BS"D

Potomac Study Center: Special notes for Tzav/Pesach 5781

The complexities of Pesach starting Motzi Shabbat make it extremely difficult for any person to contribute to kashering a home, washing three sets of dishes and utensils, preparing Devrei Torah for both Shabbat and Pesach, and having everything ready before the deadline for what I explain to my grandsons is Harry Potter's ancient recipe for turning Chametz into dust. (What a great trick for a wizard! I remember an antitrust conference years ago, shortly before Pesach, when an attorney facing harmful documents asked another, playing the role of Harry Potter, if he could turn these documents to dust. Unfortunately, the Aramaic formula only works on Chametz, not on documents.)

Many excellent materials for Pesach are either arriving late or coming into documents so large that they would cause E-mails of many of my readers to crash. I am therefore sending some of the attachments by E-mail. The following attachments will be available by download at www.PotomacTorah.org – hopefully by late morning or early afternoon:

Special Devrei Torah on Tzav and on Pesach, and some special thought questions for the Seder, by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer of Am HaTorah Congregation in Bethesda, MD.

A terrific digest taken from the recent and thoughtful Haggadah by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l.

Ohr Samaich's volume covering its annual Pesach holiday – Tzav, Pesach, Shemini, Tazria, and Metzora.

Hopefully you will download and print a copy of this material before Shabbat, select some materials to read and add to your Seder (sticky notes as place markers help a lot), and read more from the materials later during the Chag. What you learn too late for Seders this week could help make your Seders different and more insightful next year as well as this year.

Shabbat Shalom, Chag Pesach Samaich, Moadim L'simcha. Note: out of respect for those who resent any thought that they might not have a kosher Pesach, I add: in hoping for Chag kasher v'samaich, my wish is that more Jewish people than ever will join those who always have Kosher homes and holidays. Of course I know that most of my readers always have Kosher holy days, so I do not wish to insult any who have been frum from birth.

Alan

BS"D
March 26, 2021

Potomac Torah Study Center

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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

The primary subject of Tzav is the recipes for Kohenim to accept sacrifices and perform them for Jews who chose to (or sometimes were required to) bring them to the designated place (Mishkan and later, the Temple). Tzav is a fitting preamble to Pesach, because the Seder started with the first korban Pesach, God's commandment for each Jewish family to obtain a lamb, have it live in the house from the 10th of Nisan, sacrifice it on the 14th day, put some blood on their doorposts, roast the animal, and eat it after dark that night. Since sheep were Egyptian gods, killing an Egyptian deity and showcasing the blood was a strong message defying Egypt as our ancestors prepared for their freedom.

At the Seder, we re-enact the ritual of the korban Pesach (without the sacrifice, which we cannot do in the absence of the Temple in Jerusalem). The Haggadah, the text of which evolved since the time of the Mishna, is only a starting point for our Seders. If a family only recites the Haggadah, it has not really observed Pesach. Our task is to explicate the story, starting from the Haggadah, not merely to read it. The point of the Seder is to bring what we learned from our parents, add to it what we have learned from our own studies, and teach our children so they can connect to past generations of Jews and teach their own children and grandchildren.

As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, relates in his new Haggadah, the focus of the Seder is children. Maggid turns quickly to the children – four questions, four children, four cups of wine. The questions are to encourage the children to ask questions throughout the Seder. In addition to encouraging children to learn, the focus on children asking questions is to keep them engaged during the evening. A Sephardic custom is for children to act out various parts of the Haggadah – carrying matzos on their backs, acting out the ten plagues, etc. These customs help make the Seders more vivid and interesting to children. In a successful Seder, the children come and leave later with questions, discussion, and vivid memories. At a deeper level, our questions reflect a belief that the world contains God's plan. Our world is not random. There is a meaning to our universe, and God wants us to delve into this meaning and discover our roles in making the world a better place.

The four children reflect differences among Jews. We are all different, learn differently, and have different experiences. We must therefore teach differently to each child – another reason why we must adjust our Seders depending on the levels of the children in our audience.

