong cleanser, and go over the switch once so that nothing edible is left there.

Doorknobs: Again, use a damp cloth with cleanser. However, this is not enough if you've got a fancy doorknob with crevasses. In that case you should use a cloth that's more saturated, so any chametz that may remain will be totally non-edible.

KITCHEN BASICS

There are surfaces in the kitchen that will not touch your food, but that may come in contact with food indirectly -- because you touch them while you make food. Examples include doorknobs, doors, windows, cabinet covers, radio, and especially the telephone. These surfaces must be perfectly clean, or at least nothing edible should be left on it. Use ammonia or a strong cleanser. (Window cleaner contains ammonia.) If you can unscrew part of the telephone, it's a good idea, because you never know how many crumbs are in there.

Some items in your kitchen are on even a lower level. This is the category of things that you are going to put away in storage -- e.g. your chametz dishes. All you have to do is make sure there's no edible chametz and no kezayit of gook -- then put them away in a cabinet which is closed shut, then taped, locked or labeled. This way you won't accidentally take it out during Passover.

What about chametz dishes that are used only for special occasions -- e.g. a breakfront where you have china and crystal on display? These you can continue having on display. Since you don't take these out regularly, there's no danger of you accidentally taking it out during Passover. (Additionally, there is no Passover prohibition of owning the "taste" of chametz absorbed in a plate.) People may feel uncomfortable about leaving these dishes on display, and of course it's perfectly acceptable to put them away. But the halacha is that you are allowed to leave them out.

Speaking of discomfort... On Passover, some people will cover up a piece of artwork that shows bread. Certainly there's no requirement to do so, but you can appreciate someone not wanting to have a picture of challah hanging next to their Passover table!

UTENSILS USED IN COOKING

Now we get to the surfaces that will actually come in contact with your food. The most obvious example is pots and pans. Of these, the most severe category is those things used on the fire without liquid -- e.g. a frying pan. If you want to use this pan for Passover, you'll have to burn the chametz out. This is called libun, literally getting the metal red-hot. You basically have two choices: use a blowtorch, or a self-cleaning oven. (Just be careful that the plastic handle doesn't disintegrate.)

What about pots that are used on the fire with water -- e.g. your spaghetti pot, or utensils that were used with hot food -- e.g. silverware? If you want to use this for Passover, then you have to boil it completely. This is called haggalah.

How do you do haggalah? First, make sure the item is completely clean. Then, fill up a big, big pot with water. Get it boiling, and then completely immerse whatever you want to kasher in the water. Since the item will cool the water somewhat, you have to leave it in there long enough so that the water reaches a boil again. The optimum time is to leave it in for 30 seconds, and then remove the item. If you leave it in any longer, there's a problem of re-absorbing some of the chametz. Thirty seconds is ideal.

Haggalah becomes a bit more complicated if the item you want to kasher is a big pot. What can you immerse that in?! One option is to fill the pot to the very top with water, then bring it to a boil, and finally throw something in so the water boils over the sides.

The other option is to call your local synagogue and see if they offer a "kashering day." This is where they prepare a huge public vat of boiling water. Just make sure that whoever is dipping your pots is patient enough

to leave it in for the requisite 30 seconds. The custom is not to kasher anything that was used for chametz within 24 hours. And generally speaking, people today try to have a separate set of pots and silverware for Passover. If you can afford it, it certainly simplifies things.

THE CANDLESTICKS STRINGENCY

There is another level which is a stringency for Passover. The Ashkenazi custom is that anything that came to the table during the year cannot be brought to the Passover table, unless you kasher it first. That includes items that have only come in contact with cold chametz during the year, like a Kiddush cup. Generally there's no "chametz taste" absorbed in that, because the medium of heat is necessary to infuse a taste. Nevertheless, if you want to use the Kiddush cup on Passover, you must kasher it in boiling water. The same applies to candlesticks if they've been brought to the table.

There is one leniency here, however: it's enough to just pour boiling water over them (as opposed to the regular immersion). But don't forget -- if the Kiddush cup is a fancy silver one with a lot of crevasses, you have to clean it well with silver polish before koshering. If you can't get it fully clean, then it's best to use a different one for Passover.

