

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Pesach*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Pesach

## Shabbos Hagadol

The Tur (430) writes, "The Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos HaGadol because a *nes gadol*, a great miracle, happened on this day... The Jew took a sheep for the korban Pesach and tied it to their bedposts. The Mitzrim asked them, 'Why are you doing this?' The Yidden answered that Hashem commanded them to slaughter the sheep as a korban Pesach. The Mitzrim were very upset that the Jewish nation was about to slaughter their gods, but they didn't have permission to say anything.<sup>1</sup> In remembrance of this miracle, we call this Shabbos "Shabbos HaGadol."

*Tosfos* (*Shabbos* 87:) states another miracle that we celebrate on Shabbos HaGadol. The *bechorim* (firstborns) of the Egyptians asked the Yidden why they tied a sheep to their bedposts. The Yidden told them that Hashem was going to slay every firstborn Mitzri, and they would bring a korban Pesach to celebrate this miracle.

The firstborns of the Egyptians rushed to Pharaoh and their parents and demanded that they free the Jewish nation. They didn't want to die. They correctly understood that their lives depended on freeing the Jewish nation.

Pharaoh and their parents didn't heed their shouts. They didn't believe that it would actually occur.

The firstborns declared war on Mitzrayim, as it states (*Tehillim* 136:10), *למכה מצרים בכוריהם*, "Who smote Egypt through their firstborns." Many Egyptians died in this war. According to *Tosfos*, this is the miracle we celebrate on Shabbos HaGadol.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches that Shabbos HaGadol is a day of atonement, similar to Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, and the miracles of Shabbos HaGadol were on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Yom Kippur is called *Yoma Rabba*, "the great day" (see Rosh Hashanah, 21.), and this Shabbos is called "the great Shabbos." The Chidushei HaRim explains that when Pesach arrives, we have no *aveiros* because we burned and got rid of the chametz, which symbolizes *aveiros*.

The Levush says it is called Shabbos HaGadol because it is a preparation for (Malachi 3:24) *יום ה' הגדול והנורא*, "Hashem's great and awesome day" - the day when Moshiach will come.

The Ohev Yisrael *zt'l* (*Likutei Na'ch, Shabbos HaGadol*) writes, "The origin and fountain of all Shabbosim of the year is Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuvah. They are the heads of all Shabbosim of the year." It is wise to make this Shabbos special.

## Creating a Positive Atmosphere

The son the rasha asks (*Shemos* 12:26), *מה עבודה הזאת לכם* "What is this work for you." He looks at the seder and calls it *עבודה*, work, a chore that he doesn't want to do.

We would understand if called Yom Kippur *עבודה* because we fast on Yom Kippur. We would understand if he asked this question regarding Tisha b'Av. But why does the rasha ask this question at the seder, when good food is served, and the family eats together in happy spirits? What could possibly be upsetting about this setting that he doesn't want?

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1. A person can't do anything without Hashem's permission. The Mitzrim wanted to protest, but Hashem didn't allow them to, so they couldn't.



B'derech tzachus, perhaps it is the tense nerves that the rasha sees from the people at the seder. Everyone is concerned about keeping the mitzvos correctly and avoiding chametz. These fears certainly have a positive side, but they must not get out of hand. Our concerns mustn't cause us to lose the joy of the yom tov and the joy of the mitzvos. B'derech tzachus, the rasha refers to these worries, so he asks, *מה העבודה הזאת לכם*, why do you need this chore?

We add that the rasha is upset with what he saw erev Pesach, all the nervousness and screaming, when the house was being cleaned for Pesach. There was too much panic for his nature, too much tension, so he asks, "What do you need it for?"

We certainly should be cautious not to cause this atmosphere in the home. Ideally, the children should associate the yom tov with joy, not panic and nerves, *chalilah*.<sup>2</sup>

One year, as Pesach approached, Reb Nota Zenwirth *zt'l* said in good humor, "I think we need to make a yom tefillah (to daven for salvation)." "What's the problem?" people asked him, knowing he had something clever to say.

He explained, "Whenever there is an *eis tzarah*, Klal Yisrael responds by making a yom tefillah. Let's do the same now. Pesach is approaching, and we must clean... and people become anxious and worried. It is treated as a *tzarah*, so we should make a yom tefillah!"<sup>3</sup>

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2. A *yungerman* told his rav, "I was thinking about how women clean for Pesach, and I concluded that they don't clean well enough. They clean the floors by pouring water over the floors, but what about all the crevices!? Chametz can get caught there and water won't take it out. I asked my wife to clean the floor with a toothpick and remove all the chametz from the cracks, but she refused. She said that only if the rav agrees it is important to clean the floors with a toothpick will she do so."

The rav replied, "I agree that it is very important to do so. In fact, it is so important that you should do it yourself. Don't rely on your wife or anyone else to clean the floors."

The lesson: Husbands shouldn't make things hard on their wives. And if they desire something out of the ordinary, they can do it themselves...

In Yiddish, there is an old translation for each of the 15 *simanim* of the Seder, which many people have the custom of saying at the Seder.

People attending the Tchebiner Rav's Seder related that the Tchebiner Rav would translate the *simanim* קדש ורחץ כרפס etc. into Yiddish, as customary, but when he got to שולחן ערוך, he didn't say the Yiddish translation, which is, *מען גרייט צו די טיש מצה מיט פיש און אלע גוטע זאכן*, "We prepare the table with matzah, fish, and all tasty foods."

One year after the Seder, someone asked him why he didn't say the traditional Yiddish phrase. He replied, "When I said קדש, the Yiddish translation is that I should make kiddush. When I said ורחץ, the Yiddish phrase tells me to wash my hands. But when I say שולחן ערוך, I am asking the women to set the table and serve the meal. When asking of others, it is improper to repeat the request. I said it once and in brief, שולחן ערוך, and that's it."

3. The Tchebiner Rav's second Rebbetzin was a granddaughter of the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*. To honor her, the Tchebiner Rav would tell her a *devar Torah* or a story from the Chasam Sofer every day.

The Chasam Sofer's custom was to eat kneidlach at the Seder. One year, Reb Shmuel Binyamin Schiffer from Vienna was at the Tchebiner Rav's seder, and he asked the Rav why he didn't eat kneidlach, as was the custom of the Chasam Sofer.

The Tchebiner Rav replied, "You are right that we should follow the ways of *tzaddikim*. Therefore, we must learn their *divrei Torah* and emulate their holy ways. But we don't have to begin with the kneidlach."

The Bas Ayin zt'l didn't permit his chasidim to paint their beis medresh before Pesach. He explained that when there is a lot of tension at home due to the cleaning for Pesach, the husband at times needs a quiet, calm place to go. The beis medresh needs to remain open so he can have respite when needed.

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zt'l once told his family before Pesach, "Believe me, a drop of anger is worse than a drop of chametz."

Once at the seder of Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna zt'l, the rebbe's young grandson came into the dining room carrying a beer bottle. The family was shocked. "Chametz by the seder?" The child had taken the beer from the closet sold for Pesach.

Everyone lost their peace of mind, everyone besides the Rebbe. The Rebbe told the young boy to put down the bottle, and he covered it with a pot. He did so with joy, to perform the halachah (Pesachim 6): "If one finds chametz on Pesach, he should cover it with a utensil." After covering the beer bottle with a pot, he placed a small tablecloth over it so it would appear respectable in honor of Yom Tov.

He said to his grandson, "Thank you so much! You enabled us to keep a halachah in Shulchan Aruch. How often does one have the opportunity to keep the halachah of covering chametz? This halachah wasn't given to Goyim; it was written for Yidden, and it is seldom that we get to keep it. You helped us fulfill it."

Others might have responded with anger, but what would anger accomplish? It wouldn't increase the yom tov atmosphere, and it wouldn't increase the child's love for the Yom Tov. It wouldn't do much for the child's self-esteem, either, nor for his interest in Yiddishkeit. Rebbe Yochanan showed him the joy in keeping halachah, the pleasure of Yiddishkeit. And that is a positive lesson that can endure for years to come.<sup>4</sup>

### Pesach Without Anger

It states (Shemos 34:17-18) , אלהי מסכה לא תעשה לך, את חג המצות תשמור, "You shall not make yourselves molten gods. You shall observe the Yom Tov of Matzos..." The Zohar says that the Torah juxtaposes the prohibition of avodah zarah with the yom tov of Pesach to tell us the severity of eating chametz, that it is compared to avodah zarah.

Chazal say, "Whoever becomes angry, may it be in your eyes like he worshipped avodah zarah." Tzaddikim explain that the Torah put together the *inyan* of avodah zarah with Pesach to warn us not to become angry on Pesach or while preparing for Pesach.

Tzaddikim have said that women could attain ruach hakodesh when they clean for Pesach; only anger destroys it.

The Pele Yoetz (Pesach) writes, "The mekubalim write that it isn't solely chametz which is so severe on Pesach, rather every aveirah becomes far worse when it is committed on Pesach, more than the rest of the year." So, we should be cautious of anger and from all aveiros on Pesach.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Tosfos (Rosh Hashanah 16.) quotes a Yerushalmi, which explains how blowing the shofar confuses the Satan:

"When the Satan hears the shofar the first time, he becomes somewhat afraid (בהיל ולא בהיל). When he hears the shofar again, the Satan says, 'This is certainly the great shofar of Moshiach. I will be destroyed.' He becomes confused and is unable to speak *kitrug* (slander) on the Jewish people."

The Bardichover Rav zt'l says cleaning for Pesach creates similar malachim as are created by blowing the shofar. Therefore, we can say that when women clean their homes for Pesach, the Satan becomes somewhat afraid (בהיל ולא בהיל). But when a child comes into the house carrying chametz in his hands, and nevertheless, the parents remain calm, this is like the second blast of the shofar. The Satan becomes very afraid. Due to his fear, he can't speak *kitrug* against the Jewish people.



Reb Meshulem Igra *zt'l* was extremely *machmir* on Pesach. He only ate matzos at the seder. He wouldn't eat matzos at any other time on Pesach because of the possibility that they became chametz. And at the seder, he only ate the matzos that he baked on his own, with much caution to be free from chametz.

Once, on *erev Pesach*, Reb Meshulam Igra's children were hungry. The *rebbetzin* wasn't around then, and the maid sought something to give them. The chametz was already burned, so that wasn't an option. She found some matzah – she didn't realize that these were Reb Meshulem Igra's special matzos – and gave them to the children.

Soon, the *rebbetzin* discovered that her husband's matzos were given to the children, and she was worried that her husband would be upset. So, she left the house and returned home just in time for the Seder. She didn't want to be home when her husband discovered his matzos were gone because she knew how upset he would be.

She found her husband in happy spirits. "He probably doesn't know yet," she thought. With tears in her eyes, she told her husband that the maid mistakenly gave away his matzos.

He said, "So what's the problem? There are other matzos in the house. I'll use those."

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* repeated this story and expressed his admiration and wonder that Reb Meshulam Igra was able to pass this difficult test. He didn't become angry with the maid (or his wife for not being more on top of things). He believed this was *bashert*, so there was no reason to be angry.

Furthermore, his stringencies were a *chumrah*, while becoming angry and insulting others are Torah prohibitions.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's son once became angry with his maid because she put matzah in the soup (rendering the soup and the matzah *gebroks*). Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer rebuked his son, saying, "Now you can eat this matzah too." He taught his son that getting angry and insulting others is worse than *gebroks*.<sup>6</sup>

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5. A renowned *mechanech* and *tzaddik* from Yerushalayim invited some of his students to his home for the Seder. The students were shocked when they entered his house and found a very non *yom-tovdig* atmosphere. *Shulchan Aruch* (472:1) states, *יהא שולחנו ערוך מבעוד יום כדי לאכל כשתחשך*, "The table should be set in the daytime so you can start the Seder [immediately] when it is nighttime." But they found this home turned over, and there was no sign that it was the Seder night.

(Unfortunately, the wife of this renowned *mechanech* was emotionally unwell, and things like this would happen in his home.)

Their host told them, "When you go to other people's homes and find the table set, the children dressed in their *yom tov* clothing, pleasant aromas coming from the kitchen, you think you see freedom. I say you are seeing slavery because they are enslaved to that perfect situation. If a minor detail isn't in order, the family doesn't know how to handle it. But in this home, we celebrate true freedom because we accept Hashem's will, whatever it is. If this is what Hashem wants, it is good for us."

Every year, before the Seder, the married children of Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* would come with their families to wish him a *gut yom tov*. One year, one of the grandchildren accidentally threw down all the matzos. Reb Zalman Brizel didn't become upset. He explained, "Hashem gave me grandchildren. Isn't that a reason to be happy?"

There is always a lot of good in our lives. And when we focus on the good, we can always be happy.

6. A *chasan*, just a couple of weeks after his *chasunah*, was at his in-laws for the Seder, and when he was served a bowl of soup, he found a wheat kernel in it.

The embarrassed mother-in-law immediately said, "I cleaned the home very well. I don't know how this

## Chumros

The *rasha* of the *Haggadah* asks (*Shemos* 12:26), מַה הַעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם, "Why do you do this work?" The Pele Yoetz (*Elef HaMagen, Bishalach*) explains that the *rasha* is asking why are you so *machmir* on Pesach? Why do you go beyond

the letter of the law? Why isn't it sufficient to keep the basic halachah?"

We answer the *rasha*, אִילוּ הָיָה שָׁם לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל, "If you were in Mitzrayim, you wouldn't be redeemed." The Pele Yoetz Yoetz explains:

At *kriyas Yam Suf*, the *malachim* said, "Also Yidden worship *avodah zarah!*<sup>7</sup> So, why

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happened."

But the son-in-law took his mortified wife and left the house, and he went straight to the home of Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim. He was certain Reb Shmuel Salant would agree that he did the right thing. He couldn't eat in a home that was careless with the halachos of Pesach.

Reb Shmuel Salant took the *chasan's shtreimel* and shook it. Some wheat kernels fell out. The custom in Yerushalayim was to throw wheat kernels on the *chasan* when he had his *aliyah* on the Shabbos before the *chasunah*. Reb Shmuel Salant understood that the wheat kernel had probably fallen from his *shtreimel* into the soup.

So, the son-in-law was guilty of not cleaning his *shtreimel*. It wasn't his mother-in-law's fault.

The *chasan's* second mistake was that, in his zeal, he didn't consider the shame and humiliation he was causing his in-laws and his new wife. Had he had thought about that, he would have reacted more wisely.

One year, at the Seder of Reb Binyamin Rabinowitz *zt'l* (*dayan* of the Eidah haChareidis, Yerushalayim), the meal of *shulchan orach* began twenty minutes before *chatzos*. His children began serving the meal very quickly so they could eat the *afikoman* before *chatzos*.

Reb Binyamin *zt'l* stopped them. He said, "The *rebbetzin* worked hard to prepare the meal. She will be upset if we rush through the meal and don't enjoy it. All the *chumros* we have at the Seder are worthless if they cause another Yid distress."

Reb Shlomo Frishtik married the daughter of Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil. Before the first Pesach as a married couple, Reb Shlomo wondered whether he should eat machine matzos in his father's home or whether to honor his wife's family from the Zvhil dynasty, who were very cautious about eating only hand-matzos.

He asked talmidei chachamim for advice, and they advised him to pose this question to his wife's grandfather, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l*.

Rebbe Shlomke told him, "When we get to heaven, we won't be asked whether we ate hand or machine matzos. Instead, we will be asked two questions: (1) Did you guard your eyes? (2) Did you guard your mouth from hurting another Yid?"

Once, a guest in Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's home ate *gebroks*, and the Rebbe didn't permit anyone to stop him, saying, "In heaven, you will not be asked whether you ate *gebroks* or not. You will be asked whether you guarded your eyes and tongue...."

The Jewish nation is called *segulah*, as it states (*Shemos* 19:5), וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סְגוּלָה. The word סְגוּלָה comes from the word סָגַל, which is a vowel that has two dots over one dot. They represent two eyes and one mouth. Guard these, and you will be a סְגוּלָה, a special treasure to Hashem.

How does a *mikvah* purify? Rebbe Shlomke *zt'l* said that it is because in a *mikvah*, one closes his eyes and mouth, and that is what purifies him.

7. It states, לְקַחְתָּ לְךָ מִתּוֹכָהּ לְךָ מִתּוֹכָהּ, "to take a nation from the midst of a nation." The Jewish nation wasn't noticeably different than the Mitzrim. It wasn't so clear that they should be spared while the Egyptians perish.



should the Yidden be saved and the Mitzrim be drowned in the sea?"

What indeed saved the Jewish nation?