Why, for example, did God bring ten plagues to make the Egyptians suffer for more than a year? God could have taken the Jews directly from Egypt and had them land immediately in Israel. God, however, wanted to run a university level course on "Who Is Hashem?" God ran this course for Paro, the rest of the Egyptians, the other non-Jews in the world – but just as much for the Jews, who also needed to learn this lesson. Paro said that he knew 70 different gods but had never heard of Hashem. All the students in this class needed to learn who Hashem was, how powerful He was compared to all the pagan deities, and how strongly Hashem loved His people Israel.

Dayeinu contains fifteen stages from slavery to freedom. The fifteen stages represent fifteen steps up to the Temple and fifteen psalms (all starting Shir HaMaalot) – songs of ascending. The Levites sang these songs while going up the steps to the Temple. Rabbi Sacks considers Dayeinu to be a tikkun for the ingratitude of B'Nai Yisrael in the midbar. Dayeinu

makes the point that if Hashem had done only some of the fifteen wondrous actions for our ancestors, we still would have had an obligation to recite Hallel, songs of praise to Hashem, for all he had done for us.

The Haggadah ends with some beloved songs meant to appeal to children of all ages. Chad Gadya tells the story of the Jews from slavery to freedom, conquests by various foreign powers, and eventual return to Israel 73 years ago. "Who Knows One?" delves into deep Kabbalistic insights of the significance of numbers. By focusing on children and deep Judaic history/philosophy, these songs take our Seder experiences to new levels, if we only focus on their deeper meanings.

Growing up, I never understood the main reasons for a Seder – to learn how to ask questions, to find new meaning in each Seder, to make each Seder unique while still relating the story of how Hashem brought us out of slavery by Himself, without any human intervening, because of His love for us. This story is not obvious in the Haggadah. Lively Seders with my beloved Rebbe, Leonard Cahan, z"l, started me on really understanding the beauty and depth of traditional Seders. Further study has led me to realize that each Seder should be unique and bring in new insights if it is to have maximum impact. Hopefully some of the attachments to the E-mail version of my packet will provide some new material for your Seders. May we all bring new insights to our Seders and make them more special than ever this year.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Pesach Samaich,

Hannah & Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Menachem Mendel ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Hannah & Alan

Lifeline: Tzava: I Know One!

by Rabbi Label Lam © 2007

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

The whole Pesach Seder is driven by questions. Perhaps the most important question at the Pesach Seder is not one of "the four questions." You might not even recognize it as a serious question because it is included in a cute and fun song at the very end of the Pesach Seder. The question is, "Who knows one?" We offer an answer right away. "I know one! One is HASHEM in the heavens and the earth."

How do we declare with such confidence at the Seder's conclusion, "I know one! One is HASHEM…"? Maybe someone can say I believe or I think but how do we know HASHEM?

The Rambam begins Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah with the following amazing words:

> יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון The foundation of all foundations the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a primary entity (HASHEM).

How does one "know" it is so? The Rambam answers, וידיעת דבר זה מצות עשה שנאמר אנכי ה׳ אלהיך…

> The knowledge of this matter is a positive Mitzvah as it says, "I am HASHEM your G-d Who took you out of the Land of Egypt…"

How do we "know HASHEM" based on that commandment? The Kuzari asks, "Why did HASHEM makes such a small claim by Har Sinai when He declared… "I am HASHEM Who took you out of Egypt"? He could have said, "I created heaven and earth!"

The Kuzari answers that no one was there by the creation of the world but an entire nation, 600,000 adult males from 20 to 60 plus those above 60 and below 20 and those of the opposite gender (perhaps 3,000,000 people) all experienced the exodus from Egypt! You saw it! You felt it! You lived through it! You experienced it! That's how you can know HASHEM!

We find ourselves at the Pesach Seder each year for the past 3325 years reliving the exodus from Egypt, as it says in the Haggada, "In every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out Egypt." It thus makes perfect sense that at the very end of the Seder, the final exam about whether or not we re-experienced leaving Egypt is whether or not we have the answer to the following question: "Who knows One?"

Hopefully we will all be able to answer confidently in unison with all generations, "I know One!"