To review: Anything that you cook in needs to be immersed in boiling water. (Though the custom is to have a separate set for Passover anyway.) Whereas anything that you do not cook in -- but came to your table during the year -- needs boiling water poured over it.

STOVE GRATES

Surprisingly, you don't really have to kasher stove grates. This applies all year as well. For example, if some meat juice spills on your stove grate, and then some milk spills there -- it's still kosher. Why? Because since the grate is constantly over the fire, any spill is regarded as burned up before the taste can become absorbed into the grate.

For Passover, we make the same assumption -- i.e. any chametz was burned up before its taste became absorbed. However, the Ashkenazi custom is still to kasher the grates. We use a "light" form of "burning out" called libun kal. Practically speaking, you heat up the grate until it is so hot that if a piece of paper touched it, it would turn brown. The easiest way to do this is to heat up your oven, stick in the grates, and that will be sufficient. Or, you can turn on a few burners, and put your Shabbos blech right on top of the grates. (Don't turn on all four burners, because with the blech there is not enough oxygen and the fires will go out. Instead, turn on two diagonal ones, then do the other two on the other side.) In either case, be sure the grate is hot enough so that a piece of paper touching it would turn brown.

KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS

Stainless steel counters can be kashered. First, make sure they've not been used for hot chametz in the past 24 hours. Then, clean them well. And finally, pour boiling water from a kettle all over them.

The problem is this is a really messy job and you may have to fill up lots of kettles. So one alternative is to put cold water all over your counter (put something on the side so the water doesn't spill over), then take an electric steam iron, and go over the entire countertop. This will make the water "sizzle," which is the halachic equivalent of using a red-hot stone -- eh'ven meluban. (Don't worry, a steam iron is waterproof and this will not ruin your iron.) But remember -- this only works on stainless steel counters.

What if you have stone or marble counters? That depends on the type of stone. In Israel, most people have what is called shayish. This is a combination of stone and epoxy -- and cannot be kashered for Passover. You have to cover it with something waterproof. And although it's not required, some people pouring boiling water over it before covering it properly.

If you have what they call "granite," that is real stone and can be kashered for Passover. (Use the methods described above for stainless steel.) The only problem spot is the seams where you have a little crack filled with plaster. Some people put rubber mats over their granite (even if they do

kasher it) just to cover these seams. But halachically, if you pour boiling water there, it should be sufficient.

What about the wall behind the countertops? Since your pots touch the wall during the year, make sure to cover it. It doesn't make a difference what the wall is made of, you should cover the wall behind the counter.

Additionally, you should cover the underside of the upper cabinets that overhang the counter. Why? Because some Passover food may touch it. But beyond this, there is steam that can go up and absorb the taste of chametz steam that was absorbed there. Not everyone agrees, but I believe that surface should be covered.

As for the outside of the cabinets themselves, we assume that food will not touch there directly. But make sure you clean them well.

As for the kitchen table, it is the same as we said for the dining room table: cover it with something waterproof. If your tabletop is made of wood, metal or stone, you could pour boiling water from a kettle directly onto your table, and that would actually enable you to use the table without any covering. This method does not work for formica.

REFRIGERATOR

Most people generally don't put hot food directly into the refrigerator. But if you do during the year, don't do it on Passover!

The basic rule with a refrigerator is the same as doorknobs: It must be cleaned spotlessly. First take out the shelves, then clean the entire inside very well with something that renders food non-edible. It may be a little difficult to bend in there, but the surface itself is smooth and not too hard to clean.

What about the shelves themselves? If you try going over every surface by hand -- in between the little slats -- it's going to take forever. So the best thing is to fill the bathtub about halfway with water, add some ammonia, and put all the shelves in there. Wash them off under pressure, and make sure that nothing edible remains.

Although this is sufficient, some people still feel uncomfortable putting Passover food directly down onto the shelves. You can cover the shelves, but be careful: If you cover them with something that air cannot go through, then there will be no circulation in the refrigerator, the thermostat will get confused and the motor will run forever. You can kill your fridge that way! Instead, cover the shelves with something that air can circulate through -- like paper towels or aluminum foil poked with holes.

As for the freezer, defrost it and clean it out thoroughly. If you have a self-defrosting freezer, make sure to pull out the water pan at the bottom. If you haven't cleaned that pan out lately, there could easily be a kezayit of crumbs down there!