The Pele Yoetz explains that Klal Yisrael had *chumros* to safeguard them from chametz and that merit saved them. This is based on the Gemara (*Brachos* 20:) that teaches that Hashem has compassion on the Jewish nation when they are *machmir* with the mitzvos:

"The *malachim* say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: 'Ribono shel Olam, You write in the Torah (*Devarim* 10:17) **אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשָּׂא פָּנִים**, 'Who does not show favor,' that Your judgment is fair and true, and that You don't change the rules of judgment just because you favor someone. [If someone is guilty, he will be punished; there is no way out.] Yet You also write in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 6:26), **יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ**, 'May Hashem lift His countenance for you,' which means Hashem judges the Jewish nation with kindness [and even when they are guilty, he finds a way to make them virtuous in judgment].'

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'Shouldn't I judge them favorably? I write in the Torah (*Devarim* 8:10), **וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ**, 'You will eat, be satisfied, and you will bless,' that *birchas hamazon* is said after one is satiated. But they are *machmir*, and they bless Me even after eating just a *kezayis* or a *kebeitzah!*'"

So we see that Hashem judges them favorably in the merit that the Jewish nation

is *machmir*. This merit saved them at the Yam Suf. They were *machmir* with chametz, so although they didn't deserve to be saved, Hashem favored them and split the sea before them.

We tell the *rasha*, "You want to follow the minimum halachah without *chumros*. If you would have done so in Mitzrayim, you wouldn't merit to be saved."

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught that one doesn't have to be *machmir* with the mitzvos more than what is the accepted halachah. However, Pesach is an exception. One should be *machmir* on Pesach to be sure that one doesn't *chas v'shalom* eat chametz on Pesach.

But even when we take on *chumros* on Pesach, it is essential to keep them joyfully and without worry. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* said that the *chumros* we keep on Pesach decorate the *kallah* (the *Shechinah*) with jewelry and ornaments. When one adorns a *kallah* for her *chasunah*, there's an atmosphere of joy and excitement in the air. We should have a similar happy ambiance as we keep the *chumros* of Pesach.

There is particular importance in upholding the *chumros* that are a tradition in your family. It states (*Mishlei* 1:8), **אַל תַּטּוֹשׂ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ**, "Don't forsake the Torah of your mother," and Chazal explain that this means we must abide by the customs we received from our parents.<sup>8</sup>

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The Meor Einayim and others tzaddikim say that *chas v'shalom*, the Yidden didn't actually worship *avodah zarah* in Mitzrayim. Rather, Chazal mean that their *emunah* wasn't perfect.

8. There was a chasan who wasn't planning on wearing a shtreimel after his *chasunah*. When Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a* asked him why, the chasan said, "Clothing doesn't mean anything to me. A shtreimel is a hat. All hats are the same, as far as I'm concerned. It's what's inside the person that matters."

The Rebbe replied, "The Gemara (*Gittin* 60:) says, **לֹא כָרַת הַקְב"ה בְּרִית עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל דְּבָרִים שְׁבַעֲלָ פִּה**, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a bris with Bnei Yisrael solely because of the Oral Torah.' What is the Oral Torah today? The oral Torah used to be the Mishnah and the Gemara, but today, these are written. In our times, the oral Torah is the *minhagim*. So, don't take *minhagim* lightly. In their merit, Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a bris with the Jewish people."

It states (*Devarim* 1:44), **בְּשַׁעֲרֵי עַד חֲרֻמָּה**. The Slonimer tzaddikim explained, "To veer away from a family custom,

Although chumros are essential, it is important to differentiate between chumros and halachah because when these lines become blurred, it can also result in a rasha asking מַה הַעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם, chalilah. Just think about the following story:

A student of the Noda b'Yehudah's left the path of Torah and became a priest, r'l. The Noda b'Yehudah contemplated how he could bring him back. After making some inquiries, the Noda b'Yehudah heard that every day, the priest sits on his porch and greets the passersby at a particular hour. So the Noda b'Yehudah decided to pass his home at that hour and greet the priest. If the priest returns his greeting, that would be a sign that there's hope. But if he doesn't return his greeting, it will indicate that he isn't interested in Yiddishkeit.

When the Noda b'Yehudah passed the priest's home, the priest greeted him first. The Noda b'Yehudah answered his greeting in a friendly manner, and they shared a few words before The Noda b'Yehudah continued on his way. When he came home, he immediately asked one of his students to invite the priest to his home.

The priest arrived shortly afterward.

Getting straight to the point, the Noda b'Yehuda asked him, "Why did you leave the path of Torah?"

The priest replied that when he was learning in the Noda b'Yehudah's yeshiva, he ate teig, meals, at the home of generous people in Prague who took in the yeshiva students for meals.

"At one meal, during Pesach, there was a halachic shailah on one of the foods because a wheat kernel was found in the pot. The family asked me to ask you. You ruled that according to halachah, the food was kosher. Nevertheless, you recommended that we

shouldn't eat it because of the *chumrah* of chametz. I returned to their home and told them your *psak*. The family agreed to be *machmir*, as you recommended, and they were about to throw out the food. But I told the family I wanted to follow the more lenient view. So, they gave me a portion before throwing out the rest of the pot.

"I ate the food with relish, but soon regretted what I did. I couldn't believe I fell to the level of eating questionable food on Pesach. I felt like a *rasha*. That was my turning point. I fell from level to level until, as you can see, I became a priest. This is my story."

The Noda b'Yehudah replied, "But I told you the food was kosher! It was only a *chumrah*. Because you didn't keep a *chumrah*, you fell so far? Therefore, from now on, regret your sins and return to Hashem."

The student followed the Noda b'Yehudah's counsel and became a *baal teshuvah*.

We tell this story to remind us that we must differentiate between a *chumrah* and a *halachah*. We can't place them both on the same level, or we can make terrible mistakes with terrible consequences.

### Lessons from Chametz and Matzah

The Radvaz explains that we are more stringent with the laws of chametz than any other aveirah because chametz represents the yetzer hara.

In contrast, matzah represents the yetzer tov, that battles with the yetzer hara. A hint to this is the pasuk (Yeshayah 41:12) אֲנָשֵׁי מִצּוֹתֶיךָ, "the men who battle with you." So, מִצּוֹתֶיךָ, which is from the word מִנְצָה, means to battle. It hints to the yetzer tov that battles against the yetzer hara.

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even by a hairsbreadth (בשעיר), leads to חרמה, destruction, because he might end up entirely falling away from Yiddishkeit.



Therefore, many lessons related to our fight against the yetzer hara can be derived from the halachos and the lessons associated with chametz and matzah.

### The Yetzer Hara is the Culprit

The Mishnah discusses the mitzvah of bedikas chametz and states, בודקין את החמץ, "we check the chametz." Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* asked, shouldn't it be written as בודקין את הבית, "we check the house," because it's the house we check, not the chametz?

Years later, his son, Rebbe Yissaschar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said he could answer the question with a *maschal*:

Two business partners came to the market and sold their wares in a very short time. They put their earnings into a money pouch and headed to their hometown by foot. Halfway home, they stopped in a field to lie down. They needed a break. Their only concern was what to do with the money pouch. They looked around, no one was there, other than some cows grazing in the pasture. They hung their moneybag on a branch and went to sleep under that tree.

But they forgot that when there are cows, there is a shepherd nearby. When they were fast asleep, the shepherd took their money.

The shepherd contemplated his options. He couldn't run away because he had a job to do. He was hired to watch the cows. He also knew that if he was nearby when the businessmen discovered the theft, they would bring him to the police.

He decided to fill the money bag with cow manure so the merchants would not realize that he had stolen the money.

The merchants awoke and were happy to see their moneybag still hanging on the tree. They didn't suspect a thing and continued on their journey home. When they opened their bag and saw that it was filled with manure, they wondered, "How did the cows climb up the tree to put the manure inside?" They resigned themselves to their loss

because what could they do? You can't quite bring a cow to court, can you?

When Rebbe Yissaschar Dov told this story, his chassidim laughed, although they didn't understand how this story answers the above question: why the Mishnah says בודקין את החמץ (we check the *chametz*) and not that we check the house.

Rebbe Yissaschar Dov's son, Rebbe Aharon *zt'l*, was also present, and the chassidim noticed that he was trembling from fear. They asked him why, and he replied that he understood his father's intention. He explained: The foolish merchants should have turned their question into an answer. Since a cow can't put manure inside a pouch, it must be that a cow didn't do it; rather, a person did. They should have returned to look for the thief and take him to court. Perhaps they would have gotten their money back.

Now we can explain why the Mishnah states that we check the chametz. This can mean that we check our bad deeds and ask ourselves, "Where did they come from? These aren't the type of deeds I wanted to do. I wanted to do mitzvos. How did I end up with so much bad on my hands?"

After contemplating this, he concludes that he is guilty, which leads him to despair. But the real culprit is the yetzer hara. The yetzer hara tricked you, enticed you, and brought you where you are today. Recognize this, and don't lose hope. Find the culprit and battle him.

### Zerizus

A lesson in avodas Hashem that we can learn from matzah is to be a *zariz*, always to be occupied with performing mitzvos. This is because one of the halachos of baking matzah is (Shulchan Aruch 459:2), לא יניחו העיסה בלא עסק ואפילו רגע אחד, don't leave the dough idle without working it – not even for a moment." Working with the dough prevents it from becoming chametz. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l*

said that this halachah hints at the virtue of always being active in *avodas Hashem*.

Some people have extra time on their hands, and they seek ways to fill it. The Chasam Sofer zt'l wittily said, "If you have extra time, pass it on my way because I don't have enough time." There is so much to do, and we don't have time to waste.

Being constantly occupied in *avodas Hashem* has two benefits. One is that you will earn many mitzvos. A second benefit is that you won't have time to perform aveiros. As the Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l said to his chassidim, "More than it bothers me when you do aveiros, it upsets me that you had time to perform them."

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l would say, "If you don't have the strength to learn Torah, say *Tehillim*. If you don't have the strength to say *Tehillim*, give *tzedakah*..." There is always something you can do, and to be occupied with in *avodas Hashem*.

The Gemara (Brachos 28.) tells us that when Reb Zeira was tired from his studies, he would sit at the doorway of Reb Noson bar Tuvi's beis medrash. He said, "When the Rabbanim pass, I will stand up for them and receive reward."

This is the concept we are referring to: Always be active in *avodas Hashem*. Don't let time pass idly. Even when you need to rest, seek to do so in a way that will earn you mitzvos.

Perhaps we aren't on this level. Maybe we need other kinds of recreation, as well. But we should aspire to perform many good deeds. There is a lot that we can do each day.

Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli zt'l said that we can learn three lessons from children: (1) When a child wants something, he cries until he gets it. (2) A child is happy when he gets what he wants. [Adults are not that way; When they get their desires, they are soon dissatisfied again because they want something else.] (3) A child is always active.

We, too, must strive to always be active and engaged in Hashem's service. We learn this attitude from matzah, which one doesn't leave idle. From when the water is poured until it is baked, people are constantly working with the dough.

The flip side of this lesson is that one should regret that he hasn't done more. This brings us to the topic of a broken heart, which is also a lesson of matzah. A broken heart means feeling incomplete in one's *avodas Hashem* and regretting that one isn't doing more. As the Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l says, "There is nothing more complete than a broken heart."

This is alluded to in the letter heh that's in מצה. The heh has a broken leg, indicating a broken heart. That is the difference between חמץ and מצה. The two words are nearly identical; both have a *mem* and a *tzaddik*. The difference is that matzah has a *heh*, with its broken leg, while chametz has a *ches*, with a straight leg. Rebbe Shlomo Dovid of Slonim zt'l explained that the broken leg of the ה hints at a broken heart. This is so important; it is the defining factor that differentiates between matzah and chametz, between kedushah and tumah, r'l.

Additionally, the similarity of the letters חמץ and מצה tells us that it is often difficult to differentiate between *kedushah* and *tumah*. The Meor Einayim (Tzav חמץ מצה) writes, "*Kedushah* is called matzah and the *kelipah* is called chametz. There's barely a difference between them, besides the small drop that discerns a *ches* from a *heh*. The *yetzer hara* generally doesn't tell a person to do an *aveirah* because who will listen to him? Instead, the *yetzer hara* tries to convince his victims that an *aveirah* is a mitzvah..."

We add that the small difference between the *ches* and the *heh* indicates that all it takes is a drop of improvement, and one can reach very high levels. He might be in the realm of tumah, but with a tiny change, everything turns around, and he is in the realm of kedushah.



Reb Eliyahu Dessler would teach his students to take on a small *kabbalah* before Pesach, and he would tell them that even a small *kabbalah* will elevate them to very high levels, and that will prepare them for Pesach. One year, Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* asked a *bachur*, "Which *kabbalah tovah* did you accept on yourself as a preparation for Pesach?"

The *bachur* replied that he didn't take on anything. He said he didn't believe a small *kabbalah* could make a big difference.

Reb Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

A person from a third-world country came to New York City and was astounded by the tall skyscrapers he encountered. He stood outside a skyscraper and looked up in amazement.

A passerby told him, "On the top floor, there's an observation deck. You can see the entire city of New York up there."

"Amazing!" the man replied. "I would love to go up there, but I don't have the strength to walk up all those steps!"

"You don't have to take the stairs," the man replied. "You can use the elevator."

The man from a third-world country had never heard of an elevator before. The man he spoke to briefly explained to him that you don't have to walk up the stairs. You just press a button, and you reach a high floor.

The man entered the building and went into the elevator but didn't press any buttons. The door closed, it turned dark, and he was afraid that he would be locked inside. Panicking, he pushed the buttons randomly. As it turned out, he hit the emergency button. Emergency personnel rushed over and freed him from the elevator. They asked him, "Which floor did you want to go to?"

"I wanted to go to the highest floor. I wanted to go to the observation deck."

"So why didn't you press the button?"

"I don't believe in that," he told them. "How can pressing a button bring me up so high?"

Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that people think tiny *kabbalos* are insignificant but aren't. With each small *kabbalah*, one grows immensely.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* compared it to two people walking towards an escalator. One of them took one step more than his fellow man. That one step made all the difference because it got him onto the escalator, which brought him to the next floor, while his friend, who didn't take that step forward, remained below.

This is the uniqueness of a *kabbalah tovah*. It is a small step that brings us very high.

These ideas are alluded to by the small difference between the *heh* and the *ches*. It is the small things that make a big difference.

This also brings us back to the topic of *zerizus*, to be occupied in *avodas Hashem*. Perhaps you won't have the *zerizus* of the great *tzaddikim*, but each good deed you do can mean so much. It can make the difference between *chametz* and *matzah*, *tumah* and *kedushah*.

### Lessons from Bitul Chametz

One of the ways we clean our homes from *chametz* is with a *mitzvah* called *bitul chametz*. The morning after *bedikas chametz*, we burn the *chametz* and say a *nusach* written in the *siddur* to annul the *chametz*. The words mean that if there is *chametz* in our possession that we don't know about, we consider it to be like the dust of the earth. After saying these words of *bitul*, even if one accidentally has *chametz* in his home, he hasn't transgressed the *aveirah* of owning *chametz* on Pesach.

There is an essential lesson that we can learn from *bitul chametz*. *Chametz* represents the *yetzer hara* and evil temptations. We annul it when we consider it to be nothing more than the dust of the earth. We should

do the same for aveiros and bad temptations. We should recognize how meaningless and hollow these matters are, and then we won't desire them.

The yetzer hara glorifies aveiros and tries to make us interested in them. Bitul means to annul, to train our hearts to realize that the yetzer hara is selling us foolishness and that there is no rational reason to want these matters.

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.15) writes, "The factor that draws people to pleasures [that are harmful to one's avodas Hashem]... is that one thinks the pleasures are sweet and good. When a person understands that the good is false and the bad that will come from it is true, he will be disgusted and won't want them at all. This is the primary lesson that a person must educate himself in.

"The pleasure of food is the pleasure most experienced by the senses, but... the pleasure is solely during the time it takes until it is swallowed. After the food is in his belly, it is lost as if it weren't ever there. After the meal, if he had eaten fat ducks or cheap bread, he will be just as satisfied. And think about the many illnesses that can come from food, the heaviness one feels after eating, and the vapors that come up and confuse his brain. [When one thinks about these matters] he won't want it because the good isn't real and the bad is indeed bad.

"All other pleasures of the world are the same. If you think about them, you will see

that even the imagined good is solely for a short moment, and the bad that can come from the pleasures are long and difficult. Any intelligent person won't want to place himself in these dangers for a small moment of pleasure. This is obvious. When you accustom yourself to think about this truth, slowly but surely, you will free yourself from the imprisonment of foolishness, and you will not want the foolish pleasures at all. You will be disgusted by them and only take from them the necessary amount."