Passover 5781: What Story Are We Telling?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2021

Dear Friends,

I want us to ask ourselves a simple question: What is the story that we will be telling?

The central mitzvah of Pesach night is maggid, to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. In many of our homes on Seder night, we will have spirited discussions and debates as we attempt to be doresh – to engage in the story, to bring our personal lens to it, exploring its meaning and relevance to us today.

In this telling, we stand outside the story and ask about its meaning. To translate this into our religious lives would be transformative – it would bring taamei hamitzvot, the reasons of the mitzvot, into the doing of the mitzvot. It would move us from mechanically following halakha to asking: "What is the matzah – what is this mitzvah – about?"

One dimension, however, is often missing – that of being part of the story itself.

To tell the story is to step into it, to see ourselves as one of the characters in the story and ask: What does it mean to be part of this arc of Divine history? Where is the story that began with the Exodus going to end? Where is it going and where am I going?

The Haggadah, surprisingly, does not tell us the answer to these questions. It develops the narrative at length and then stops short of the ending. In doing so, it invites us to imagine how it should conclude.

The Haggadah hints at an answer: "This year we are here. Next year, in Jerusalem." It ends with our return to the Land. For some, then, with the establishment of the State of Israel, the story has now reached its natural conclusion.

But for many of us outside of Israel – and even for many living in Israel – we find ourselves not at the story's end but squarely in its middle.

We ask: Where are we going? What is my purpose? What ending should I be looking for and working to achieve – for myself, the Jewish people, and the world?

As we anticipate a post-COVID world, a lot of people are asking questions of meaning. What have we learned about the need for direct presence versus what can be accomplished through Zoom? How will this change how we do business? What meanings and lessons can we derive from our experiences over the last year?

I would encourage us to ask a different question, a question about narrative. We will now be entering an unfinished world. What story will we now be telling about what it means to live on this planet, to live in society? How have we reoriented ourselves so that we can now tell a different story and see a different ending?

Let us all enter Pesach asking ourselves this question: As Jews and as citizens of the world, what is the story that we tell? Where is the Torah and our humanity pointing us? What is the ending that we see in the horizon, and how can we play our role in moving towards it?

Chag Kasher v'Sameach!

https://library.yctorah.org/2021/03/passover-5781-what-story-are-we-telling/

Shabbos HaGadol Drasha 5781
Simple Answers to Difficult Questions

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2021 Teach 613

Dear Friends,

It was my intent to share these words by audio, over Zoom, on Wednesday night. I had intended to joke that this Shabbos HaGadol Drasha would be neither on Shabbos, nor Gadol, a long one. But, as I am coming down with a cold, it appears that I will not be able to deliver it by audio at all. Instead, I will share my thoughts in the written form. I hope you enjoy!

As I was preparing for a recent parenting workshop, one request that was repeated by the parents was that I address the question: "What messages would we like our children to walk away from the Seder with?" I would like to adapt that question for the Drasha. "What messages would we like—ourselves—to walk away from the Seder with?" Indeed, sometimes we can do all the Halachos correctly, know all the Midrashim perfectly, and still miss the point.

There are certainly many messages and lessons to be learned from Yetzias Mitzrayim, the story of the Exodus. I would like to focus on the three themes that are our Shul's slogan: Torah, Tefilla, and the Interpersonal.

TEFILLA (PRAYER):

One of the most important principles of Judaism is the belief in a personal G-d. Not only is G-d the creator of heaven and earth; He also takes a personal interest in our lives. When we are in crisis, there is a specific mandate—a Mitzva—to turn to Hashem in prayer. Indeed, a significant lesson of Yetzias Mitzrayim is that eventually the enslavement was so unbearable that the Jews cried out in prayer. From that moment on, the Divine intervention begins towards redemption, first with charging Moshe with the mission to redeem the people, and then followed quickly by the plagues and actual redemption.

As Jews, we believe not only in national redemption, but in personal redemption as well. When the individual is in crisis there is a mandate—a Mitzvah—to call to Hashem in heartfelt prayer. Hashem hears our prayers and responds, sometimes in open, and sometimes in hidden ways. In fact, in our time of exile, the deliverance will often be couched in natural means. This only makes the miracle of intervention so much greater, as Hashem—master of all—is able to turn difficult situations around with ease, due to His mastery over everything.