Next: the rubber gasket around your refrigerator door. Obviously clean it well with a cloth. But more important, you need to clean the accordion folds. The most effective way is take a Q-tip, dip it into ammonia (or windex), and run it through the folds. The Q-tip will do a great job of picking up all the dirt.

What about food that you want to leave in your refrigerator (or freezer) and include in the sale of chametz? You should wrap it up, put it in a corner of your refrigerator (or freezer) and then cover it to avoid any contact on Passover.

For the outside of the refrigerator, make sure to clean the door and handles, because you're going to be touching that frequently during Passover. Also check on top of the refrigerator, especially if there are kids in the house. Who knows what may have gotten tossed up there! As for the exterior sides, just clean them well. Some people like to cover them, but the halacha does not require it.

KITCHEN CABINETS

We already spoke about the outside of kitchen cabinets. But what about the inside shelves? Since you normally don't put hot food there, you don't have to use boiling water. Just clean it very well with detergent and make sure there's nothing edible left.

Still, many people feel uncomfortable putting Passover dishes and food down on surfaces that are used for chametz all year long. This is the source of the "ancient Jewish custom" of shelf paper. Many people put shelf paper on the bottom of drawers and cabinets, and some put it on the sides as well.

KITCHEN SINK

The sink obviously has to be kosher for Passover. A stainless steel sink can be kashered by dousing it with boiling water. However, the drain itself has a seam that you can't really get perfectly clean. One solution is to clean the stainless steel sink by blasting it with a blowtorch. However, most halachic authorities maintain that blowtorching is not necessary, and it is sufficient to pour strong detergent down your drain. This way, anything that is stuck -- either on the seam of the drain or in the drain pipe itself -- will be rendered totally non-edible. If you have plastic pipes, drain cleaner may disintegrate plastic pipes, so strong detergent is good enough. Additionally (although this is not really necessary), some people put a plastic insert or rubber mat in the sink so that nothing touches the sink itself.

A porcelain sink cannot be kashered. You must clean the sink thoroughly and then put a plastic insert. But sometimes your sink can back up with water, and you can end up getting drain water coming onto the plastic insert! This obviously defeats the whole purpose. The key is to remove the strainer from the drain in your sink, and instead to put a strainer securely in the insert. This way, all the dirt will get stuck on top, which you can clean out, and if anything goes through, it will go all the way down and not stay in the sink.

Furthermore, the insert should be slightly raised, not sitting directly on top of the sink. You can put two little pieces of wood in the sink, which the insert will sit on -- as long as it's slightly removed and not touching directly.

What about lining a sink with contact paper? The problem is that you may get a water bubble inside it, and then that water would transmit taste from your non-Passover sink. If you can be sure that there is no water under the contact paper, then contact paper is okay.

While we're on the subject of the sink, don't forget the faucet itself. The handles should be cleaned perfectly. Some people actually have different handles for Passover. If you don't feel like unscrewing them, at least wash them in detergent to render any particles non-edible. With regard to the faucet itself, you have to pour boiling water on it because it comes in contact with chametz steam all the time.

A plastic faucet is a very big problem because it cannot be kashered. So you will have to keep the faucet moved to the side during Passover, and keep it away from your pots, to make sure that no steam comes on it.

DISHWASHING ON PASSOVER

In order to avoid all sorts of problems in your sink, don't wash dishes in very hot water on Passover. This will avoid getting any residual chametz to a point where it can cook. (The halachic cooking point is called *yad soledet bo* -- literally "too hot to the touch" -- which is 45 degrees Celsius, 112 degrees Fahrenheit.) It's not forbidden to wash with very hot water, but it's a way to avoid many problems. You can get your dishes just as clean by using very warm water that's not too hot. This caution is only necessary on Passover.

THE OVEN

Our final appliance is the oven. If you have a self-cleaning oven, put it through the self-cleaning cycle and that will make your oven "Kosher for Passover." In a self-cleaning oven, if you have any interior parts that are rubber -- or other substances which halachically cannot be kashered -- then you should cover those pieces with aluminum foil, and make sure they stay covered whenever you use your oven.