This is the lesson of bitul, to recognize how much we suffer from the temptations of the yetzer hara and to consider these temptations to be nothing at all, like the dust of the earth.

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* said something similar regarding forbidden thoughts. When one thinks that the thoughts are pleasurable, it is a great challenge to maintain pure thoughts. But when one recognizes how much he suffers from these thoughts, even in this world, it is easy for him to push these forbidden thoughts away.<sup>9</sup>

### **Spiritual Growth from the Mitzvos of *Bedikas and Biur Chametz***

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* learned in Yeshivas Chevron (Yerushalayim). One year, all his roommates with whom he shared a rented apartment went home for Pesach, and only he remained, so bedikas chametz was his responsibility that year.

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#### 9. Reb Gad'l told a parable:

A person was carrying expensive diamonds. From the corner of his eye, he noticed thieves following him. If he ran, the thieves would know he was carrying something precious and would certainly chase him. So, he walked calmly and casually, signaling that he had nothing to hide, and the thieves let him be.

The nimshal is a lesson on how to overcome forbidden thoughts. You can fight them by running away from them, but then the yetzer hara will chase you and push the forbidden thoughts onto you. A wiser approach is to decide in your heart that you don't want these temptations, and then you will quickly and effortlessly stop thinking about them.

In a similar approach, the Beis Aharon *zt'l* explains that you should fill your heart with a desire to do good. Your desire to serve Hashem will annul all other temptations.

He studied the halachos well and did a thorough *bedikah* that lasted several hours.

Then he remembered that he hadn't gone up to check the roof. The roof was used by all residents of the apartment building, but Reb Shimshon Pinkus knew that people tend to rely on others, and if he didn't check the roof, likely no one would.

He found the roof cluttered. The residents used the roof for storage, and many items were tossed up there. To do an effective *bedikas chametz*, he would have to tidy up first. He knew it would take a long time (and this was after performing *bedikas chametz* for several hours in his apartment). Still, he kept reminding himself, "I'm doing the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz*!" That thought gave him the strength to continue.

That year, he completed the *bedikas chametz* just before daybreak.

He was sure he would be tired at the Seder, but it was just the opposite. He never had such a good Seder. He enjoyed each word of the *Haggadah*. When the Seder was over, he couldn't sleep; he felt so inspired. He remained awake all night, studying about *yetzias Mitzrayim* until the morning.

The inspiration remained the entire *yom tov*. And after Pesach passed, he kept growing higher and higher. Reb Shimshon Pinkus said, "If I have any good qualities today, it is from that mitzvah *d'rabbanan* of *bedikas chametz*, which I did with *mesirus nefesh*."<sup>10</sup>

This story could occur from any mitzvah performed with *mesirus nefesh*. It can

elevate one to very high levels. For Reb Shimshon Pinkus, it was *bedikas chametz*. This mitzvah elevated him to very high levels.

And there is a specialty to *bedikas* and *biur chametz*. Reb Yeruchem, the *mashgiach* of Mir *zt'l*, said, "If we came to this world just to perform the mitzvah of *biur chametz*, דיינו, it would already be worthwhile. This mitzvah imbues us with *kedushah* and *taharah*."

### Erev Pesach

In a letter, Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "When the Jewish people lived in their land, *erev Pesach* was a joyous holiday because everyone brought the *korban Pesach* and said *Hallel*, etc. Even today, *erev Pesach* should be in that spirit... We should be busy with mitzvos all day, burning the chametz, preparing for the Seder..."

The Bas Ayin (*Drush lePesach, Metzora*) writes, "*Erev Pesach*, when a person does *teshuvah sheleimah* before Hashem and eradicates all the chametz and evil from his heart, it is the greatest *eis ratzon* of the year!"

The Ateres Yehoshua of Dzikov *zt'l* would recite the tefillah of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* (printed at the beginning of many *machzorim* and *siddurim*) while he burned his chametz. It is a good time for tefillah because chametz represents *tumah*, and at this special time, we cleanse ourselves and the world from all impurities.

Tzaddikim taught that the war of Gog and Magog, which heralds the coming of

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**10.** Reb Shimshon Pinkus would consider that special night of *bedikas chametz* the day he was born because that is when he became a new person. Chazal say that tzaddikim are *niftar* on the day they were born. And, indeed, Reb Shimshon Pinkus was *niftar* Wednesday, and he was buried Thursday evening, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the night of *bedikas chametz* (that year Pesach began on Motzei Shabbos).

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov once asked his sister, "Do you remember our father's *bedikas chametz*? It took all night and was performed with tears and *hisorerus*."

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* rarely cried, but he would cry when he burned the chametz and when he said קריבן on Purim.



Moshiach, will take place on *erev Pesach* during the three hours when people are burning their chametz.

This can be the meaning of the verse in *Hoshanos* (we say on Succos) הוֹשַׁעֵנוּ שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁעוֹת, "Save us three hours." We pray to be saved from the war of Gog and Magog, which will take place during those three hours.

The Russian government placed a harsh decree on the Jewish community. A Jewish activist discovered that for a price, it was possible to bribe one of the primary ministers, who had the power to annul the decree. The price was high, and he spoke with many rabbanim, urging them to influence their followers to donate money for the bribe. Most rabbanim recognized the need and spoke to their communities. However, Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l* ignored the activist's request.

So, the activist spoke to Rebbe Yitzchok of Skver *zt'l* (Rebbe Aharon Chernobyl's brother) and asked him to influence his brother to participate in this fundraising program. The Skverer Rebbe spoke with Reb Aharon and explained why raising money for this cause is important, but even then, Rebbe Aharon didn't participate.

On *Erev Pesach*, when Rebbe Aharon Chernobyl went outside to burn his chametz, he said, "Some say we can annul harsh decrees with money, but that isn't correct. When we burn the chametz on *erev Pesach*, we annul all harsh decrees."

Reb Shmshon Ostropole *zt'l* wrote a letter and advised that people should read it once a year, and ideally, they should read it on *erev Pesach*. He said that whoever reads

and studies this letter will experience salvations.

He writes in the letter the following:

"Our master, the holy [Arizal], wrote the following wondrous ideas in a concealed manner, and no one knows how to decipher them. Many *gedolim* asked me to explain what the Arizal was saying, and I didn't tell them. But because of my love for you, I will reveal the secret of this matter according to how it was revealed to me in a dream at night." Reb Shmshon explains the concealed lesson of the Arizal in a wondrous way and concludes, "After these matters were revealed to me, heaven told me that whoever studies this awesome secret as I wrote it here, even just once a year, primarily when he studies it on *erev Pesach*, he will certainly be guarded the entire year against all troubles, unnatural deaths, and tragedies. His enemies won't rule over him; they will fall before him, and wherever he turns, he will enjoy success."<sup>11</sup>

### Every Part of the Seder is Special

Rebbe Shalom of Shotz *zt'l* told the following parable: Someone tied a donkey to a mill and had the donkey walk around the mill. The donkey didn't understand why it had to walk around in circles. If it could think, it would say, "This person is doing *tzaar baalei chaim!* If he wants me to go someplace, it's my duty to bring him there. But to walk around endlessly for no purpose is just cruel." The donkey doesn't know that as it walks around, it is turning the millstone and grinding wheat into flour.

Rebbe Shalom of Shotz *zt'l* explained that each part of the Seder has great kabbalistic secrets. For example, on the קַעֲרָה there's an

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11. Once, in Elul, during the Holocaust, the Rav of Erloy *zt'l* reminded himself that he hadn't yet studied Reb Shmshon of Ostropola's letter. So he immediately studied the letter and was saved from the grave dangers he was in.

The Erloyer Rav said that his grandfather, the Hisorerus HaTeshuvah, would study that letter yearly. When he was ninety-four years old, he didn't get around to reviewing the letter; that was the year he was *niftar*.

egg in one corner, *karpas* in another corner, *maror* in the middle, and so on. Each item represents one of Hashem's attributes: *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferes*, and so on. We don't understand exactly what we're doing with the Seder plate and all the other mitzvos of the Seder. But we go through the motions of the Seder happily, and this process accomplishes great matters and brings us amazing *brachos*. The קערה is round to indicate that we go around the cycle of performing the customs and *halachos* of the Seder (like in

the mashal of the donkey that goes around and around). Although we don't always know the purpose, through this process we accomplish so much. We will receive many *brachos* from Hashem.

After performing a seder, Rebbe Yechiel Meir of Gustenin *zt'l* couldn't fall asleep. He compared it to someone who has just won the lottery. He won't be able to sleep; he's too excited. Similarly, when one understands how much we earn on this night, he will be so happy that he won't be able to fall asleep.<sup>12</sup>

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**12.** Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zy'a* told the following mashal as a lesson not to squander opportunities that are presented to us:

A wealthy person bought a very expensive, beautiful, and mighty horse. He brought it to his stable, which was located near his home. But he was afraid his rare horse would be stolen, so he built a fence around where the horses were held. Still, he feared thieves might find a way to get through the wall, so he hired someone to stand guard all night. He told the guard, "I want you to think about interesting and intriguing questions throughout the night so you don't fall asleep."

So, the prized horse was enclosed in a fence, and someone was standing guard, but the wealthy man was still worried. "What if the guard falls asleep?"

The wealthy man couldn't sleep because he was so worried, so he went outside to check on the horse. He saw his horse peacefully resting in the stable, and the watchman was awake. That was good.

"What are you thinking about now?" he asked the guard.

"I am trying to figure out what happens to the wood when one bores a hole through a wooden plank. Where did the wood go? There was wood before, and now there's a hole. Where did the wood go?"

The wealthy man patted him on his shoulders, "Very good," he said. "Keep thinking about such weighty matters, and you won't fall asleep."

The wealthy man returned home, satisfied that everything was under control, and fell asleep. But an hour later, he awoke, frightened once again. "What if the guard fell asleep?"

So he went back outside to check on his horse. The watchman was still standing there, guarding the horse.

"I am so glad you are still awake. What are you thinking about now?"

The guard replied, "I am thinking about bakers. They make donuts and bagels with a hole in the middle. There used to be dough there. Where did the dough go?"

"Wonderful question," the wealthy man replied. "Keep thinking along these lines, and you won't fall asleep."

The wealthy man managed to sleep for another hour, but then he woke up again, feeling he had to check up on his horse again. He asked the guard, "What are you thinking about now?"

"I was just wondering," he said, "a wealthy person buys a prize horse, constructs a fence to protect it, hires someone to stand guard, and wakes up every hour to make sure that everything is ok. So, I'm wondering, if he took such good care, where did the horse go to? How did the horse disappear?"

What's the lesson of this story? It's a reminder that we must grab the opportunities of this night so we aren't left empty-handed. Otherwise, one will ask, "I bought matzah, maror, and all products for the Seder; I cooked and prepared for the Seder; so where did the Seder go? How did I lose it?"

Every part of the Seder is precious. The Maharil writes, "Don't take these matters lightly. Even if aspects of the Seder seem insignificant to you, be wise to do them because there is nothing extra."

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes, "It is amazing the many great things... that occur in the upper worlds when the Jewish nation makes the Seder on this night, with the matzos, the *maror*, the *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*..."<sup>13</sup>

Mordechai and Esther decreed a three-day fast. One of the fast days was on the Seder night. That year, the Yidden didn't eat matzah and *maror*, etc. As it states *ויעבר מרדכי*, which means that Mordechai transgressed the first night of Pesach by declaring a fast on that day (see Gemara *Megillah* 15.).

Why did Mordechai choose to create a fast day on this night? There was still plenty of time. Haman's decree was to be carried out twelve months later, on the fourteenth of Adar. Why did Mordechai decree a three-day fast now, resulting in people not

performing the mitzvos of matzah and maror at the Seder?

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that Mordechai wanted to show Heaven what the world would look like if Haman's scheme succeeds and there isn't a Jewish nation to celebrate the Seder. The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "A great commotion arose in heaven when no one made a Seder that night. The *malachim* were asking, "What is happening? ... This showed Heaven that if Haman's plan succeeds and there won't be a Jewish people, *chalilah*, the entire world will cease to exist."

Reb Eliyahu Gutmacher *zt'l* says that Mordechai and Esther established a fast on the seder night to take advantage of the greatest *eis ratzon* of the year to annul Haman's decrees. Their *tefillos* at that time were immediately answered, and Haman was hung on the second day of Pesach.<sup>14</sup>

### The Holiness of the Seder

*Shulchan Aruch* (472:2) states, *יסדר שולחנו בכלים נאים לפי כוחו*, "One should set the table with

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**13.** There are fifteen simanim at the seder, and holy sefarim teach that we should say each siman before performing its part of the seder. Saying the name of the siman brings us kedushah (see *Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah*).

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* silently repeat to himself the simanim of the Seder (קדש ורחץ כרפס יחץ etc.) before he began the Seder. Chassidim explain that he was reminding himself of all the wonderful steps of the Seder so that he could keep each step correctly. This is because sometimes a person reaches *נרצה* and he regrets that he didn't take more advantage of the holy Seder with all its mitzvos, segulos, holiness, and bounty. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* wanted to make sure that he took advantage of all the mitzvos of this holy night, so at the beginning of the Seder, he reviewed what was coming up, so he could perform the mitzvos properly.

The order of the Seder, קדש ורחץ, etc., are called simanim. When someone claims a lost object, he must give evidence of ownership (*simanim*), and then he gets back the lost object. Throughout the year, due to sins, a person loses his holiness. When he does the simanim of the Seder, he gets his kedushah back. What was lost is returned to him.

**14.** Reb Gutmacher describes the uniqueness of this night with a *mashal*: Imagine a person imprisoned within four high walls; there is no hope for escape. However, if there's even just a tiny breach in one of the walls, he can hammer away at that opening, and it will widen until he is able to escape. The Seder night provides us with that small opening. Everyone has "fortified walls" surrounding him. For some, it's the lack of *parnassah*; for others, it's health issues or other forms of *tzaros*, *rachmana litzlan*. People feel trapped, unable to get out. They don't know how to leave their *tzaros*. However, on Pesach, they find a crack in the walls. If they pound on this crack (with *tefillah* and the mitzvos of the night), the crack will open wide, and everything can change. Even one's *mazal* can change for the better on this night.



beautiful utensils according to his abilities," as this demonstrates the freedom we attained on this night.

The Magen Avraham (472:2) adds that the Maharil would place the vessels he received as collateral for loans on his seder table. Throughout the year, he didn't use those vessels. They didn't belong to him; they belonged to goyim, and it would be *gezel* to use them. But at the seder, he would take them out and use them because it is customary to adorn the Seder table with valuable vessels.

The Magen Avraham asks why, at the seder, it wasn't considered theft. The Magen Avraham answers, "Since the Maharil used them solely one day a year, the goyim weren't *makpid*." They wouldn't mind if he used their vessels for just one night, so it wasn't theft.<sup>15</sup>

But the Chasam Sofer zt'l raises another question (Drashos Shabbos HaGadol vol.2, p.255). We can't eat food from utensils if they aren't immersed in a mikvah. So, how could the Maharil use the Goyishe dishes?

The Chasam Sofer writes, יש בו סכנה וטומאה, עצומה של לחמם טמא, "There is a danger, and a powerful *tumah*" when one eats on gentile utensils. So why wasn't the Maharil concerned about this impurity? Why did he use gentile utensils at the Seder?

The Chasam Sofer replies that there is so much *kedushah* on this night that the *tumah* of the non-Jewish utensils disappears. It becomes negated in the great *kedushah* of the night.

When the Jewish nation left Mitzrayim (Shemos 12:35), וישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכל זהב, "they

borrowed from the Egyptians silver and gold utensils..."

Rashi (Shemos 12:37) writes, "The Egyptians gave more than the Yidden asked for. [The Egyptians said], 'You are asking for one? Take two and leave.'"

The Chasam Sofer explains that the Egyptians were eager to give their utensils because they understood that their dishes could contaminate the Jewish nation.

(The Chasam Sofer clarifies that the Mitzrim weren't so wise to know that their utensils would generate *tumah* for the Jewish nation, but their *mazal* and *malach* in heaven knew, and unknowingly, this inspired them to be eager to give them their utensils.)

The Jewish nation was hesitant; they didn't want to borrow anything (see *Brachos* 9). They were concerned about the *tumah*. Moshe Rabbeinu had to convince them to borrow these utensils. The Chasam Sofer explains that their hesitance stemmed from their fear of becoming *tamei* from the *goyishe* utensils.