I have often observed that the very founding of this country, the United States of America, required many such subtle, miraculous interventions. For example, when General Washington needed to evacuate his troops over muddy terrain to save them from a British ambush, Hashem sent great gusts of frigid weather to freeze the muddy paths and enable the fledgling Continental army to escape, regroup, and eventually win the war.

Rabbeinu Yona (Mishlei 3:6) writes that some people only pray when they are dealing with something that they consider "really big." Otherwise, they are willing to leave things to "chance." Rabbeinu Yona points out that this is a great mistake. Even if things turn out as they hoped, they have missed an opportunity to bond with Hashem through prayer.

INTERPERSONAL:

It has often been noted that success and failure of the Jewish people is largely dependent on our unity. Our greatest moment, connecting to Hashem at Sinai, is prefaced with the message that the Jewish people encamped at the mountain, "Like one." Similarly, in the story of the Exodus, the rise and fall rhythm of the Exodus depended on the Jewish people's interpersonal relationships.

When Moshe, a prince in the house of Paroh, first tried to reach out to the Jews and help them, he was rebuffed. Two men were quarreling; one of them lifted his hand to hit this fellow, and Moshe attempted to intervene and deescalate the conflict. These quarreling men respond to Moshe's overtures by reporting him to Paroh. Moshe exclaimed, "Now I understand why we are in exile." When Moshe witnessed Jews ready to escalate conflicts and bad-mouth each other, He felt that he now understood the fall of the people into these intense afflictions.

The key to blessing and salvation depends on interpersonal relationships. The turning point was when Moshe was appointed to lead and redeem the people, and Ahron, his older brother, would go out to greet him with joy. The statement, "He will see you, and he will rejoice," is the turning point in the story. Aharon, almost as a Shaliach Tzibbur representing the nation, will experience joy instead of jealousy in Moshe's prestigious appointment.

Aharon would be rewarded to wear the Choshen Mishpat adornment as a result of this experience. He became a protype of what we hope Jews to be, as the Mishna in Avos states, "Be a student of Aharon; pursue peace." This would set a new precedent for the Jewish people, quite different than the one Moshe encountered with the escalating conflict of the two men Moshe encountered, and the bad-mouthing that they did against him.

Interestingly, in describing the conflict of the two men, the Torah terms the one who raised his hand to strike his fellow, a "Rasha," a wicked person. We wonder, what did the person do wrong? Are we not judged in this world by the actual deed, and not for merely contemplating doing a bad deed? Why is he already deemed wicked if all he did was lift his hand?

We suggest that just raising a hand to hit, already did much damage, damage enough to warrant the term "Rasha." By lifting a hand to hit, this man had publicly expressed a standard to settle disputes, a standard of violence. This contributed to Moshe's expression, "Now I understand why we are in a bitter exile." Aharon, in contrast, would be rewarded with the Choshen Hamishpat breastplate. This is the same term "Choshen Mishpat" which is the section of Shulchan Aruch dealing with financial law and dispute resolution. Aside from reconciling who owes money to whom, the goal of Jewish law is that there should be peace and resolution between the litigants. In fact, the Rambam (Introduction to Mishna) writes that if a judge could fairly mediate a settlement without imposing "The Law" upon one litigant, the judge should indeed opt for the mediated settlement. Settlement is the highest form of resolving the interpersonal conflict.

The rhythm of rise and fall of the Jewish people in the years of the exile in Mitzrayim, is the same rhythm in the life of the Jewish people to our day. It has been said that communities do not succeed or fail based on financial wherewithal. Communities succeed or fail based on Machlokes and interpersonal relationships. Too often communities fall into the depths of attempting to settle differences through blame and bad-mouthing. Too often Machlokes rears its ugly head when individuals act on their hurt for not having been chosen. "Notice me," the ego declares. Notice my wealth, my stature. Notice that I am a great Talmid Chochom. Aharon was all of these, but he rejoiced in Moshe's appointment, and through that joy paved the way for the redemption of his day and eternal blessing.