If you do not plan to use your oven during Passover, all you have to do is look inside: If there is no edible food inside and no kezayit of gook, just close the door, tape it shut, and that's all. If you want to be stringent, spray some oven cleaner inside, wait three minutes, wipe it off, and close the door. Halachically, if you're not using your oven on Passover, it does not

have to shine. Please don't make anyone scrub your oven for hours because of a stringency! Simply make sure there's no edible chametz and no kezayit of gook.

If you never use your oven for chametz and you want to use it for Passover, you still have to kasher it. However, here you can rely on turning on the thermostat to the highest setting and waiting until it reaches its highest temperature.

What about the top of the stove, where the burners sit? We already discussed how to kasher the stove grates -- they need *libun kal*, which means they get hot enough to turn a piece of paper brown. The same rule applies to the burners that the fire comes out of -- just clean them well, and then turn them on to make sure you burn out any food.

The top of the stove, however, is a different story. In reality, that surface is always *treif*, because it gets splashings of milk and splashings of meat. During the year, this is not a problem. Why? Because first of all, you're careful that those splashings don't touch what you're cooking. And if it does, then it all depends on whether the splashings are "edible food," and what the proportion is, etc. Furthermore, if your stovetop is cleaned, then the only problem is that it has absorbed milk and meat "taste" -- which we assume happened more than 24 hours ago. So during the year, it's very unlikely that these splashings can render your food "non-kosher."

On Passover, however, the 24-hour leniency doesn't apply. Something that was used for chametz a year ago is still chametz. Consequently, Passover food cannot touch your stovetop and it must be covered. The easiest way is to take aluminum foil and cover the whole stove top. Use the heavy-duty kind so it doesn't tear.

The most problematic part of your stove is a part you may have never seen: under the top platform. If you remove that, you will find remnants of all the different cereals and soups you cooked during the year. There may likely be some edible crumbs there, as well as a kezayit of gook. So you have to remove the entire stovetop. Hopefully, you have one that's removable (perhaps with screws). Otherwise it means getting under there with your fingers. That is very difficult, and the only advice is to pry it open and then spray some ammonia detergent to make everything non-edible.

Assuming you've removed the stovetop, the first thing is to get a vacuum cleaner and get rid of all the crumbs. This way, you won't have crumbs flying all over the place. If you don't have access to a vacuum, then take a damp cloth and go over the area. The crumbs will stick to the cloth. Don't make the cloth wet, because that will make a mess of your whole oven. This is necessary even if you're not going to use your stove on Passover.

If your stove is built into the counter, the top is generally not a problem, because spills have no place to fall into.

Other stoves are more problematic. If you have one big glass or porcelain top with heating elements under it, then kashering that for Passover (because of the material) is not possible. The only thing you could do is to cover it with aluminum foil, but the problem is that when you cover these things, they don't work as well. Unless you can find a way of covering it without losing efficiency or ruining your food, the best solution may be to get a different stove for Passover.

If you have electric elements that are exposed, then the elements have to be cleaned but not kashered.

An electric warming tray (*plata*) should be cleaned as well as possible. And if you want to use it for Passover, cover it over with heavy-duty aluminum foil that won't tear. A metal burner cover (*blech*) has to be either kashered or totally covered. It makes more sense to buy a thin *blech* especially for Passover; otherwise heavy-duty aluminum foil should suffice, although it may emit harmful and unpleasant fumes.

Some stoves have a cover that you can put down when not using your stovetop. Since this gets splashed all year long, you must clean and cover it (or else detach it completely). Similarly, the wall behind your stove has definitely absorbed some chametz -- so either move the stove away from the wall so no pots will touch it, or cover the wall.

If you have a ventilator above your oven, that's a problem -- a breeding ground for chametz steam and particles. The best thing is to cover the vent

and don't use it during Passover. Additionally, if there's anything edible in there (or a kezayit of gook), you have to clean it out.

MICROWAVE AND DISHWASHER

A microwave itself can be kashered for Passover, providing that the inside is metal (or even painted metal). Simply insert a bowl of water and have it make a lot of steam for 20 minutes. It's preferable that you get a new glass plate for Passover, or at least cover it.