This *tumah* couldn't be removed by immersion in a mikvah because the utensils were borrowed (not acquired). This left them with contaminated *goyishe* utensils without the possibility of purifying them. They were left with a great impurity and no way to rectify it.

But the Yidden had nothing to fear. As the Chasam Sofer explains, "Because of the immense *kedushah* that Hashem bestowed on the Jewish nation on that night...the *tumah* became annulled...in the *kedushah*." There was so much *kedushah* on the night of Pesach that the *kedushah* annulled the *tumah* in the utensils, and the Jewish nation was not affected by the *tumah*.<sup>16</sup>

15. Others (*Chok Yaakov* and *Mishnah Berurah*) answer that the Maharil put those utensils on a sideboard in his dining room to decorate the room but didn't actually use them.

16. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Jewish nation didn't deserve this high level of *kedushah*, but Hashem wanted to keep His promise to Avraham Avinu that the Jewish nation would leave with immense wealth. Therefore, Hashem told them to borrow the utensils, and He purified them with the great holiness of the night.

The Chasam Sofer adds that this immense *kedushah* reoccurs in every generation. "Therefore, every Seder night, it is permitted to use the utensils taken as collateral from goyim [as the Maharil would do]. Due to the *hislahavos* people have when they tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *tumah* of the *keilim* won't harm us, even if the utensils weren't *toveled*." This source teaches us about the immense *kedushah* of the Seder night.

The following lesson is also from the Chasam Sofer, and it teaches us about the holiness of the seder.

At the Seder, we say *כל דכפין ייתי ויכול*, "Whoever is hungry, come and eat." What would happen if people took up our offer and came to our home? Where would we put them, and how would we have enough food for everyone?

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*drashos Shabbos HaGadol* (תקס"ב ד"ה כי תבאו) says that we don't have to worry about that because there will be room and food for everyone. This is because when we make a Seder, our homes become holy, and wherever there's holiness, there is abundance and plenty of room.

Chazal (*Avos* 5:5) say that one of the ten miracles of the Beis HaMikdash was that "No one ever said he doesn't have a place to sleep in Yerushalayim." How did this happen? Because of the holiness of Yerushalayim, there was always room.

Another miracle was *עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים*, that although it was very crowded in the Beis HaMikdash when they bowed down, there was plenty of room for everyone. How did this happen? It was because where there's *kedushah*, there is room.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Chazal say that there was always sufficient *לחם הפנים* for all the *kohanim*. When many *kohanim* were present, each *kohen* received a morsel of bread, but it was enough, and the *kohanim* were full and satisfied. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that this is because where there's holiness, there is always enough.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "With these ideas, I explain, *כהא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא*, 'This is the bread of poverty our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim with hunger and suffering.' [And we are still poor] and we are still eating poor man's bread... Nevertheless, *כל דכפין ייתי ויפסח*, *ויכל כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח*, 'Whoever is hungry, come and eat with us.' Don't worry. There will be enough. As Chazal says, 'The entire nation can eat the same *korban Pesach*.' Our homes will become spacious and there will be room for all the guests because when we tell Hashem's wonders and miracles, our houses become a miniature Eretz Yisrael.

"Chazal (*Megillah* 29.) say, 'In the future, the *batei midrashim* and the *batei knesiyos* will move to Eretz Yisrael.' Our houses will also move to Eretz Yisrael. This is the meaning of the words *השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל*, 'We

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17. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that the miracle that the Mishnah is referring to isn't that there was enough room to bow down because that would be expected due to the *kedushah* of the Beis HaMikdash. Wherever there is *kedushah*, there is room. The miracle was *עומדים צפופים*, that when they stood straight, it was crowded. This miracle occurred to increase their reward, as Chazal (*Brachos* 4.) tell us, the reward for attending a *drashah* comes from the discomfort of being crowded (*אגרא דכלא דוחקא*).

Shu't Tashbatz writes that in his time, there was a *beis medresh* in Yerushalayim that everyone went to on Shavuos. It was very full, yet miraculously, there was plenty of room for everyone.

The Chasam Sofer (*Teshuvos*, *Yorah Deiah* 234, in a letter to Reb Efraim Margulies, the Beis Efraim *zt'l*) quotes this Tashbatz and the Chasam Sofer adds, "Hashem knows that my eyes also saw such a miracle in *chutz l'aretz*, only I can't write the details because of the mockers of our nation." The Chasam Sofer's grandson (*Chut HaMeshulash*) writes that the Chasam Sofer was referring to his *yeshiva* in Pressburg. The physical dimensions of the *yeshiva* weren't large enough to hold the many students who learned there. A miracle occurred, and there was room for everyone.

are here now. Next year *this house* will be in Eretz Yisrael'. There is an atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael at the Seder, so there will be space and enough food for everyone."

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said to his grandson, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*, "Eliyahu HaNavi comes to everyone's Seder and there are great tzaddikim who see him. But an even greater level is when one doesn't see Eliyahu but *believes* that Eliyahu is there."

After saying שפך המתך, the Noda b'Yehudah would escort Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* out of his house, down the stairs, and into the street. The Chidushei HaRim praised this deed immensely and said, "The Noda b'Yehuda didn't actually see Eliyahu Hanavi, but he believed he was there. And believing is a higher level than seeing." This lesson is also an indication of the holiness of the seder. Eliyahu HaNavi is present.

And it isn't solely that Eliyahu is present. Hashem is also at our seder. It states in the *Haggadah*, ובמזרה גדול זה גילוי שכינה. This means Hashem's presence was revealed in Mitzrayim and that is what brought about our redemption. This reoccurs yearly at the Seder. The *Shechinah* is present.

The Mishnayos Pesachim tells us the order of the Seder, and the word לפניו, "before him," is used. For example, the Mishnah states, הביאו לפניו מטבל בחזרת... הביאו לפניו מצה וחזרת, "They bring before him [the karpas]... They bring before him matzah and *maror*..." However, by the cup for kiddush, it states (*Pesachim* 10:2), מזוגו לו כוס ראשון, "They pour for him the first cup of wine [to say Kiddush...]" Here it doesn't state לפניו.

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* explains that לפניו means "Before Hashem." When we make the seder, we are seated before Hashem.

However, when we are about to say kiddush, the seder hasn't yet begun. Therefore, referring to the first cup of wine, it states מזוגו לו כוס ראשון, "They pour for him the first cup of wine." The wine is poured before the person who makes the seder, but it doesn't state לפניו, that the wine is poured before Hashem. This is because we are before the beginning of the seder, and the *Shechinah* didn't come yet. However, when the seder begins, we are seated before Hashem.

We also say in the *Haggadah*, ונאמר לפניו, שירה חדשה, "We will say *before Him* a new song." The entire Seder takes place before Hashem.

The Belzer Rebbes would clap their hands before saying *Mah Nishtanah* as it states (*Shemos* 28:35), ונשמע קולו בבואו אל הקדש, "The sound shall be heard when he enters the sanctuary..." This pasuk refers to the Beis HaMikdash, but it is appropriate to use this pasuk also in reference to the seder because when we are at the Seder, it is like we are in the Beis HaMikdash.<sup>18</sup>

Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l* would have a *taanis dibur* at the Seder. He explained that Hashem is at the Seder, as it says (*Shemos* 12:12), ועברתי בארץ מצרים - אני ולא מלאך, "I shall go through the land of Mitzrayim - I, and not an angel." And when one is before a king, he is silent.

The Shlah HaKadosh states that we shouldn't read *magid* while reclining on our left side (הסיבה). We can explain that this is because the *Shechinah* is present, and it isn't proper to lean when seated before Hashem. (This is similar to the halachah that one doesn't recline at the Seder when his Rebbe is present.)

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 12:) teaches that we shouldn't daven in Aramaic because the

18. The Maharal (*Haggadah shel Pesach*, ענין לבישת הקיטל) compares the *kittel* to the white garment the *kohen gadol* wore on Yom Kippur when he entered the *kodesh kadoshim*.

Taking this a step further, this means that when we conduct the Seder, it is like we have entered the *kodesh kadoshim*.



malachim don't understand this language and won't be able to elevate the tefillos. However, the Gemara says that when one is visiting the ill, he may daven in Aramaic. This is because the *Shechinah* is with the sick person, as it states (*Tehillim* 41:4), ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי, "Hashem will preserve him on his ill-bed." Hashem is present, and the malachim aren't called to elevate the tefillos. Therefore, he can daven in Aramaic.

The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that the same occurs at the Seder. We begin the Seder with הוא לחמא עניא, in Aramaic. The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that this is because Hashem is present at the Seder, so we can speak in Aramaic.

The Seder ends with חד גדיא, also in Aramaic. This hints that Hashem is present from the beginning of the Seder until the end. (And this is one of the reasons tefillah is so powerful at the Seder. It is a tefillah directly before Hashem.)

### Levels we can Attain

As a child, the Imrei Emes *zy'a* asked his father, the Sfas Emes *zt'l*, "Why do we wear a *kittel* at the Seder?"

The Sfas Emes answered, "On *Yom Tov*, we wear nicer clothing than usual, and we don't want them to get ruined. So, we put on a *kittel* to protect the clothing."

When the Imrei Emes was an adult, he still remembered his father's explanation for the *kittel*, and he was certain that it was undoubtedly more than just a joke. He thought about it and understood that his father was hinting that on Pesach, at the Seder, we reach great heights and become

like new. And we must be careful to retain this cleanliness. We shouldn't tarnish our souls again.

Reb Yehoshua of Kroli *zt'l* discussed the greatness of the seder and the levels that one can attain. According to one version, he said that if a person doesn't attain *ruach hakadosh* at the Seder, he isn't a human being. Another version is that Reb Yehoshua of Kroli said that if one doesn't have *giluy Eliyahu* at the Seder and on Yom Kippur, it's a sign his forefathers weren't at Har Sinai.<sup>19</sup>

Generally, first one attains *taharah* (purity), and afterwards, one can achieve *kedushah* (holiness). At the Seder, the first two *simanim* are קדש ורחץ, which can be translated as, "make yourself holy and purify yourself." The ווא"ו of ורחץ implies that this is the order: *kedushah* comes first, and then comes *taharah*. This isn't the order we generally follow.

But this is the order *malachim* use. As we say in *Shacharis*, וכולם פותחים את פיהם בקדושה, ובטהרה, "They all open their mouths with *kedushah* and *taharah*." *Kedushah* is mentioned first.

The order קדש ורחץ indicates that at the Seder, we reach the level of *malachim*.<sup>20</sup>

The Maharal teaches that the first nine makos were performed by malachim. To protect the Jewish nation from the makos, Hashem raised the Jewish nation above the *malachim*. The tenth plague, *makas bechoros*, was performed by Hashem Himself, as we say in the *Hagaddah*, ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך, "I passed through Eretz Mitzrayim; it was I and not an angel." What protected the Jewish nation from this plague? It wouldn't

19. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* repeated this thought from Reb Yehoshua of Kroli when the managers of the Satmar institutions wanted to discuss money matters with the rebbe. He told them he preferred to speak about money matters after the seder; now, he needed to prepare for the holy seder.

20. Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrivka *zy'a* taught: קדש ורחץ, if a person wants to sanctify and purify himself, the path is כרפס, which is *roshei teivos* for כרפס. The first rule is to keep the mouth shut. By avoiding forbidden speech, one can attain holiness and purity. יחזק מניח means that when you do speak, say only half of what you planned to say.

be sufficient to raise them above the malachim because this makah came from a higher source.

The Maharal says that during *makas bechoros*, Hashem elevated the Yidden to His level. They became a חלק אלוהי ממועל, *kiveyachol*, united with Hashem, and this is what protected them.

Every year, on this night, Hashem raises the Jewish nation to that high level. Therefore, the *yom tov* is called פסח, which means to jump (*Rashi Shemos 12:23*). On this holiday, we jump up to Hashem's level, *kiveyachol*.

The Gemara (*Pesachim 116.*) says about the Seder, מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, "We begin with the disgrace, and we conclude with the praise." The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* says that this pattern repeats itself each year at the Seder. Even if one is at a low level at the beginning of the Seder, when he concludes the Seder, he is in a high place.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz u'Matzah 7:6-7*) writes, "In every generation, a person must see himself as if he has now left Mitzrayim, as it states (*Devarim 6:23*) וואותנו הוציא משם, "He brought *us* out from there." Also, Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us in the Torah

(*Devarim 5:15*) וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים, 'You shall remember that you were a slave in Mitzrayim.' This means that you should imagine that you yourself were a slave and you were saved. This is the reason we must eat leaning on our side, as a free person would eat, and everyone, men and women, must drink four cups of wine..." We demonstrate the freedom we attained.<sup>21</sup>

The Chasam Sofer explains that just as we show and imagine ourselves as slaves who were freed, we should also imagine and perceive the spiritual greatness that we attained on this night.

This is because Chazal (*Pesachim 116.*) say that at the seder, we must discuss the גנות and the שבח, the initial disgrace, and our ultimate praise and salvation. According to Shmuel, the disgrace was that we were slaves, and the praise is that we were saved. According to Rav, the disgrace was that our forefathers (the father of Avraham) worshipped avodah zarah (מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היה אבותינו) and the praise is our spiritual salvation, that we now serve Hashem.

So, just as we imagine and play out our physical redemption, we should also imagine and play out our spiritual salvation.<sup>22</sup>

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**21.** Pele Yoetz (*Pesach*) writes, "At the seder, be strong to keep what Chazal say, 'A person must envision himself as though he left Mitzrayim.'" With constant, pure thoughts [about this topic], your heart will become filled with hislahavus until you feel it is impossible not to be happy. According to the extent of your desire to keep this Chazal, and in accordance with your attempts to attain it, so will you receive siyata d'Shmaya. הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו, "When one desires to be pure, he is helped." He will be very happy with his Creator, a simchah of a mitzvah..."

**22.** This *yom tov* is called פסח, which means to jump because, on this night, we jump to levels we couldn't reach the entire year.

Many use a radish or a potato for *karpas*. Radishes and potatoes both grow in the ground, suggesting that even those who are symbolically beneath the ground and on a very low spiritual level become elevated at the Seder.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said, "All year round you're worth a רעטיך, a radish, [a Yiddish expression for something that doesn't have much value]. But now you merited to be placed on the Seder table."

The Chareidim teaches that when the *malachim* see the high levels Yidden reach, they ask, "Why do they deserve this? How did they reach the *Kisei haKavod* so easily?" The answer is that Hashem knows how difficult it is for a Yid to choose good in this world, surrounded by so many temptations. Due to the challenges, a Yid can reach high levels very quickly.

## A Seder for Everyone

We are inspired when we read stories of tzaddikim regarding the wonderful Sedarim they made, and we strive to reach their levels, but we know that Hashem is happy with our Sedarim, too.

The Ksav Sofer's zt'l Rebbetzin, Rebbetzin Chavah Leah, heard from her sisters-in-law to expect an extraordinary Seder when she goes to her father-in-law, the Chasam Sofer, for the seder. They told her that the Chasam Sofer's face glows brightly, and it is impossible to look at his face.

Rebbetzin Chavah Leah thought they were fantasizing. "*Ungarisher dimyonos*, Hungarian imaginations," she thought to herself.

But at the Seder, she tried to look at her father-in-law's face and couldn't. The Chasam Sofer's face shone so brightly.

The Avnei Nezer zt'l said, "My father-in-law, the Kotzker zt'l, always appeared like a *malach*, but at the Seder, he appeared like a *saraf* (a higher form of *malach*).... At the Seder, the Kotzker appeared elevated in ways we didn't see even on Yom Kippur. During the second half of the Seder, sparks of fire came out of his mouth." (Abir HaRoim).

The Shlah HaKadosh writes that there were chassidim who kissed the matzos when they lifted them at the Seder. The Rebbe of Raminov zt'l said that if he weren't embarrassed, he would shake the matzos in beis medresh with נענועים as we do with the *lulav* and *esrog*.

Perhaps we aren't on these high levels; nevertheless, the Torah was given to everyone, and to us the Torah says (*Shemos*

12:18), בערב תאכלו מצות, "In the evening you shall eat matzos."<sup>23</sup>

The final *siman* of the Seder is *nirtzah*, which means "It was accepted and desired." We are confident that after we went through the Seder, Hashem is happy with the seder we performed, and He accepted it.

Everyone aspires that his Seder should be beautiful, the children should behave, and the atmosphere be happy and uplifting, but, alas, it isn't always so. We must know that Hashem is happy with our Seder precisely as it was.

Reb Shmuel of Karov was poor, but he tried to keep what is written in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deiah* 255:1) that "a person should always refrain from asking for *tzedakah*. He should live in poverty (יגלה עצמו בעוה) rather than ask for financial aid. As the Gemara (*Pesachim* 112.) says, עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך לבריות, it is better to eat simple, weekday-like foods on Shabbos, than to ask people for financial aid." Therefore, he never asked for financial aid.