TORAH:

One of the primary features of the Seder is asking questions. Questions are so fundamental to the Pesach experience that the Talmud recommends doing many unusual things on Seder night, just to prompt questions. Questions, even without answers, are enormously valuable. In Torah study we sometimes find that a topic ends off with the term, "Teiku,"

meaning, “Let the matter stand as a question.” A well formulated question quantifies and clarifies the matter to a great degree, even if we do not have an answer.

In fact, the Izbitzer Rebbe (Parshas Yisro) indicates that the ability to ask questions highlights the difference between the idol worshipping religions and Judaism. The idol worshipping religions can hold everything-- literally and figuratively—in their hands. In an idol worshipping religion everything is meant to be well crafted, understood, and manipulated by the human being. In contrast, Judaism acknowledges that we are mortal, finite and we will never truly understand Hashem; as He is immortal and infinite. Asking questions, and sometimes leaving questions unanswered if we do not have a good answer, is the mark of true human wisdom.

A classic example of this is the question, “How could G-d have let the Holocaust happen?” The question itself bespeaks great understanding. The question takes as a given that there is a G-d, and that He is benevolent and all powerful. The question also appreciates the concept of free choice, and that sometimes mankind makes bad decisions. The question that remains is, “Why didn’t G-d intervene?”

On Seder night in particular, but really throughout the Jewish experience, we see questions as the building block to wisdom. This is true even regarding questions that we cannot answer. The ability to articulate a question with wisdom is itself greatness. The ability to live with a question is also greatness, as it affirms our understanding of ourselves as mortal creatures standing before G-d, the Infinite.

IN CONCLUSION

One of the greatest questions which the Hagadah prompts is from the words, “Next Year in Jerusalem!” words that we recite with great anticipation each year. These words prompt the question, “When will it actually happen? When will the redemption of our times occur?” The Mesilas Yesharim explains that although we do not know the answer to that question, the very fact that we ask the question is itself a bonding experience with Hashem, as we yearn to return to the beloved relationship that once was. The Beis Hamikdash was a love palace between us and Hashem, and when we earnestly ask, “When will we return?” it is itself powerful, even as an unanswered question.

The themes of Torah, Prayer, and Interpersonal relationships are pillars of our lives, and are also good starting points to explore the themes of the Seder, of Pesach, and of national and personal redemption. May we merit to share good tidings with one another.

Wishing everyone a happy, Kosher, safe, and meaningful Pesach!

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When Wickedness Parades as Justice: Thoughts for Parashat Tsav/Shabbat haGadol

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson took leave from the Court to serve as the U.S’s chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. He wrote that “the most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice.” He sharply criticized the role of judges and legal systems to legitimize tyranny and oppression.

Judge Jackson understood that the atrocities of the Nazis were all purported to be “legal”. Laws were passed depriving Jews of all rights. Laws were passed to round up, imprison, and murder Jews. All those who participated in these heinous actions were following the law of the land!

The problem, though, was that the law itself was starkly immoral; the government that promulgated murderous laws was itself evil; the “legal system” which allowed such “laws” to be passed and implemented was the epitome of injustice, cruelty, and wickedness. Moral people should have denounced such “laws” and should have resisted the “legal system.” If enough good people had risen against the tyrannical laws and the murderous Nazi regime, millions of lives would have been saved.

In our times, we also witness tendencies to legitimize wicked and immoral behavior by means of declaring such evil to be "legal." The United Nations is perhaps the world's most nefarious example of this tendency. The UN routinely passes resolutions condemning Israel--not because these condemnations relate to moral and sound judgment, but because a malicious cabal of Israel-hating nations muster the majority to pass anti-Israel resolutions. There isn't even the faintest element of fairness to these resolutions, not the slightest effort to understand Israel's position, not a word of condemnation of groups and nations who attack Israel in every way they can. The UN espouses resolutions and policies that are dressed in the garb of "international law" when in fact these resolutions and policies are classic examples of immorality, injustice and corruption of the value of law.
It's not just the UN that tends to cloak immorality in the dress of justice. There are groups of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic people who seek to undermine Israel; they insidiously pose as being interested in human rights, as guardians of international law. Yet, they operate with malice toward Israel and perpetrate the vilest propaganda against her; they support boycotts of Israel; they constantly rebuke Israel for any real or imagined shortcoming. For these people, justice is not just at all; rather they pervert justice to further their own unjust and immoral goals.