If you have different parts in the microwave -- like little rubber pieces -- this is a big problem. First of all, rubber is a substance that can't be kashered. And secondly, since this is a microwave, the pieces obviously can't be covered with tinfoil. The best solution is to get replacement parts and save those for Passover only. Otherwise, you can't use your microwave for Passover.

A microwave with a plastic interior cannot be kashered for Passover.

In order to kasher a dishwasher for Passover, it must be metal. Additionally, you should have a separate rack for Passover.

SMALL KITCHEN APPLIANCES

There are other appliances that we do not use on Passover. These include a toaster, toaster oven, and mixer -- things that you use for bread and cake all year long. Although it may be possible to kasher these things, it's just going a little too far and we don't do so.

So what do you do? First of all, if you think there's anything edible, clean it. Take the crumbs out of your toaster and toaster oven. Do the best you can, but don't go crazy. You don't have to take apart your toaster, toaster oven or mixer.

The reason you don't have to be as careful cleaning these items is that you're going to include them in your sale of chametz anyway. So even though we have a custom not to sell chametz gamur (i.e. bread and cake), there is no problem of selling a toaster that has some crumbs left in it. Just remove whatever chametz you can, and whatever you can't reach, rely on the sale.

As for your mixer: If you're afraid it has a bunch of dough still attached, it's probably not edible. In which case just make sure you don't have a kezayit. The best way to solve all this is to wash it with detergent which makes it totally non-edible.

THE FLOOR

Crumbs on the floor, assuming they're less than a kezayit, are regarded as dirt. The problem, however, is that clothes fall on the floor, children play on the floor, etc. So to minimize problems in general, try to keep the floors fairly tidy during the days you're cleaning for Passover. And then, as the final step when everything else in the house has been kashered for Passover, wash the floors very well. (You don't have to use ammonia.)

What about during Passover itself? Realize that every time anyone enters the house from outside, they're carrying many potential chametz particles on their clothes, and particularly their shoes. You can keep sweeping your house, but that won't do a perfect job.

So the rule is: Anything that falls on the floor during Passover does not go back on the table. The original custom was that it didn't go back on the table at all for the duration of Passover. Today, we're lenient to permit washing it off. For instance, if a piece of silverware falls on the floor, just wash it off and then you can use it again. The same with toys -- if a child wants to bring it to the table, it must first be washed off.

With about rugs? They're full of crumbs -- even edible crumbs -- and they're very difficult to clean. The best option is to shampoo the carpet before Passover, which will eliminate anything edible. Otherwise, many people just roll their carpets up, put them away, and sell them for Passover. This is not required, but is certainly advisable (unless you're shampooing).

One crucial thing to remember: You spend your whole time cleaning for Passover, and where does all your chametz go? It gets stuck in the broom, goes into the garbage can, and into the vacuum cleaner bag. You must clean your broom well, so that there's nothing edible left in it. Or preferably have a special broom for Passover that you put away from year to year. Make sure your garbage can is cleaned well. And above all, make

sure to throw out the vacuum cleaner bag. That's one instance where you're likely to have a whole kezayit of chametz gook together!

SALE OF CHAMETZ

The prevailing custom is not to sell real edible chametz like bread, crackers, etc. The exception is when getting rid of it will involve a hardship -- i.e. you've got a large quantity of it, it's difficult to obtain, or it's expensive. Certainly you can include a half-bottle of scotch in the sale. Otherwise, you can give the food away to a non-Jewish acquaintance. Some cities specifically host food drives for poor people in the days before Passover.

But what about food that's not "real" chametz -- i.e. a can of tuna fish that's not labeled "Kosher for Passover," or food that was cooked in a chametz pot? These things you can put away in a cabinet and sell them. Taping the cabinet closed is only necessary if out of habit you may open it on Passover. By the way, even chametz of a non-Jew must be put away and covered.

Have a happy and kosher Passover -- and an easy cleaning!

Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits is a leading expert on Mitzvot Bein Adam L'Chavero, the Torah's wisdom regarding interpersonal relationships. He is presently the Dean of the Center for Jewish Values, an international organization which promotes Mitzvot Bein Adam L'Chavero.