But one year, Pesach was approaching, and he didn't have matzah and wine. He hoped he wouldn't have to make an exception this time.

The Chozeh, with his *ruach hakodesh*, knew what his student, Reb Shmuel Karover, was going through. So, when Reb Shlomo Konkuli z'l (a wealthy person) came to the Chozeh of Lublin for a *brachah*, the Chozeh told him to send food to Reb Shmuel.

A delivery of *yom tov* food arrived at Reb Shmuel's door moments before Pesach. Reb Shmuel was extremely happy because he

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Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zy'a taught that זכה פסח הוא לך means when a person, זכה, slaughters his *yetzer hara* (by ignoring the *yetzer hara*'s requests), פסח הוא לך, he jumps up all the way to Hashem's throne.

23. The Rokeach (*Pesach*, 291) writes that when one eats matzah during the seven days of Pesach, he becomes a partner with Hashem in Creation. As it states, מצות יאכל שבועת הימים (*Shemos* 13:7). It is written שבועת הימים with an extra ה"א, hinting at the seven days of Creation. For keeping this mitzvah, we become partners in the creation of the world, which was completed in seven days.



had everything he needed for *yom tov*, and he didn't have to ask for help.

That night, Reb Shmuel had a joyous Seder like never before.

On the second night of Pesach, Reb Shmuel was very tired, so he lay down before the Seder. He woke up late and had to rush through the Seder to eat the *afikoman* before chatzos.

He thought the second Seder wasn't a success.

When he came to the Chozeh, the Chozeh said with his *ruach hakadosh*, "Let's think about Reb Shmuel's Sedarim. The first Seder was celebrated with much *kavanah* and joy, but it wasn't a perfect Seder. But the second Seder was special! No one in the world made such a wonderful and holy Seder like that one."

The explanation is that he conducted the second Seder with humility and a broken heart, which made it extraordinary.

The lesson is that we can never know what is most precious to Hashem. At times, a Seder we thought wasn't good is wonderful in Hashem's eyes, and when we believe we had a good Seder, Hashem may have a different opinion. All we can do is try our best and believe that *נרצה* it was pleasing and accepted by Hashem.

The custom of Reb Ber'tze, a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l*, was to set the table for the Seder himself before leaving to go to the beis medresh to daven minchah and maariv. One year, when he came home from shul, he saw that the table was messy, and the matzos and the wine were shattered on the floor.

His wife was in bed, moping. She complained, "It is your fault. Why did you put the wine and the matzos so close to the edge of the table? When I passed by the table, my apron got caught on the tablecloth, and since you placed everything so close to

the edge, it all crashed to the floor. It's all your fault!"

Reb Ber'tze replied, "It wasn't my fault, and it wasn't your fault. This is what Hashem wanted." And Reb Ber'tze and his rebbetzin celebrated the Seder with joy.

The following day, Rebbe Ber'tze davened Shacharis in the beis medresh of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l*. Rebbe Asher, with his *ruach hakodesh*, discussed the Sedarim of many tzaddikim and how special they were, and then he said, "But the Seder of Reb Ber'tze was greater than all the others. No one reached the heights he attained."

It was because he remained happy despite what occurred.

There are four sons in the *Haggadah*. Rebbe Hirsh Riminover said, "In my opinion, the *שאינו יודע לשאול* is the best off from all of them." Because this son doesn't ask any questions, he accepts everything with *emunah* that this is how it has to be.

We must remember the lesson stated in *Beis Aharon* (*Pesach* p.85). He writes, "The Seder isn't solely for people on high, lofty levels. The Seder is for every Yid, whichever level he is on. And one must believe this..."

### **Matzah, Maror, Korach**

The Chasam Sofer (*Choshen Mishpat* 196) writes, "The mitzvah of eating matzah on the Seder night is the only mitzvah that has remained with us in exile, of which it is to eat. We don't have the mitzvah of eating the *korban Pesach* or the other *korbanos*. We can't eat *terumah* or *maasar sheini* in our days either. Matzah is the only mitzvah we have for eating, and we can only perform this mitzvah once a year. If this mitzvah is not performed correctly, will Hashem be happy with that?"

In a letter, Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* warns us to eat the right amount. He writes, "You must be careful to eat more than the minimal amount of matzah and *maror*, for if you eat less than the minimum amount, you've forfeited the mitzvah. If one has wisdom,

how could he not be cautious to keep these mitzvos properly? We cannot perform these mitzvos the entire year, and who can guarantee that he will be alive to keep them next year? Isn't it enough that we don't keep the mitzvos of tefillin and *birchas hamazon* properly throughout the year? Why should these mitzvos also be lacking?"

One year at the Seder, before eating the matzah, the Kedushas Levi *zy'a* said with *hislahavus*, "Ribono shel Olam! Either you come into me, or I will come into you."

The Tiferes Shlomo writes that matzah is a spiritual medication that removes the bad inside of us and unites us with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* says that eating *afikoman* is conducive to annul bad *taavos*. The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (*Haggadah shel Pesach* 56) writes that this is alluded to in the word אפיקומן. *Chazal* say that אפיקומן stands for אפיקו מיני מתיקה, bringing out sweet foods. The Yismach Yisrael explains אפיקו מיני מתיקה means that this mitzvah will take out our temptations for the sweet pleasures of this world.<sup>24</sup>

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* ate very little. His Rebbetzin would say, "I made good food for you; why don't you eat it?"

He would answer, דאס אדזעט מיר, "I am disgusted by food." His sole desire was *ruchniyus*.

But at the Seder, the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah with relish. His Rebbetzin asked him, "Did you become a *baal taavah'nik*? Did you suddenly become so interested in food?"

He said, "The entire year, I am not interested in food, yet you encourage me to eat. Once a year, when I finally am interested in food, you say that I am a *baal taavah*." The truth is, this is the pattern: When one holds back from *taavos* the entire year, he will eat the matzah with immense *taavah*.<sup>25</sup>

The Yerushalmi states, "Someone who eats matzah on *erev Pesach* is similar to someone who takes his fiancé before the *chasunah*."

We understand from this that eating matzah on Pesach is like a *chasunah*. The Maharil writes that this is why we say seven *brachos* before eating the matzah. It is similar to the *sheva brachos* we say at a *chasunah*.<sup>26</sup>

After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, it states (Bereishis 3:24) ויגרש את האדם, "[Hashem] banished Adam..." The Midrash says that ויגרש means divorce. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *kiveyachol*, divorced Adam (*geirushin*). When Adam did teshuvah, the marriage, *kiveyachol*, was re-established. As we explained, eating matzah is a *chasunah*. So, if someone became distant from Hashem due to *aveiros*, the union is reestablished when he eats matzah.

Once, at Reb Shimon Sofer's Seder, his grandson asked him, "Why do children steal the *afikoman*? Is it proper to educate children to steal?"

Reb Shimon Sofer didn't answer. He continued with the Seder. During the meal, he told his grandson, "You asked a good question: why do we steal the *afikoman*? Why is it encouraged? The Gemara mentions this custom, as it states (*Pesachim* 109), הוטפין מצה, "We

24. Some people always carry a piece of the afikoman with them. My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, would distribute pieces from his *afikoman* on *motzei Shevi'i shel Pesach*.

25. The Nesivos Shalom *zy'a* once saw a *bachur* of his yeshiva eating falafel with great relish. The Nesivos Shalom gently rebuked him, saying, "The way you eat reminds me of how the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah on Pesach."

26. The miforshim list the seven *brachos* that we say at the seder, from the beginning of the seder until one eats matzah.

grab the matzos..." The Gemara says this is to keep the young children awake so they will hear the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. However, we can still wonder why it is performed in a manner of stealing. I never heard an explanation before and I never thought about it, either. But as soon as you asked me, I had an answer. I didn't answer you immediately because I wanted to teach you that a Yid must keep the *minhagim* even when we don't know the reason. And now, I will tell you my explanation for this custom:

"The *pasuk* states (*Shemos* 11:7), ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב לשונו, 'To all of Bnei Yisrael, no dog will bark...' When dogs don't bark, there can be thefts. Because Chazal (*Pesachim* 113) advise that one should live in a city with dogs, as this protects the residents from theft. At the Seder, we steal the *afikoman* to commemorate the miracle that the dogs didn't bark. The stealing is just a reminder of the miracle that occurred with the dogs, that they didn't bark."

The *roshei teivos* of מצ"ה spell מיכל צרה היצילני, "Save me from all troubles." We attain salvations with this mitzvah.

The *Zohar* calls matzah, מיכליה דאסוותא, healing bread, and the Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (*Haggadah shel Pesach* 78) writes, "Also non-Jewish doctors agree that matzah cures the head. They don't realize that they are saying a prophecy because by eating matzah, one merits *emunah*, and *emunah* is a cure for the brain to think correctly."

Reb Tzvi Kintzlicher *zt'l*, the Rav of Seban, Romania (later, he moved to Yerushalayim in 5709), suffered from severe stomach pains. The doctors in Klausenberg told him that they needed to operate immediately. The Rav of Seban told the doctors that he wanted to be home for Pesach and would return right after Pesach for the operation.

The doctors agreed but warned him not to eat anything difficult to digest. He certainly wasn't permitted to eat matzah. He could only have light foods, like fruits and milk.

Reb Tzvi planned to follow instructions, but at the Seder, he decided to eat matzah soaked in milk.

While eating the matzah, he felt something positive happening in his stomach. He ate matzah on the second night of Pesach too, and by the time he finished eating the *kezayis*, he had no stomach pains.

On Shabbos after Pesach, he told his congregation that he was leaving for a serious operation. "Pray for me because I don't know what will be."

When he returned to Klausenberg, the doctors said, "Which doctor did you go to? The disease is gone!"

He told them that he was cured through the mitzvah of eating matzah, the מיכליה דאסוותא, healing food."

One of the doctors said, "I have seen several times that everything we doctors know means nothing when Hashem desires differently."

מצ"ה has three letters: מ' צ' ה'. When each of these three letters is spelled out in full, it looks like this: מ"ם צדי"ק ה"א. The added letters (all letters besides the primary letters of מצ"ה) are called the מילוי, filler letters. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said that if you take the מילוי of מצה it spells אקד"ם, "I will come first..." The Sar Shalom noted that this hints that some tefillos aren't answered immediately, but the tefillos on Pesach אקד"ם, will be answered immediately.

The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* once said, "I don't understand why it's called *maror*. It's so sweet!"

מרור has the same *gematriya* as מוות, implying that by eating *maror*, one annuls death and all other hardships and troubles. So, although *maror* is bitter at first, it makes everything sweet.

There was a time when the only *maror* available was horseradish, and eating a *kezayis* of it was difficult. Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "Even when it comes to *maror*,



one should eat the proper amount. Every day we say, בכל נפשך, that it's a mitzvah to serve Hashem with all our soul, with *mesirus nefesh*, so why shouldn't we endure this little bit of hardship [of eating horseradish]? I promise, when one eats *maror* with *simchah*, he will almost not feel the sharpness of the *maror*."

Eating the *kezayis maror* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. Chazal (*Eiruvin* 18:, *Rashi Bereishis* 8:11) say, יהיו מזונותי מרורין כזית. This phrase can also be read as, יהא מזונותי, my *parnassah* comes from the *kezayis maror* that I eat at the Seder.

There is a debate among the poskim whether to recline while eating *korach* (the matzah and *maror* sandwich), and the accepted opinion is that we do recline.

But why should we recline if it contains *maror*?

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that the *maror* is wrapped in matzah, the food of *emunah* (מיכלא דמיהמנותא). When we have *emunah* that even the bitterness of *galus* is good, we feel like free men, and therefore we recline.

In the Shira we say, אמר אויב ארדוף אשיג... "The enemy (Pharaoh) said I will chase and catch them..." Why are these words in the *shirah*? It doesn't seem like something to sing about. The answer is that after we see the miracles, we can sing for the difficult moments, too. We become aware that everything is for the good.

### Magid

One of the special mitzvos of this night is *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, to tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. What a privilege this is!

The Zohar<sup>27</sup> states:

"Every person who tells the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*... Hakadosh Baruch Hu

gathers all the *malachim* in heaven and says, 'Come and listen to My praises that My children are saying! They are happy with My redemption!' The *malachim* listen, and they see that the Yidden are happy with the redemption... The *malachim* praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miracles and for His holy nation that He has on earth who are happy with His redemption... Just as a king's power increases when his subjects praise him and express their gratitude to him, Bnei Yisrael give strength to their Master [when they praise Hashem for *yetzias Mitzrayim*]. Therefore, we must praise Hashem and tell this story... His words go up to heaven, and all the *malachim* gather and praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This brings honor to Hashem above and below."

Yesod Yosef (85) writes, "Whoever says the... Haggadah with happiness, without any anger, without laziness, and without feeling that it's a burden, *chas veshalom*... the *Shechinah* spreads out its wings on him to save him in all places and in all travels, and he merits miracles..."

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* vol.2 p.252.) writes, "We are guaranteed that even in this bitter exile when we sit and tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* to our children to implant them with *yiras Hashem*, Hashem's kindness is on us, just as it was when we left *Mitzrayim*."

At the Seder, the father wears a *kittel*, which represents *tachrichim*, shrouds. The Chasan Sofer *zt'l* explains that we want the father to remember that he doesn't live forever. There will be a time when he will be dressed in *tachrichim* and buried in the ground, and then he won't be able to tell his family about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This realization will inspire him to take advantage of the night, to tell his children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and to implant in them *emunah* in Hashem.<sup>28</sup>

27. The Zohar is printed in many haggados before Magid, and many say it before the beginning of Magid.

28. One year after the seder, when the Beis Yisrael of Gur's *zy'a* removed his *kittel*, he said, "Earlier tonight,

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* said that the *kittel* helps the father imagine that he has already passed away. In honor of Seder night, heaven lets him return to earth to make the Seder so that he can teach *emunah* to his children. With this thought in mind, he will certainly perform the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* properly.

In the merit that we speak about and praise Hashem for the redemption, we merit redemption from this *galus* and any other hardship we suffer.

This is hinted at in the *brachah* that we say at the end of *magid*, *ברוך... אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו*, "Bless Hashem... Who redeemed us and Who redeemed our forefathers..." *אשר גאלנו* implies that Hashem saved us, too. We are redeemed each year again from our *tzaros* in the merit that we say the Magid.

The Apter Rav *zy'a* writes, "When one says *אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו* and he believes that Hashem is also redeeming us, he will be saved from all kinds of trouble."

This is implied in the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:42), *ליל... שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים... לדורותם*, "It is a night of anticipation for Hashem to take them out of Mitzrayim... for their generations." There are two indications in this *pasuk* that we merit redemption each year. One is from the word *לדרתם*, "for their generations." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* says that this indicates that in every generation, Hashem takes us out of Mitzrayim and saves us from our problems.

It is also implied from the word *להוציאם*, "to take them out," which is written in the future tense. Every generation Hashem saves us again in the merit of the mitzvos we

perform at the seder and in the merit of the Magid.

When the Yidden were at the shore of the Yam Suf, the *malachim* prosecuted and said that the Yidden also worshiped *avodah zarah*. They asked, "Why should we save these and kill those?" Why should they save the Yidden with a great miracle and toss the Mitzrim into the sea if both are the same?"

If so, it is indeed a question: why was the Jewish nation saved? The Meor Einayim (*Tzav*) answers, "When the Yidden were in Mitzrayim, they conducted the entire Seder exactly as we do today. They told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* because they trusted that Hashem would certainly take them out of Mitzrayim. These matters drew down Hashem's kindness, and they were redeemed..."

The Meor Einayim adds, "There is *galus* for the nation, and there is *galus* for the individual. The individual's *galus* is his *yesurim* that he suffers. Due to the *chesed* we draw down in Nisan, we will be redeemed from hardships."

### Show Your Children

On the words *והגדת לבנך*, Onkelus writes, *ותחוי לבנך*, "Show your children." The simple translation of *והגדת לבנך* is to tell your children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But there is also a concept of showing them. What does this mean?

There is a concept of concealing one's good deeds from others. No one other than Hashem needs to know all the good things one does.<sup>29</sup> But like every rule, there are

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we put on the *kittel*, and now we're taking it off. But there will come a time when we will wear a *kittel* and never take it off."

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* said that when a father speaks to his children moments before his *petirah*, they listen carefully and try their best to keep his final wishes. At the seder, the father puts on a *kittel* because he wants the children to listen to what he tells them at the Seder with the same awe and earnestness that they would have during his final moments in life.