Many seemingly good-hearted people get swept up in the "politically correct" anti-Israel bashing. They are gullible in the extreme, and don't have the time or moral courage to try to find out actual facts. These people will condemn Israel for causing pain to Arabs in Gaza, but will never raise a word of protest when thousands of missiles are fired into Israel from Gaza. They will condemn Israel's intransigence, but will never call to account Arab and Muslim leaders who unashamedly call for the destruction of Israel. Thinking that they are standing for "human rights" and for "international law," these people are in fact accomplices in immorally seeking to deprive Jews of their rights. They foster "laws" and "resolutions" and "policies" that are in essence criminal, unjust, immoral.

In Psalm 81, we read: "lo yihye bekha el zar," let there be no strange god among you. The Talmud (Shabbat 105b) offers a more literal and more profound interpretation of this phrase--you shall not have within yourself a strange god. According to this interpretation, the verse is not warning us against worshiping external idols. Rather, it is telling us to look within ourselves for strange gods, for evil inclinations, for false divinities. It is demanding that we introspect, that we maintain truth, that we reject the false gods that mislead us into false beliefs and corrupt behaviors.

This is a message of utmost importance for all people. None of us should allow "false gods" to fester within us, to blind our eyes to our moral responsibilities. All humans must strive to root out the evil inclination that leads to discriminatory attitudes, to corrupt laws and resolutions, to following along with the "politically correct" but morally bankrupt anti-Israel chorus. We must remember the words of Justice Jackson that "the most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice."

This coming Shabbat is known as Shabbat haGadol—the great Shabbat recalling the Israelites' preparation for their redemption from Egypt. Just as the ancient Israelites were redeemed from their cruel oppressors, so we pray that today's Israelites will be redeemed from their oppressors. We pray that all humans will strive honestly and sincerely to remove the "strange gods" of hatred, hypocrisy and malice from within themselves.

Our rabbis taught: in the month of Nissan our ancestors were redeemed, and in the month of Nissan we will be redeemed in the future.

* https://www.jewishideas.org/when-wickedness-parades-justicethoughts-parashat-tsavshabbat-hagadol **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Instutite for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time**.

Pessah on My Mind

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

In his book “Crowds and Power,” the Nobel Prize winning Sephardic author, Elias Canetti, writes of the tremendous diversity among Jews. He theorizes: “One is driven to ask in what respect these people remain Jews; what makes them into Jews; what is the ultimate nature of the bond they feel when they say "I am a Jew"....This bond...is the Exodus from Egypt.” Canetti suggests that the Israelites’ formative experience as a vast crowd leaving Egypt is the key to understanding the nature of Jewish peoplehood. As long as Jews—however different they are from each other—share historical memories of the Exodus from Egypt, they continue to identify as members of one people. We are bound together by the shared experience of redemption.

When we imagine the Exodus, we naturally envision a huge crowd of Israelites hastily leaving Egypt. When we recount the story of the Exodus in the Passover Haggada, we are reminded that the redemption was a group experience of great magnitude that has shaped the destiny of our people for all generations.

Yet, the Haggada does not focus only on the “vast crowd” experience, but conscientiously strives to personalize the story to the level of each individual. “In every generation one must see him/herself as though he/she personally had come forth from Egypt.” The Haggada tells stories about particular lessons taught by individual rabbis. It teaches that we have not fulfilled our obligation unless each of us speaks of Pessah, Matsah and Maror.

And, famously, the Haggada includes instructions on dealing with children with different aptitudes and interests. The challenge is to feel and transmit the vast group Exodus experience of antiquity on an individual level.

Thus, while the Haggada celebrates national liberation, it also provides a theme of personal liberation. While each participant is taught to identify with the masses of ancient Israelites who were redeemed from bondage, each is also encouraged to relate to our tradition as a unique individual.