<http://chareidi.shemayisrael.com/ohagodhzav66.htm>

Dei'ah Ve Dibur

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Telolei Oros: Parents and Children, Day and Night — A Selection of Thoughts for the Seder Table

Each Son Has Potential

In the Torah, the questions and answers of the four sons do not appear in the same order as they do in the Haggodoh. In response to the question of the rosho (Shemos 12:26), the posuk gives an answer that is suited to the chochom. The she'eino yodei'a lish'ol receives the answer that is given in the Haggodoh of the rosho, (Shemos 13:8), while the question of the chochom, (Devorim 6:20) gets an answer that is suited for the tam.

The following is a possible explanation. The mitzvoh of recounting the story of yetzias Mitzrayim has to take a different form for each of the four types of sons, in response to the way each of them phrases his question. However, the Torah doesn't present the responses according to the questions, because even if a child is endowed with the gifts necessary to become a chochom, it is not certain that he will follow this path all his life. He must battle his yetzer hora and who can guarantee that he will be victorious?

And on the other hand, though a child may be born with tendencies that can lead him to become a rosho R'l, one must never give up hope. He is still obligated to serve Hashem and if he merits it, he can yet become a tam or even a chochom.

According to this, we understand the relevance of the phrase that precedes the discussion of the Four Sons in the Haggodoh "Blessed is [He] who gave Torah to His people Yisroel. The Torah speaks about four sons . . ." The Torah does not only address itself to the wise son but to the wicked son as well. A person can be born with a difficult, perverse nature, which in a gentile environment or in the natural course of life, would lead him to no good and offer no possibility of changing for the better. We however, bless Hashem "who gave us the Torah," through which a person can refine and elevate his nature and rectify his character faults, to the point where it is within everybody's power to become as righteous as Moshe Rabbenu, as the Rambam writes (Hilchos Teshuvoh 5:2).

This is therefore the right place to offer thanks for our receiving the Torah, wherein everybody can find the remedy to rectify his shortcomings.

(Tziyunei Derech)

Starting with Shame and Ending with Worthiness

[It seems hard to understand the opinion that the "shame" referred to is the Egyptian slavery, which we mention in avodim hoyinu.] What shame is there in having servitude forced upon us? The explanation could be, however, that a person who believes in Hashem and His direct Providence will not attribute any misfortune or suffering that befalls him to a human or worldly cause. He knows that Hashem yisborach "spoke and it came about" (Tehillim 33:9). He knows that whoever is immediately responsible for his suffering is no more than a stick being wielded by the real Deliverer of the blows. It has no independent power to do harm; all of its strength comes from the one holding it.

Even if such a person is forced to be a servant, he will not regard the one who controls him as a master and will thus never lose his inner freedom. In his soul, he never becomes a slave because he recognizes that "this came from Hashem" (Tehillim 118:23). He regards his situation as something temporary, whose purpose is to refine him and atone for his sins.

This was not the case with Klal Yisroel in Egypt. Their faith in Hashem and His direct Providence was deficient. They thus lost their sense of inner freedom, because they viewed themselves as servants of Pharaoh: "We were servants to Pharaoh in Egypt . . ." [This then, is the shame, for] there is no greater disgrace than there being a flaw in the core of one's faith.

(HaRav Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer Zt'l of Cracow)

Servants to Pharaoh

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu instructed Moshe to go to Pharaoh, He told him to say, "So says Hashem, 'My firstborn son Yisroel,'" (Shemos 4:22). Why is this particular term used here when Moshe approached Pharaoh for the first time?

The author of She'eris Yaakov explains that Pharaoh thought that bnei Yisroel were [only] servants of Hashem and that he was therefore justified in enslaving them, since Hashem was displeased with them (as we find in the parable which the wicked Turnusrufus put to Rabbi Akiva). However, the posuk (Devorim 14:1) tells bnei Yisroel that, "You are sons to Hashem . . ." on which Chazal comment (Kiddushin 36), "When you behave in the manner of sons, you are called "sons" (as Rabbi Akiva in fact replied). The suffering which Pharaoh inflicted upon bnei Yisroel was therefore unjustified and he and his people deserved to be punished for it.

There is a well known question that is posed by the early commentators: How could Hakodosh Boruch Hu, who is referred to as a Cohen, enter the land of Egypt which was full of idols and impurity? Even a Cohen though, is allowed to become impure for his son — and we are called Hashem's sons.