29. A handyman once came to the home of the Husiatiner Rebbe *zt'l* to patch up a couch. But he didn't

exceptions. Rebbe Meir of Dzikov *zy'a* (*Imrei No'am*) says that parents shouldn't conceal their good deeds from their children. The children should know their parents' good deeds to emulate their ways.

This is indicated in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 31:20), אשר צפנת, מזה רב טובך, ליראיך, you should conceal. פעלת לחוסים בך, but for those who rely on you – your children, נגד בני אדם, perform your good deeds in front of them so that they can learn from you.

When the head of the family breaks the middle matzah for *yachatz*, the larger half is wrapped and concealed, and the smaller half is left on the table. This hints that people should conceal most of their good deeds.

But then the children search for the *afikoman*. They find the larger half that was concealed. Because on the Seder night, we want the children to see our hidden good deeds so that they can learn from their parents.<sup>30</sup>

### Tefillah at the Seder

The Seder is also an opportune time for tefillah. The Gemara (*Brachos* 4:) discusses the importance of connecting the brachah גאל ישראל with *Shemonah Esrei*, and it states that whoever does so will merit *Olam HaBa*.

Rashi explains that this is because when we praise Hashem for redeeming us from *Mitzrayim*, Hashem is close to us, making this a good time for tefillah. Rashi writes, "[If a person doesn't connect גאל ישראל with *Shemonah Esrei*] it can be compared to a friend of the king knocking at the king's door, and when the king opens the door, he sees that his friend has left. When the king sees this, the king also leaves. Rather, a person should appease Hashem with praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and then Hashem will be close to him. And when Hashem is nearby, he should ask for his needs."

When we discuss *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem comes near us and wants to hear our requests. This is an indication that the seder is a good time for tefillah, and perhaps particularly when we recite *Magid*. At that time, Hashem is near, and we can ask Him for our needs.

I share here a letter that I received from a member of our chaburah:

"I used to wonder: What is the source from *rishonim* that we should daven at the Seder? I was bothered by this question because the Seder doesn't seem to be a time for prayer. But then I saw שו"ת דברי יציב אבן העזר סו"ס (פ"ג) that our three daily *tefillos* (*Shacharis*, *Minchah*, *Maariv*) were established by the *avos* on the first day of Pesach! Furthermore, someone

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patch up the back side of the coach. When the Rebbe showed him that he had forgotten to fix a hole in the back of the couch, the handyman replied, "Rebbe! No one looks there."

The Husiatiner replied, "We were taught that the places where no one looks need to be the best."

The best deeds are those that are concealed because when no one is aware of them, it is easier to perform his deeds *l'shem shamayim*, and not to attain honor.

There was a scholar who wanted to study Torah in concealment so that he could learn entirely *l'shem Shamayim*, but my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, advised him against it. The Rebbe explained, "When tax auditors come to appraise someone's earnings, he will hide all the expensive items of his home to conceal them from the authorities. He doesn't want them to suspect that he is earning well. But he won't hide his bread and butter because these are staples every home needs. Similarly, it's ideal to hide your good deeds, but Torah study is a staple. It is something that one simply cannot be without. And therefore, there is no reason to conceal it."

30. We put aside the larger half of the matzah for later. The *Sfas Emes zt'l* (5652) teaches that this is a sign that the inspiration and growth of this night will remain for the rest of the year.



showed me the *Likutei Moharan* that the *Targum* (*Eichah* 2) states that on Pesach, it is people's custom to shout during the tefillah, as it states, קול נתנו בבית ה' כיום מועד, 'They shouted in the Beis HaMikdash like on a holiday.' And the *Targum* explains, כקל עמא דמצלין בהגא דפסחא, 'Like the loud voices of the nation when they pray on Pesach.' What better time is there for tefillah than at the Seder, the day the *avos* established tefillah?"

The Rema (*Darkei Moshe*) writes that when we tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the Seder, it is like a *tefillah* because we are praising Hashem. He says that this is the reason we wash our hands for ורחץ, because "just like we wash our hands before we daven," we also wash our hands before we say Hashem's praises, which is a form of *tefillah*.

An egg is placed on the seder plate, and the Meiri teaches that *beitzah* is often pronounced בעי, Which can mean "to request." This is yet another indication that the Seder is an auspicious time for tefillah.<sup>31</sup>

It states (*Bereishis* 21:25-26), והוכח אברהם את אבימלך, על אדות באר המים אשר גזלו עבדי אבימלך, "Avraham rebuked Avimelech regarding the well of water that Avimelech's servants had seized." The Ahavas Shalom zt'l says that the pasuk

can be translated as that tzaddikim (called in this pasuk אברהם) say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the King of the world (who is called in this pasuk באר המים), "Why is Hashem's bounty (אשר גזלו) being stolen from us and taken by the slaves, the nations of the world?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, וגם אתה לא הגדת לי וגם אנכי לא שמעתי בלתי היום. The word הגדת is from the word מגיד. Hashem says, "At the Seder, when you said *magid*, you didn't daven to Me. וגם אנכי also on Shavuos when we read אנכי ה' אלקיך, I didn't hear your prayers. בלתי היום, I only hear your prayers on Rosh Hashanah (which is called *hayom*). And that isn't sufficient. If you daven on Pesach and Shavuos, as well, you will have your salvation."

A chassid of Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala zt'l waited many years for children. When the Rebbe went for מים שלנו, to draw water for baking matzos, the chassid went over to the Rebbe and requested a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe advised him to daven for children right before *Mah Nishtanah*. This is because the Mishnah states, כאן הבן שואל, which can be translated as, "This is the place to ask Hashem for children."

But the chassid rushed through his Seder (wanting to go to his rebbe's seder) and forgot to

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**31.** Rebbe Leibele Eiger said that we eat eggs at the Seder to indicate that just like an egg becomes a chicken when it is kept warm under a hen. Similarly, many great things can happen to us on this night, but we must bring forth warmth— our enthusiasm and joy — and then we will merit it.

The Imrei Emes zt'l says that an egg is placed on the קערה (Seder plate) to remind us to prepare for the seder. The Gemara (*Beitzah* 2) says, "Every egg laid today was finished yesterday." If an egg was laid today, its shell was completed yesterday. The egg is a reminder that whatever happens tonight at the Seder was completed and prepared earlier. The amount of *kedushah* one receives is dependent on how much one prepares.

There's a saying people use to describe a fool (or someone who does something foolish). They call him "The *chacham* from the *Mah Nishtanah*," the wise *chacham* of the Seder.

It's repeated in the name of the Satmar Rebbe zt'l, "The *chacham* of the *Mah Nishtanah* asks wise questions! Why is a fool called "the *chacham* from the *Mah Nishtanah*"? The answer is that true, the *chacham* asks wise questions at the Seder, but where was he until now? Didn't he see everyone cleaning for Pesach, buying matzah, and so on? Why didn't he ask his questions then? Why did he only wake up now?"

Let's not be that *chacham*; let's not wake up at the Seder to realize something special is happening. We should be awake beforehand and prepare for these holy days.

daven for children. When he came to the Rebbe's *tisch*, the Rebbe asked him, "Why didn't you daven for children?"

The chassid utilized whatever was left of the night to daven for children, and that year, he had his salvation.

The Rebbe of Alexander (*Akeidas Yitzchak*) *zt'l* said that by *Mah Nishtanah*, one can pray for children and good children, as it states, כִּי אֵין שׂוֹאֵל<sup>32</sup> הַבֵּן שׂוֹאֵל.

The Veyaged Moshe writes (in the name of kabbalah *sefarim*) that asking *Mah Nishtanah* is *mesugal* to have a heart open to understanding

Torah. "Therefore, I made it the custom in my house that whoever comes for the Seder should say *Mah Nishtanah*, and I daven for them that they should have a heart open for Torah. And after everyone says *Mah Nishtanah*, I also say the *Mah Nishtanah*."<sup>33</sup>

### Vanitzak!

An innkeeper fell behind on his rent payments, and the *poritz* warned him that if he didn't pay up soon, he and his family would be thrown into a dungeon.

32. I know of a youngster who didn't have children for many years. One of today's tzaddikim advised him to study the Haggadah shel Pesach, which he did. He learned it with the rishonim and soon afterward, he came to inform the rebbe that Hashem performed a miracle for him. The rebbe was also surprised that the *segulah* worked so quickly.

It states (Shemos 13:8), וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh teaches that telling the story of yetzias Mitzrayim is *mesugal* that one day you will be able to tell the story to your own children. This means this mitzvah is *mesugal* to bear children.

There was a *dayan* who didn't have children for four years after his wedding. During Elul, he was giving his weekly shiur on *Or HaChaim Hakadosh* and was looking for the *vort* from the Or HaChaim regarding having children. He thought it would be in *parashas* כי תבוא, by the discussion of אֲרַמְיָא אִיבַד אֲבִי, which we read at the Seder. When he didn't find the Or HaChaim there, he remembered that it is in *parashas* Bo on the words וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ. So he read the Or Hachaim in *parashas* Bo to his shiur, where it says that by speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, one merits children.

Ten months later, he had his first child.

33. Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* asked some children the day after the Seder, "Did you ask *Mah Nishtanah*?"

"Yes."

"And what answer did you get?"

"עבדים היינו."

"Did you ask the *Mah Nishnatah* last year?"

"We did."

"And what answer did you get last year?"

"It was the same answer, עבדים היינו."

"If you received this answer last year, why did you ask the same questions again this year?"

The children tried to explain in various ways.

Reb Shlomo Zalman commented, "When I was eight years old, I was walking home from the Kosel with my father, and we met Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*. He asked me the same question I just asked you: 'If you asked *Mah Nishtanah* last year, why did you ask it again this year? But when Reb Yosef Chaim asked me this question, I cried, and when I asked you this question, you tried answering me in different ways...'"

The worried innkeeper went to the Apter Rav *zy'a* for Shabbos HaGadol to receive a *brachah*. *Erev Shabbos*, the *gabbai* told him that the Rebbe couldn't see him. The innkeeper hoped to speak to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*, but as it turned out, he didn't have to talk to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*. He received his answer on Shabbos afternoon at the Apter Rav's Shabbos HaGadol *drashah*. The Apter Rav began the *drashah* with a deep halachic discussion, which this simple Yid couldn't follow. Then the Rebbe turned to discuss the *Haggadah*, and he said, "When we get to וַיִּצְעַק אֶל ה' it's an extraordinary moment for *tefillah*. If one needs *parnassah*, *refuah*, or if a Yid rents an inn from a *poritz* and doesn't have money to pay the rent, and the *poritz* threatens to throw him and his family into a dungeon and he shouts at this point to Hashem and begs for salvation, Hashem will save him."

The innkeeper was certain the Rebbe was talking to him, and he understood that his answer was to shout out to Hashem when he got to וַיִּצְעַק in the *Haggadah*.

When Shabbos was over, he didn't wait to speak with the Rebbe. He had already received the advice he needed. He came home, and his wife asked him what the Rebbe said. He told her that she would soon find out.

At the Seder, when they reached וַיִּצְעַק, the innkeeper shouted and prayed, and his wife shouted and prayed along with him.

Shortly after they finished davening in this manner, there was a knock on their door. It was a goy whom they knew. He told them that he had killed his wife and must escape before the police arrested him. "I must store my money somewhere, so I'm bringing it to you. I know I can trust you because you are Yidden."

The goy rolled in two barrels filled with gold coins. He said, "You can keep one barrel for yourself. Eventually, I will settle down in another country; I will send you a letter with my address so you can send me the other barrel."

After saying this message and depositing the money, he left.

The Yid and his family continued the Seder with joy. Hashem had answered their *tefillos* and sent them the money they needed to pay the *poritz*... and much more.

The goy never sent a letter asking for the other barrel, so both barrels filled with gold coins became theirs.

After Pesach, they traveled to the city to buy new clothes. They didn't need to dress in rags anymore. Then, they went to the Apter Rav to thank him for the miracle he had performed. He told them, "It wasn't my miracle. You don't have to thank me. You drew down the miracle on your own through your וַיִּצְעַק"<sup>34</sup>.

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**34.** We know of several people who had their *yeshuos* when they prayed to Hashem on this holy night. Some of them shouted to Hashem at this *eis ratzon* of וַיִּצְעַק, and others davened at other times on this sacred night, and they received their *yeshuah*.

I know the following story firsthand:

A family of Gerer chasidim had a hard time finding *shidduchim* for their three older sons, ages twenty-five, twenty-seven, and thirty. They all had fully grown beards and weren't engaged yet.

The custom in the Gerer yeshiva was that before *yom tov*, the *bachurim* would *gezegen* [take leave] from the Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev Simchah *zy'a*, before going home. The Rebbe would call them *kasha fregers* ("question askers") because they were returning home to ask the Four Questions from their fathers. When these three older *bachurim* came to the Gerrer Rebbe, he told them, "This year, ask your father why you aren't engaged yet."



Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch *zy'a* said people think that all they lack is that Moshiach should come. But in Mitzrayim, they understood that waiting for salvation isn't sufficient. They had to daven, as well. The *geulah* came when there was a *ונצק*.

I am sharing here a letter that I received from a member of our *chaburah* from Beis Shemesh.

"In *תשע"ז*, we sat down joyously for the Seder together with my brother-in-law and his family, but there was one issue that marred our joy. My brother-in-law's five-year-old son was born with a cleft lip, and after many operations, he still couldn't talk. He could only make sounds. Every sound he made was like a dagger in his parents' hearts. The cheder recently informed the parents that the child couldn't continue learning there because he couldn't talk.

"When we reached *הא לחמא עניא*, we remembered a *vort* from the Beis Aharon: *כל דכפינ*, whatever a person needs, *ייתי ויפסה*, he should have *פה סח* (a speaking mouth) and pray to Hashem for a salvation because with prayer all our needs can be fulfilled. We davened that this young boy should be healed and that he should have a *פה סח* to be able to speak and learn Torah. After the Seder was completed, the father of this boy said to his wife, *את פתח לו*, implying, "Now, you should pray to open his mouth." They said *Tehillim* with tears the entire night. In the morning, a miracle occurred. Their son began to speak. He spoke so much; it was like he was making up for the lost time..."

### Different Types of Miracles

Noach's *teivah* was 300 amos long, 50 amos wide, and 30 amos high. It needed to be so large to house all the animals.

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They understood that he intended that they should ask their Father in heaven for a *shidduch* at the seder, but one son took the Rebbe's counsel literally. At the Seder, he asked his father, "Why am I not yet engaged?"

The father started to cry, and his three older sons cried with him.

The mother stopped them. She said, "It's *yom tov*. It isn't proper to cry now."

They stopped crying and celebrated the rest of the Seder in the proper *yom tov* spirit.

After the Seder, the father said, "Let's say *Tehillim*, from chapter 90 until the end, and we will daven that our sons get engaged."

*Chodesh Iyar*, one of them got engaged. *Sivan*, the second son was engaged, and by *Tamuz*, the third son was engaged.

Here's another story. It happened to a very special *Yerushalmi* couple who were childless for eleven years. For *Pesach*, they usually went to either his or her parents, but one year, he told his wife, "This time, we're staying home."

In the privacy of their home, they made a *ונצק*. They shouted to a Hashem for a salvation. A year later, they had a child.

A person had trouble with his legs, and he was often in excruciating pain. From time to time, he would go to the hospital or a clinic for a shot to stabilize the condition somewhat. This went on for years. One *Pesach*, he was celebrating the Seder in his brothers' house. When they got to *ונצק* he left the room and poured his heart out to Hashem. *Motzei Yom Tov* he received a shot in his leg, and he never needed another one; he was cured.

We also know of stories of people who could not shout at the seder, in a literal sense, so they shouted silently, the silent shout of their heart, and merited salvations.

Nevertheless, the Ramban (*Bereishis* 6:19) says that it was still a miracle that it held all the animals. He writes, "There are many species of wild animals. Some of them are very large, like the elephants... And also, there are endless small animals. There are so many of them! And there are endless species of birds. Noach had to bring all of these into the *teivah*, and he also had to bring their foods into the *teivah*. The *teivah* wasn't large enough. Even ten such *teivos* wouldn't be large enough! It was a miracle. החזיק מועט את המרובה, a small area held so much."

The Ramban asks that since Hashem performed a miracle anyway, Hashem could have told Noach to build an even smaller *teivah*, and miraculously, there would be room for everything it needed to carry. So why did Hashem instruct Noach to build a *teivah* with relatively large dimensions?