Each person brings his/her specific talents, sensitivities and knowledge. Each needs to find his/her own way of relating to and individualizing the Exodus message.

Albert Einstein taught: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” Each person has a specific set of qualities. If allowed to develop in accord with these qualities, a person can live a happy and fulfilling life. But if a person is stifled or misled, he/she may live a frustrating and unsatisfactory life. So many people are diverted from meaningful lives because they live by definitions and standards that others have imposed on them. They strive to meet expectations of others that may, in fact, be inappropriate for them.

In transmitting religious traditions from generation to generation, the elders need to be tuned in to the specific aptitudes and sensibilities of the younger members of the family and community. One formula does not work for everyone. On the contrary, the best teachers are those who can individualize their lessons so that each child/student feels personally engaged.

The Haftara on Shabbat HaGadol is drawn from the book of Malachi. The prophet foresees the day when “He shall turn the heart of the parents to the children, and the heart of the children to their parents (Malachi 3:24).” It is profoundly significant that Malachi envisions a messianic time that begins with parents turning their hearts to their children. We might ordinarily have thought that the ideal is for children to listen to parents. Malachi—while surely agreeing that children should heed their parents’ teachings—suggests that it is up to parents to take the initiative in maintaining or restoring inter-generational relationships. The elders must strive to understand the younger members of the family/community on the latters’ terms.

“In every generation one must see him/herself as though he/she had come forth from Egypt.” To internalize the power of this message, we envision the vast crowd of Israelites who experienced the Exodus first hand. We identify with them and feel part of their peoplehood. At the same time, though, we envision the unique talents and aspirations of each member of the family and community. The goal is to raise all of us to a high level of understanding, solidarity and love.

https://www.jewishideas.org/blog/pessah-my-mind-rabbi-marc-d-angel

Parshas Vayikra – Rewriting Creation

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

The Ba'al HaTurim quotes a Medrash Osiyos Ketanos, which notes that in the Torah the Aleph in the first word of the Book of Vayikra is written smaller than the other letters in the Torah. This was a result of a compromise between G-d and Moshe. After the completion of the Tabernacle at the end of last week's parsha, G-d's Presence was sensed within the Jewish camp, centered in the Tabernacle. When G-d would speak to Moshe, He would call Moshe into the Tabernacle to prepare Moshe, mirroring the way the ministering angels prepare to serve and to praise G-d, as we say in *Kedusha* "and they call one to the other and proclaim 'Holy, Holy, Holy, etc.'" This calling, indicated by the word "Vayikra" – "ויקרא," was an expression of G-d's respect and love for Moshe. In contrast, when G-d speaks with Bilaam the Torah uses the word "ויקר" -- "And He happened upon" meaning that G-d's meeting with Bilaam came without preparation, indicating that the meeting with Bilaam was not worthy of note in G-d's eyes

When Hashem instructed Moshe to write the word "ויקרא" – "And He called," Moshe understood the implication. In his great humility, Moshe was uncomfortable writing such an expression regarding himself. He therefore asked G-d if he could leave off the Aleph, thereby changing the word to "ויקר" – "And He happened." G-d did not allow this. Moshe then asked if he could at least write the Aleph small, so as to at least avoid drawing attention to the accolade, and this G-d allowed.

This Medrash at face value is simply shocking. Our rabbis teach us that the Torah is the blueprint of creation. There are laws and concepts hidden in the crowns decorating the letters, from the shapes and placement of the letters and from every letter that is added or removed. How could Moshe possibly have asked G-d to remove an entire letter from the Torah?! Furthermore, although G-d did not allow the removal of the letter, G-d did allow Moshe to forever alter the size of the letter. If there are lessons in the crowns decorating the letters, certainly there are lessons to learn from the letters themselves. Why was Moshe allowed to change the size of a letter and forever alter the blueprint of the world?!