This is what we mean when we say, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt." In Pharaoh's eyes, we were slaves and he felt that this gave him license to enslave us. Hakodosh Boruch Hu's coming Himself and taking us out however, showed us that we are in fact His "sons."

"Yisroel are cherished, for they are called Hashem's sons", (Ovos 3:14).

(HaRav Chaim Falagi)

And It Was Halfway Through the Night

The holy Zohar tells us that halfway through the night that Klal Yisroel left Egypt, it became light as day. Tosafos (Brochos 9, beginning Rabbi Elozor), raises a difficulty in the opinion of Rabbi Elozor ben Azarya (who holds that the Torah only allows the korbon Pesach to be eaten during the first half of the night), from the posuk (Shemos 12:10) which commands us not to leave over any of the korbon "until morning." This implies that the korbon may be eaten until then. According to the Zohar the problem disappears, because this command was addressed to the Jews who were about to leave Egypt and on that night, it actually became light at midnight.

This also explains why Moshe Rabbenu told Pharaoh that the plague would take place at "around midnight" (kachatzos) and not "at midnight" (bachatzos) — because that night, there was no midnight. That night ended at the time that was midnight every other night. Thus, it was accurate to say that the plague would take place at an hour that was "like midnight" (kachatzos) of every other night.

The Zohar can also be used to explain a puzzling Mechilta which, on the posuk (Shemos 12:34), "mish'arosom — their kneading troughs — tied up in their clothes," comments that, "some say [that the word comes from the root she'eir, remnant, and refers to] the remains of the [korbon] Pesach, as it says, 'And do not leave any over until morning.'"

This opinion is extremely hard to understand. Having specifically been commanded not to leave over any of the korbon, how did the people have leftovers?

The people however, thought that even though it had already grown light, since the usual time for daybreak had not yet arrived they were allowed to leave some of the korbon to be consumed until the normal hour of daybreak.

(Rav Yehoshua of Kutno zt'l)

Like Another Midnight

When Avrohom Ovinu and his companions gave chase to the four kings, the posuk (Bereishis 14:15) tells us that, "the night was divided for them." Chazal tell us that that night was Pesach night. Besides the extraordinary victory, with one man and the members of his household defeating four powerful kings the news of which spread to all the nations, Chazal tell us that with the demise of the four kings, their idolatrous faiths also lapsed into oblivion.

This was what Moshe Rabbenu meant when he told Pharaoh, "So says Hashem, 'Like midnight . . .'" 'Like that well-known midnight, when Avrohom was saved and was victorious, so is this one going to be.'

(Or HaChaim)

A Rapid Change

The process of leaving Egypt — both the exodus from the land's spiritual impurity and the actual departure from the country — was wholly and entirely miraculous. The sharp swing from being at the forty-ninth level of impurity, rising to the heights of witnessing Hashem's revelation whereby, "a maidservant at the sea saw more than [the novi] Yechezkel ben Buzi [in his view of the Merkavoh]" was opposed to the natural laws that usually operate in creation.

When a person makes his way in darkness and is suddenly brightly illuminated, it can damage his eyes. In His kindness, Hashem therefore arranged that the light of day would increase gradually, as the posuk (Mishlei 4:18) says, "growing [gradually] lighter until midday." It is certainly the same in the spiritual realm and in the human soul. [True change only comes gradually.]

Here though [in an instant], we were brought "from darkness to light" — from the deepest darkness into a very powerful light.

(HaRav Sho'ul Broch of Keschau)

On That Day

Why does the posuk (Shemos 13:8) specifically mention that the time for fulfilling the mitzvoh of "Vehigadeto levincho, and you shall tell your son," is bayom hahu, "on that day" i.e. the anniversary of yetzias Mitzrayim? Chazal deduce from the very next words, "ba'avur zeh, because of this," that the recounting of yetzias Mitzrayim should take place only "while matzoh and morror are set down in front of you," apparently rendering bayom hahu superfluous.

With the sweet mode of expression of the righteous, the posuk is telling us that this night is called day, not night. This is the meaning of the posuk, "And night shall be bright like day" (Tehillim 139:12). The Torah is not concerned with us making the mistake of thinking that the time for the mitzvoh is during the actual day, because of the continuation, "ba'avur zeh . . . when matzoh and morror are set down in front of you."