The Ramban answers,<sup>35</sup> "[Hashem wanted] the *teivah* to be large, so the miracle shouldn't be so obvious. And this is how it is with all the miracles recorded in the Torah and *navi*." This is a principle in how Hashem performs miracles. It is Hashem's will למעט הנס to minimize miracles so that they won't be as noticeable.

But the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* are an exception to this rule. At this time, Hashem wanted to *increase* the miracles, as it states (*Shemos* 11:9), ויאמר ה' אל משה לא ישמע עליכם, פרעה למען רבות מופתי בארץ מצרים, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Pharaoh won't listen to you so that my miracles will multiply in Mitzrayim.'" Hashem desired to do many miracles at *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

There were ten *makos* in Mitzrayim and many more at the Yam Suf, although, technically, one miracle would have been sufficient. Why did Hashem perform so

many miracles? Why didn't Hashem minimize the miracles, as He usually does?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* explains it with an analogy to a baker who displays his most beautiful breads and pastries in the store window to attract customers. Those baked goods don't necessarily have to be tasty or fresh. Their purpose isn't for eating; they are for advertisement.

The baker also places breads and cakes on the shelves of the store. These are for selling to consumers to eat. These must taste good. Their appearance is less important.

The breads in the window and on the shelves serve different purposes and, therefore, have different requirements.

This brings us to the topic of miracles. There are two reasons that Hashem performs miracles. Generally, miracles are performed to save the Jewish nation from their oppressors. When that is the purpose, Hashem chooses to perform the miracles at their most minimal level. However, at *yetzias Mitzrayim*, there was a different purpose for the miracles. The miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* were to reveal Hashem. As it states (*Shemos* 10:2) ולמען תספר באזני בנך ובן בנך את אשר התעללתי במצרים ואת אתתי אשר שמתי בם וידעתם כי אני ה', "So that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Mitzrim, and that you tell of My signs that I placed in them, and you will know that I am Hashem." And it states (*Shemos* 6:6-7), והוצאתי אתכם מבלות מצרים... וידעתם כי אני ה', אלקיכם, "I will take you out of your affliction in Mitzrayim...so that you will know that I am Hashem your G-d. "When the purpose is to know Hashem, the more miracles, the better.

The Purim miracle was to save the Jewish nation from Haman's decree. The miracle of

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35. The Ramban's first answer is that Hashem wanted Noach to be occupied with building the *teivah* for a long time (120 years) so people would hear that a flood was approaching because of their evil deeds. Perhaps this would inspire them to do *teshuvah*. Hashem told Noach to build a large *teivah* so that the construction would take many years.

the teivah was to save Noach, his family, and all the other creatures from the flood. The miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim, however, weren't only to save the Jewish nation. If that were the sole purpose, Hashem would have performed one miracle, one *makah*, which would be sufficient. There wouldn't be a need for ten makos or kriyas Yam Suf. But the primary purpose was to reveal to the Jewish nation and the world that there is Hashem, and therefore Hashem performed many miracles. Each miracle was another lesson in emunah in Hashem, to know that He created the world and leads it with *hashgachah pratis*.

The Pri HaAretz (beginning of *parashas Bo*) adds that this explains why Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. If the goal were to free the nation from Mitzrayim, there would be no reason to harden Pharaoh's heart. But the purpose was *למען תספר שמי בכל הארץ*, so the entire world should know Hashem, so it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart so that more miracles could take place.

Therefore, repeating the story of yetzias Mitzrayim at the Seder is especially significant. When we do so, we are completing the purpose for which the miracles were intended: to teach our children about Hashem and how He performs miracles for His beloved nation.

### **Emunah**

Some *miforshim* say that the mitzvah *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* isn't solely at the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, any day of the year, the father has the mitzvah of *v'higadita l'vincha*, to teach his son about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "The truth is that even if a child asks his father about

*yetzias Mitzrayim* during the year, the father must also answer him.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the holy Torah teaches us that throughout the year, even if you tell your son the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the words won't settle in the child's heart... The Haggadah teaches, *לא אמרתי אלא בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך*, 'the time to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is when you have matzah and *maror* in front of you.' This is because, on the night of Pesach, the mind is open for comprehending...and the light of wisdom is revealed, and *emunah* and *bitachon* hover over all Jewish people. At this time, when you tell your son the entire story, your words will certainly enter his ears, and he will truly believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. The rest of the year, when there's darkness in the world, the son isn't able to receive the father's words properly to believe."

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) says, "If the child isn't wise enough to ask questions on his own, his father should teach him to ask questions." We want the child to ask questions so that we can teach him about *emunah* and *yetzias Mitzrayim* at this ideal time of the Seder. It is a time when the children can internalize the lessons.

The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* says that the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. A *segulah* is something that can't be explained logically. For example, a *segulah* for a *refuah* is a treatment that cures, but it can't be explained how it cures. It is a fact; it heals. Telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. It is also logical. It is logical that when you speak about *emunah*, you will implant *emunah* in yourself and your children. But it isn't solely logical. It is also a *segulah*. Speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for increasing *emunah*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Some *meforshim* say that the mitzvah of telling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* isn't solely at the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, any day of the year, the father has the mitzvah of *v'higadita l'vincha*, to teach his son about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.



The Gemara (Brachos 6., 7.) teaches that Hakadosh Baruch Hu davens, wears tefillin, and keeps all the mitzvos of the Torah. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l said that this means Hashem also performs the mitzvah להגיד לבנך to tell His children about yetzias Mitzrayim. On the night of the Seder, Hashem tells His children that He took us out of Mitzrayim and other lessons in emunah. We are Hashem's children, so Hashem speaks to us. We hear Hashem's words in the realm of our neshamos, and we are deeply influenced. We can be certain

that when Hashem teaches us emunah, His lessons are firmly implanted in our hearts.<sup>38</sup>

We say in *Shemonah Esrei*, השיבנו אבינו לתורתך, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah." Most brachos don't address Hashem as "our Father." Why do we do so in this *brachah*?

The Tur (*Orach Chaim* 115) explains that we are saying, "Hashem, You are our Father, and every father has a *mitzvah* to teach his children Torah. You keep the entire Torah, and therefore, as a Father, You have a *mitzvah* to teach us Torah. So, I plead that

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**37.** The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* vol.2 p.252.) writes, "We are guaranteed that even in this bitter exile when we sit and tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* to our children to impart them with *yiras Hashem*, Hashem's kindness is on us, just as it was when we left Mitzrayim."

A *dibuk*, a spirit of a *rasha*, entered a woman in Tzefas and afflicted her.

The Arizal sent Reb Chaim Vital to heal her.

When Reb Chaim Vital came into the room, the spirit immediately turned to the wall and explained that he didn't have permission to look at the *Shechinah*.

Reb Chaim Vital asked the spirit why he was granted permission to afflict this woman.

The spirit replied, "This woman woke up early in the morning and was striking flint stones to make fire, but she wasn't succeeding. In frustration, she shouted, 'Let it be for the Satan,' and because of those words, I had permission to enter her and afflict her."

Rav Chaim Vital asked, "You were permitted to afflict her just because of that?"

The spirit replied, "It is primarily because this woman is not the same inside as she appears on the outside. She doesn't believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. At the Seder, when Yidden say *Hallel* and tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* with joy, she thinks it's a joke. She thinks the miracles never occurred."

Rav Chaim Vital asked the woman, "Do you believe that HaKadosh Baruch Hu took us out of Mitzrayim and split the sea for us?"

"I believe," she replied, "and if occasionally I have other thoughts, I regret them." She started to cry.

After she said this, Reb Chaim Vital was able to banish the spirit from her.

The Chida zt'l writes that we should repeat this story at the Seder.

**38.** Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l heard the following story in Kelm from a *talmid chacham* whose grandfather was the author of *Malbushei Yom Tov* zt'l.

One year, before beginning the Seder, the Malbushei Yom Tov sat in his place for a few minutes with intense emotion and said, "Just as we are conducting the Seder with our family, so is the entire city conducting the Seder in the same manner - with matzah and *maror*, and so on. The entire country and the entire world are making the Seder this way. And this is the Seder that we saw by our fathers, and they saw it by their fathers. The chain goes back generations, to the *Rishonim*, *Amoraim*, *Tanaim*, all the way to the people who left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. Hashem said to the generation that received the Torah (*Shemos* 19:4), אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים "You saw what I did to Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, 'It isn't a tradition that you received, it isn't just words that I am telling you... You saw what I did in Mitzrayim.'"

You open my heart so I can learn and understand Your Torah."

Rebbe Menachem Nochum of Boyan-Tchernovitz *zt'l* (Tiferes Menachem 5695 י"ה ניסן) quotes two different Chazals and shows that they are one and the same. One Chazal says that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in Nisan, and we will be redeemed from the present galus in the month of Nisan. Another Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni, Hosheia 519*) says that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim because we had emunah, and we will be redeemed from the present galus in the merit of emunah.

He explains that it is the same lesson. In Nisan, we increase our emunah. This is especially true at the Seder, when we eat the matzah, which is called *מִיכְלָא דְמִיּוּדָה* the food of belief, and we retell the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. These actions increase our emunah. In the merit of emunah, which increased in Nisan, we were redeemed from Mitzrayim, and in the merit of emunah, which increases each year in Nisan, we will be freed from the present exile.<sup>39</sup>

### Belief in Hashem Alone

We say in the *Haggadah*, *כנגד ארבע בנים דברה*, תורה, אחד חכם ואחד רשע ואחד תם, ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול, "The Torah speaks about four sons: One is a *chacham*...." B'derech tzachus, there's a hint here that the *chacham* trusts in Hashem,

alone. אחד חכם, the *chacham* knows the one Hashem. Regarding the *rasha*, it states *ואחד רשע*, with a vav at the beginning, which means "And one is *rasha*." This hints that the *rasha* believes in Hashem, but also in other forces.

For example, when someone asks the *rasha*, "How will you have *parnassah*?" he replies, "Hashem will help - and I plan to do this and that..." This person believes in Hashem, but he also believes in himself. He doesn't believe in Hashem exclusively. It is *ואחד*, also *Hashem*. The *chacham* recognizes *אחד*, that everything is from Hashem alone.

Perhaps it is too harsh to call him a *rasha* just for this. He is better than most people because, after all, he recognizes and believes in Hashem. Nevertheless, it isn't the optimal level. The ideal level is when one knows everything is from Hashem alone. We make *hishtadlus*, but even so, everything is from Hashem.

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem 60*) writes, "All mitzvos of the *korban Pesach* are about one." The *korban Pesach* has many mitzvos and halachos around the theme of "one," to demonstrate that Hashem is one.

For example, the *korban Pesach* has to be roasted all at once (and not section by section), as it states (*Shemos 12:9*), *כי אם צלי אש ראשו על כרעיו ועל קרבו*, "roasted over the fire its head with its

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39. Every year, at the Seder, Reb Yaakov Yosef Weiss *z'l* from Manchester would tell his family about the miracle of how he was saved from the Holocaust:

"I was in the camps with a friend. I repeatedly spoke to him about *emunah* and *bitachon* and encouraged him to believe we would be free one day. My friend was pessimistic, expecting the worst. It was hard for him to hear my optimistic predictions.

"Then came the dreaded day when the Germans told us that they were taking us to shower. We all knew that they were taking us to the gas chambers. My friend said to me, 'What do you say now?'

"I told him, 'Even now, I trust in Hashem. Hashem can save us in a moment.'

"We were crammed into the gas chamber, but the door couldn't shut. I was heavier than others, so a Nazi guard y"sh pulled me out of the gas chamber so that he could close the door. That's how I was saved."

After completing the story each year at the Seder, he would add, "At my father's Sedarim, my father would speak a lot about *emunah* and *bitachon*, and his words were firmly implanted in my heart. That gave me strength during the dark moments of the Holocaust."

legs and with its innards." The Maharal explains that it is roasted as one piece because the message of the korban Pesach is about oneness.

"Another example is (12:46), בבית אחד יאכל, 'It must be eaten in one house.' It is forbidden to divide the korban into two parts and to eat it in separate places (see *Pesachim* 86.). Once again, this demonstrates the concept of one."

The lamb or goat had to be in the first year of its life, as it states (Shemos 12:5) שה תמים, "An unblemished lamb, within its first year..." (12:5). The Maharal explains "If it was two years old, it wouldn't be one."

"And, specifically a שה (goat or lamb) is used, not an עגל, calf. This is because, due to its delicate nature, a שה is totally one. As *Chazal* say, 'When a sheep injures one limb, its entire body feels it.' The explanation is that a שה is very delicate; it doesn't have a strong, heavy nature like oxen... Therefore, when one of its limbs is injured, the entire sheep feels the pain." This is another indication of the concept of "one." The korban should be an animal that is one in its feelings.

"It also states (Shemos 12:9) אל תאכלו ממונו נא ובשל, מבושל כי אם צלי אש, 'You shall not eat it rare or boiled in water, except roasted over the fire.' This is because when something is cooked, the meat particles expand. But when one roasts meat, the juices come out, and the meat becomes firm and solid... Roasted meat, therefore, demonstrates oneness, and it is proper that the *korban* should be one for the One Hashem.

"Also, it states (Shemos 12:46) ועצם לא תשברו בו, 'You shall not break a bone in it,' for this would be dividing the bone into two. To summarize, the *korban Pesach* should be one because it teaches us that Hashem is One, and He chose the Jewish nation because they are one..."

We say in the *Haggadah* that the students came to their teachers and said, הגיע זמן רבותינו, "Our teachers, the time to read Shema of *shacharis* has arrived." The Shema is where we proclaim ה' אחד, the

oneness of Hashem, and שחרי"ת is *roshei teivos*: (1) שאינו יודע לשאול (2) חכם (3) רשע (4) תם, the four sons of the Seder. On the Seder night, we seek to instill in our children, regardless of their level, the awareness that ה' אחד.

The Bnei Yissaschar *zt'l* once passed the home of a simple person on the Seder night and heard the *baal habayis* read the Haggadah: כנגד ארבע בנים דברה תורה אחד חכם, ואחד רשע, ואחד תם, ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול. When this simple man said אחד, he said it long and forcefully, in the manner people say אחד in *kriyas Shema*.

The Bnei Yissaschar knocked at his door and asked the *baal habayis* why he said אחד that way.

The man replied, "My father told me that one should stretch the word אחד when saying Shema. Why should אחד in the Haggadah be different?"

The Bnei Yissaschar commented to his chassidim, "This Yid took the four children of the *Haggadah* and turned them into *kriyas Shema*." Because our goal on this night is to teach ourselves and others that ה' אחד.

### Belief in *Hashgachah Pratis*

Matzos are round, symbolizing an ongoing cycle. This is people's general perception of the world. They think everything runs on a cycle and not by *hashgachah pratis*. By יחזן, we break the round matzah to remind ourselves that things don't run on their own; everything happens by Hashem's decree.

The first *Ani Maamin* states, אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ... עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים, "I believe with a complete belief that the Creator, may His name be blessed... He did, does, and will do everything."

The top matzah represents our belief in עשה that Hashem did – that everything that happened in the past was from Hashem. The middle matzah represents עושה, does – that everything that happens now is by His will. The bottom matzah represents our belief in יעשה; He will do – everything that



will happen in the future will come from Hashem.

We break the middle matzah because it is hardest to believe that even the present is by Hashem's decree. It is easier for people to believe that the past was from Hashem and that the future will be from Hashem. But they struggle to live with the knowledge that the present is from Hashem. So we break the middle matzah to remind ourselves that even the present is led with hashgachah pratis.

The *Haggadah* states, וירעו אתנו המצרים כמה שנאמר... וישמעו ה' את קולנו כמה שנאמר... ויוציאונו... ביד שנאמר... כמה שנאמר... חזקה... כמה שנאמר... The words *שנאמר* are repeated numerous times.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* translates it as follows, "The Mitzrim afflicted us, *כמה שנאמר* because Hashem said they should. We went out of Mitzrayim, *כמה שנאמר* because Hashem said so." Everything that happened was by Hashem's decree. The slavery, the salvation, the significant, and the trivial are all *כמה שנאמר*, precisely as Hashem decreed it.

It states (*Shemos* 13:4), היום אתם יוצאים בחודש, "Today you are going out, in the month of spring." Rashi asks, "Don't we know when they left? Moshe told them: Take note of the *chesed* Hashem performed for you: He redeemed you from Mitzrayim when the weather is dry and comfortable when it wasn't too hot or too cold."

The joy of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is so great that it seems odd that the weather should be a factor worth mentioning.

To understand our question, imagine a Holocaust survivor telling you that he jumped out the window of a speeding train headed towards the concentration camps, and that is how he saved his life. And then you ask him, "How was the weather that day?"

He will respond, "Did you hear what I'm telling you? My life was saved! The weather is irrelevant!"

Nevertheless, the Torah tells us to take note of the comfortable weather the Yidden enjoyed when they left Mitzrayim.

This is because even the weather on the day of *yetzias Mitzrayim* wasn't by chance – it was by Hashem's decree. Everything, down to the smallest detail, is from Hashem; we should note even the most minor details.

The Yidden in Mitzrayim ate matzah, as we say, *הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים*, "This is the bread of affliction that our parents ate in Mitzrayim." And when they left Mitzrayim, they ate matzah again, as we say, *על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של מצה זו שאנו אוכלים... אבותינו להחמיץ*, "Why do we eat matzah...? Because our forefathers didn't have time to let their dough rise..."

The Jews in Mitzrayim likely thought that when they became free men, they would no longer eat the bread of affliction, but on the day they were redeemed, they, once again, ate matzos! This taught them that Hashem's will always prevails. If Hashem wants them to eat matzah, nothing can change that.

It states (*Bereishis* 45:23), *ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה, חמורים נשאים מטוב מצרים*, "Yosef sent his father ten donkeys..." The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 10) explains that donkeys don't know what they are carrying or why they are carrying it. Yosef sent his father ten donkeys to hint to his father that his ten brothers shouldn't be blamed for selling him to Mitzrayim. Like donkeys, they didn't know what they were doing. They thought they were acting independently, but they were carrying out Hashem's plan.

### ***Shevi'i shel Pesach and Emunah***

Rebbe Mendel Riminover *zt'l* writes, "I heard from a student of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* who said in the name of his teacher, Rebbe Elimelech, that the ideal time to attain *emunah sheleimah* is the night of the seventh day of Pesach. At this time, also strengthen your connection with holy *tzaddikim*, because that will help you attain

*emunah sheleimah*. About this day it states (Shemos 14:31), וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בִּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ, "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant."

Regarding *kriyas Yam Suf* it states, וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בִּה', "They believed in Hashem." So, apparently, only at *kriyas Yam Suf* they had *emunah*. Beforehand, their *emunah* wasn't perfect. Why was that?

The Drashos HaRan (*Drush 11*) explains that the Jewish nation had two questions that disturbed their *emunah*: (1) Why did they tell Pharaoh they were leaving for only three days? They should have told him the truth; they are leaving forever. (Especially after *makas bechoros* when Pharaoh was ready to send them out for good.) Only people who aren't entirely in control would play tricks and say, "We are going only for three days, so please let us go."

(2) Why did they tell the Egyptians that they wanted to borrow their clothing, gold and silver utensils, etc.? They should have said that they were taking them. (They had a right to take it since they worked for the Mitzrim for so many years.) Saying that you want to borrow when you really want to keep it is also something that is done by those who don't have full power and have no other way to get the money.

These were their two questions, which made their *emunah* incomplete.

But when they saw *kriyas Yam Suf*, they realized that the purpose of these tricks was that Pharaoh and his army should chase the Jewish nation into the sea and drown there. Pharaoh wouldn't have pursued them had they told him that they were leaving, never to come back. It was the fact that they said that they were going only for three days and that they only borrowed the valuables that spurred Pharaoh and his army to chase them when they discovered that they weren't returning.

Now, everything made sense, וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בִּה', and they believed in Hashem. However, an even greater level, which we strive for, is to believe in Hashem even before we have the answers.

Shevi'i shel Pesach is an exceptional time. The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (p.93:) writes, "The six days of Pesach are a preparation for the seventh day, the primary day of Pesach. It is the perfect day, the day they sang *shirah*."

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* writes, "The שִׁירַת הַיָּם (Oz *Yashir*) has everything in it: what was and what will be. All redemptions and concepts can be found in the *shirah*. If a person says it with all his heart, with *mesirus nefesh*, according to his level, everything will be corrected, for his body and soul."<sup>40</sup>

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**40.** A song has high notes and low notes. This reminds us to sing along with the ups and downs of life because even the hardships are for the good.

The *shirah* details the miracles that occurred. For example, it states צָלְלוּ כְעוֹפֶרֶת בַּיָּם אֲדִירִים, "They sank like lead in strong waters." And נָטִיתָ יְמִינְךָ תִּבְלַעַמּוּ אֶרֶץ, "You turned Your hand, the earth swallowed them up." In between these two *pasukim*, it states מִי כָמוֹךָ בָּאֱלִים ה', "Who compares to You among the mighty, Hashem?" This *pasuk* seems out of context because the *pasuk* before and the *pasuk* after discuss the details of *kriyas Yam Suf*, while this *pasuk* praises Hashem. This *pasuk* of praise should be written either before the list of miracles or after them, but not in the middle.

Rebbe Yechezkel Shraga of Shinov *zt'l* answered that as the Jewish people sang *shirah*, their hearts became full of love and yearning for Hashem. Due to their fervor and excitement, they couldn't contain their emotions and shouted out מִי כָמוֹךָ בָּאֱלִים ה', "Who compares to You among the mighty, Hashem?" This *pasuk* is an expression of the Jewish people's love to Hashem, at that time.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* sent one of his students to a town in Poland and asked him to send his regards to a Yid called Reb Ber'l. The student went there, but everyone told him there was no one in their town with that name. He continued searching until he was directed to a cheder rebbe called Dov Ber (later renowned as

### The Holiday of *Mesirus Nefesh*

The Midrash states that Nachshon ben Aminadav was the first to jump into the Yam Suf. When the water reached his nostrils, he shouted *הושיעני כי באו מים עד נפש*, "Save me because the water is smothering my soul," and that is when the sea split. The Yam Suf split because of his *mesirus nefesh*.

It is written, *הים ראה וינס*, "The Sea saw and fled." The Midrash asks, "What did the Yam Suf see? It saw the *aron* of Yosef." When the sea saw Yosef's bones, the person who ran away from sin with *mesirus nefesh*, they ran away from him and split. This is another reference to *mesirus nefesh* associated with *Shevi'i shel Pesach*.

Tzaddikim say that the lesson of this *yom tov* is to serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh* (as they did by the Yam Suf), and then miracles will happen.

The Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l* said: "Shevi'i shel Pesach is Rosh Hashanah for *mesirus nefesh*." Also, the Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar Ahavah* 8:6) writes that the lesson of Shevi'i shel

Pesach is to serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, and then miracles will occur.

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a* teaches:

When a person serves Hashem beyond his natural limits, Hashem will act with him beyond the rules of nature and perform miracles for him.

The Avnei Nezer asks, for yetzias Mitzrayim, Hashem told the Jewish nation to perform *milah* and *korban Pesach* so that they would be worthy of yetzias Mitzrayim. So, why didn't Hashem do the same by *kriyas Yam Suf*? The malachim were saying that the Jewish nation doesn't deserve to be saved. Hashem could have given them another mitzvah or two to perform, making them worthy of being saved!

He answers that if they had not had *mesirus nefesh*, Hashem would have given them a mitzvah to perform to make them worthy of redemption. However, they had *mesirus nefesh*, and that was sufficient. They didn't need another merit to be saved.<sup>41</sup>

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the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l*). He heard Reb Dov Ber tell his students that when Dovid HaMelech lists the wonders of creation (in *Tehillim* 103) in the middle of his conversation, Dovid says, *מה רבו מעשיך ה'*, "How great are Your deeds, Hashem...." (*Tehillim* 103:24). This *pasuk* seems out of place because it should be written either before or after all the wonders listed. Why is it written in the middle? The answer is that as King Dovid was enumerating Hashem's wonders of creation, his heart became filled with joy. He couldn't contain his excitement and shouted *מה רבו מעשיך ה'*, "How great are Your deeds, Hashem..." At *kriyas Yam Suf*, a similar thing occurred, and they all shouted out *מי כמוך באלים ה'*.

**41.** Years ago, a Moroccan king was on his deathbed. The king overheard two ministers of his parliament say to one another, "The king's enemies are glad that the king is about to die. As soon as he dies, they will take over the kingdom."

The Moroccan king suddenly became strong and sat up in his bed. He survived and lived for another three years.

Tzaddikim repeated this story to show us the power of *ratzon*, desire. It can bring a dying person to life. If a person truly desires something, he can go against the rules of nature to attain it. And Hashem will perform miracles for him beyond the laws of nature.

The Sfas Emes taught, "A person doesn't do good, and a person doesn't do bad. Even thoughts of *teshuva* come from Hashem... Don't ask, if so, what do people do? People have *ratzon* and *yegiah*, desire and toil. And when one desires to do good, he can achieve anything."

The Sefas Emes (*Pesach* 5632) teaches:

Chazal tell us, "Even a maidservant at the Yam Suf saw more than Yechezkel ben Buzi." This shows us



The Or HaChaim Hakadosh (*Shemos* 14:14) writes, "Hashem said to Moshe, מַה תַּצַּעק אֵלַי, 'Why are you praying to me?'" Hashem was telling Moshe that tefillah wouldn't save the nation because the prosecuting malachim were saying that they didn't deserve to be saved. The only way to be saved was that they should go into the sea even before it split. They should have *bitachon* that I will perform a miracle for them. The merit of bitachon will make them worthy of the miracle.<sup>42</sup>

The Chareidim writes that the malachim look at the reward and the heights a Yid reaches when he does a good deed and are astounded. They ask, "How did this person reach the *kisei hakavod* so easily? How did he leap to such heights?" The answer is that Hashem knows how difficult it was for the person to perform his good deeds. It seems simple, but it required *mesirus nefesh*, and that's why his deeds are so precious to Hashem.

The *malachim* serve Hashem with immense fear and love, but they don't have a human body and a *yetzer hara* trying to stop them. Therefore, their *avodas Hashem* isn't as special as ours.

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zy'a* said that זבחה פסחה הוא לך means when a person זבחה, slaughters and overcomes his *yetzer hara*, פסח, he jumps up many levels and reaches the *kisei hakavod*.

### Annual Kriyas Yam Suf

Rebbe Shalom Ber of Lubavitch *zt'l* (the Resha"b) asked his son, Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak (the Maharyatz) *zt'l*, "If *kriyas Yam Suf* would be happening a few miles away from here, would you go to watch it?"

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak said that he would.

"And if it was happening just outside the city, would you go there to see it?"

"Of course, I would."

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the specialness of a Yid who serves Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*. In a moment, he is elevated from the lowest level to the highest.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov *zt'l* taught that even a person born with a low *neshamah* could reach the highest levels. It all depends on how much he desires and how hard he tries.

#### 42. The sea split also in the merit of Torah.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21) teaches that initially, the sea didn't want to split for Bnei Yisrael. It said to Moshe, "Hashem created man on the sixth day of Creation, but I was created earlier, on the third day of Creation. Why should I listen to you and split?"

The Midrash says, "Hashem placed His right hand beside Moshe's right hand...and the sea split."

The Or HaChaim explains that Hashem's right hand represents the Torah, as it states (*Devarim* 33:2), מימינו אש, "From Hashem's right hand, He presented the fiery Torah." Initially, the sea didn't want to split, claiming that the Jewish nation hadn't yet received the Torah. Hashem placed His right hand next to Moshe's to show that Moshe already had the merit of the Torah, and then the sea split.

It states (*Shemos* 14:27) וישב הים לפנות בקר לאיתנו, "The sea went back in the morning to its strength." The letters וישב spell לתנאי, to the *tnay*, the condition that Hashem made with the sea. Hashem made a condition with the sea that it must split for the Jewish nation. The Or HaChaim explains that this condition wasn't made only with the sea. It was made with the entire creation. The entire universe is obligated to serve and do the will of those who study and keep the Torah.

The Or Hachaim writes, התנה ה' על כל מעשה בראשית להיות כפופים לתורה ועמליה ולעשות כל אשר יגזרו עליהם, "Hashem made a condition with all creation that they must be submitted to Torah and to those who toil over it, to do whatever they decree upon them." This is the reason the sea split before Bnei Yisrael.

"Well, you should know that every year, on *Shevi'i shel Pesach*, the sea splits again, literally..."

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak replied, "But what shall we do if people's eyes are blind and don't see it?"

His father, Rebbe Shalom Ber, replied, "That's exactly the point: The miracles happen each year, and if we don't see them, the fault lies with us. If a person purified himself, he would see the miracles."

Just as the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf* take place each year, the salvations of *kriyas Yam Suf* occur annually as well. Chazal tell us that *shidduchim* and *parnassah* are compared to *kriyas Yam Suf*. Therefore, the Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it opened salvations for all generations – for the individual and for the community. Even if the gates of *parnassah* or the gates of *shidduchim* are *chas veshalom* closed, one should pray at this special *eis ratzon* by *kriyas Yam Suf*... and Hashem will save Bnei Yisrael when they shout out to Him."

One difference between the first splitting of the sea and the following years is that the first time (when the Jewish nation walked through the *Yam Suf*), the sea was originally one body and split into two. In the years following, the sea already had a nature of being split into parts. Now, *kriyas Yam Suf* is like reopening the split that already exists.

This explains why the Torah calls the splitting of the sea *ויבקעו המים*, while we call it *קריעת ים סוף*. The word *בקיעה* is used when one breaks something whole. For example, it states *בוקע עצים*, chopping wood (*Koheles* 10:9). The wood was one, and the person breaks it into two. But *קריעה* means to tear. It's an expression used for ripping a garment made from many threads sewn up together. It wasn't really one to begin with because it was made from many threads sewn together, and when you rip it, it returns to its original state. We now understand why the first time the sea split, it is called *ויבקעו המים*. The sea

was one, and it split and became two. But from then on, the sea is like different parts patched together. Each year, when the sea splits again, it's called *קריעת ים סוף*, "ripping the sea" since it's reopening the seam, returning the sea to its state of two. And since it was split once before, it is easier to again.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:6) states, "The Torah doesn't write *ויבקעו המים*, that the sea split. It states *ויבקעו המים*, that the water split [in the plural form], to teach us that all wells and pits and of every other gathering of water throughout the world split."

Every miracle serves a purpose. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* asks, what was the purpose of *ויבקעו המים*, that all waters of the world should split?

He answers that *מים* represents troubles, as it states *הושיעני אלוקים כי באו מים עד נפש*, "Save me Hashem because water (troubles) are covering over my soul" (*Tehillim* 69:2). When the Torah tells us that "water" split, this means we are saved from all troubles. Throughout all generations, *kriyas Yam Suf* occurs again, and each year we get salvations. In particular, a person can have a *yeshuah* for matters directly compared to *kriyas Yam Suf*, such as *parnassah* and *shidduchim*.

As we know, it's permitted to cook food on *yom tov*. The *pasuk* that reveals this leniency is a *pasuk* that discusses *Shevi'i shel Pesach* (*Shemos* 12:16) *אך אשר יאכל לכל נפש הוא לבדו יעשה לכם*. (Chazal derive that all holidays are similar to *Shevi'i shel Pesach*, and one may cook food on *yom tov*.)

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Chodesh Nisan* 13:2) states, "I heard from my holy *mehutan*, Rebbe Hershel of Ziditchov *zt'l* that the Torah specifically writes [the permission to prepare food] on *Shevi'i shel Pesach* to teach us that on this day it's easier, *keviyachol*, for Hashem to bestow *parnassah* on the Jewish people, even if they don't have sufficient merits, *chas veshalom*." The *pasuk* discusses preparing food because on this *yom tov*, Hashem prepares *parnassah* for the Jewish nation.<sup>43</sup>

The name of the month ניסן (from the word נס) implies that it's a month when miracles occur. The Rebbe of Ruzhin added that ניסן, with a ך at the end, means that miracles are ongoing this month. This is because a ך at the end of a word represents something that happens often. *Chazal* (*Bava Metzia* 33.) say that when a donkey buckles and crouches under its load, people must help the donkey get up. It states ריבץ, "crouched down." It doesn't state רבץ because that would imply that it sits down very often, and if that is the animal's nature, you aren't obligated to help the animal get up. We see from this Gemara

that a ך at the end of the word means something that happens often. Similarly, many occupations have a ך at the end of the word. For example, רצען is a shoemaker, קבלן is a contractor, and so on. The extra ך implies that this is their occupation, something they are always doing. Likewise, ניסן means that miracles are always happening in this month.

May we merit a true זמן חריתנו, a kosher and freilach yom tov with all its brachos and yeshuos, and may we merit celebrating the *yom tov* Pesach in the Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days, amen.

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43. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* advised those who needed *shidduchim*, *parnassah*, or *refuos* to complete the entire *Tehillim* on Shevi'i shel Pesach because it is a day of salvations.



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