Perhaps the fact that the words bayom hahu directly follow vehigadeto levincho, teaches us that this miracle too, should be included in the mitzvoh of Haggodoh.

(Or HaChaim)

And You Shall Tell Your Son

In the sefer, Minhagei HaChasam Sofer we find that on the seder night, "He only spoke at length to the young boys and girls. He translated every word in the Haggodoh for them and explained the topic's [simple] meaning without discoursing at length at all."

A Wondrous Allusion

After the Torah commands us "Vehigadeto, and you shall tell," why add the word "leimor, saying?"

We might have thought that the mitzvoh only applies to someone who has a son, but that someone who does not have a child is exempt. The Torah therefore adds leimor, to indicate that everybody must engage in this telling, even a person who is on his own.

Since everyone is obligated to fulfill the mitzvoh whatever their circumstances, why specify "to your son"? The words vehigadeto levincho could be an allusion, telling us that if a person engages in recounting the Haggodoh that the Torah commands, Hashem will merit him with a son to whom he will tell it [i.e. if vehigadeto, then levincho].

(Or HaChaim)

Become Holy and Cleanse Yourself

Many of the earlier authorities explain the mnemonic for the order of the seder, Kadeish uRechatz . . . , as an allusion to the individual's path in serving Hashem.

In this context, the Noda Biyehudoh points out that the first stage on the list, Kadeish, implies sanctifying oneself — kedushoh being defined as separating oneself even from what is permitted, as a means of heightening one's holiness (see the comments of the Ramban on the words "kedoshim tiheyu" [Vayikra 19:2]).

Why then, does Kadeish come before uRechatz, which implies an apparently more fundamental need to cleanse oneself from one's sins? The correct order would be first to distance oneself from doing anything that halochoh forbids and only then to work on increasing one's kedushoh by separating oneself from what is permitted.

Chazal tell us however, that when a person sins and then repeats the sin a second time, he starts to view the deed as one that is permitted (Kiddushin 20). This happens because the material influence of his yetzer hora prevails over the spiritual influence of his mind. When a person feels a pure inspiration to repent from his bad ways and return to Hashem, this is akin to a voluntary act of special piety, since through repeated sinning he has come to view his conduct as permissible. In his eyes, he is separating himself from what is allowed.

Once his heart begins to open and he breaks with his evil ways, the influence of his mind upon him becomes stronger and his eyes once again become opened to the true wretchedness of his state, mired and soiled in the filth of sin. Only then can he be told "uRechatz, truly cleanse yourself." (Chiddushei HaTzlach)

The Kingdom Is Yours, Hashem!

An Explanation of the Refrain: Lecho uLecho

The three pairs of double expressions — Lecho uLecho, Lecho ki Lecho, Lecho af Lecho — need to be understood. The posuk (Tehillim 115:16) says, "The heavens are the heavens for Hashem, while He has given the earth to people." This means that while Hashem possesses limitless spiritual worlds which are His alone, the earth is still "entirely filled with His glory." However Hashem has given the world to people as well. Thus, the earth belongs both to Hashem and to His creatures.

The refrain of this song can therefore be explained as follows:

Lecho uLecho, Yours and Yours — there are two things that are Yours Hashem, and they differ in their nature;

Lecho ki Lecho, Yours and only Yours — the upper worlds, which are for Hashem alone;

Lecho af Lecho, Yours and even Yours — this world, which is both for Hashem and for His creations. In His kindness and goodness, Hashem contained the revelation of His glory in this world, so that the lower, physical beings would also be able to exist. Yet even so, there is no division, no true diminishing of His glory, for there are two sides of

looking at things, from our viewpoint and from His yisborach, (as the Nefesh HaChaim writes in 5:3), and the truth is that still, "The world is entirely filled with His glory."

Lecho Hashem Hamamelochoh! The kingdom, Hashem, is Yours!

This idea is alluded to by mentioning the first six times that the word lecho is mentioned, corresponding to the six directions in the physical world, while the seventh — lecho Hashem hamamelochoh — alludes to the seventh, spiritual dimension, which upholds and sustains all existence.

(HaRav Isaac Chover zt'l, in the name of his father, HaRav Yaakov Chover zt'l)