Perhaps, we can understand this Medrash based on a Mishna in Sanhedrin. The Mishna famously teaches us that every individual is obligated to recognize and to say that "the world was created for me." G-d does not require the sum of humanity to make creation worthwhile. Rather, G-d seeks an individual relationship with each of us and cherishes that relationship. In G-d's infinite love for every human being, He creates the entire universe for the sake of each and every one of us.

Relationships are built on mutual understanding and respect. While, G-d knows us better than we know ourselves, for us to know and understand G-d is beyond our capacity. The only way in which human beings can possibly engage in a relationship with G-d is by learning to emulate G-d's traits and to follow G-d's ways.

From this perspective, perhaps we can begin to understand this Medrash. Moshe's highly developed humility was of great significance to G-d. It was an expression of Moshe's devotion and connection to G-d, and was a fulfillment of the very purpose of creation. The lesson and inspiration from Moshe's humility is apparently greater than the lessons that would have been in the larger Aleph. Moshe's personal development and growth was of paramount importance to G-d.

We often seek to encourage ourselves in our lives by reminding ourselves that our efforts and achievements are important, and that we can make a difference in the world. This Medrash teaches us that our value is even more intrinsic. The personal development and growth which we achieve in life is already significant. It is so important to G-d, that sometimes it can even merit rewriting creation itself.

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The Great Night Cometh

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

Seder night with all its promises and potentials soon will be upon us. I'm sure you're excited.

But maybe you're also a tad nervous. There's still so much to do, so much to clean, so much to organize. And what of the Seder itself? Some people at the Seder will want to talk about the philosophy of freedom and the making of the Jewish people, while others will be salivating at the thought of the matzah. (The round ones can be quite tasty!)

To lead a Seder is more art than science. To be at a seder is to be a color in the painting. How will it unfold? It depends on the dynamic interplay between everyone. You have to believe that you'll know what to do. When to dwell on a passage, when to ask a question, when to acknowledge everyone's hunger and MOVE. It's not about having a set of things that you have to say. That's already taken care of with our standard haggadah. It's about being a dynamic part of the give and take that's being created on this unique night.

So in that spirit allow me to contribute not with a set Dvar Torah, but with questions you can dwell on if you so choose. After all, questions is how we're supposed to learn on Seder night. The Talmud states that even a great Torah scholar must go through the Exodus with questions.

1) If Chametz is such a bad thing, why do we only get rid of it this time of year?

2) How can the Haggadah call Matzah both the "bread of affliction" and "Bread of redemption" (when it says it's a symbol of how we were rushed out of Egypt so fast)? How can it be both?

3) How do we attain freedom of the spirit? Through rituals? Through our power of speech? How does our speaking at the Seder help transform us into free people? Could this be the key to the Matzah's transformation?

The Arizal says that questions humble us making it the best way to learn new things. If we believe we know everything already, how can we learn anything? So feel free to think about these questions and add a few of your own. As you let them sit, new insights may pop into your head which will make you that much more of a contributing artist on Saturday night.

May your Seder be transformative for you and for all of Israel. Chag Kosher Visameach!

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Rav Kook Torah
Bo: Destroy Chametz, Gain Freedom

Why Clear Out Chametz?

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

Freedom of Spirit

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

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

The Foreign Influence of Leaven

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

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

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

Cleansing Ourselves of Foreign Influences

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

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

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

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

http://ravkooktorah.org/PESACH58.htm

Destructive and Self-Destructive (Tzav 5779)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

This sedra, speaking about sacrifices, prohibits the eating of blood:

> *Wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.* (Lev. 7:26–27)

This is not just one prohibition among others. The ban on eating blood is fundamental to the Torah. For example, it occupies a central place in the covenant God makes with Noah – and through him, all of humanity – after the Flood: "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it" (Gen. 9:4). So too, Moses returns to the subject in his great closing addresses in the book of Deuteronomy:

> *But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord*. (Deut. 12:23–25)

What is so wrong about eating blood? Maimonides and Nahmanides offer conflicting interpretations. For Maimonides – consistent with his programme throughout The Guide for the Perplexed – it is forbidden as part of the Torah's extended battle against idolatry. He notes that the Torah uses identical language about idolatry and eating blood:

> *I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. (Lev. 17:10)*
>
> *I will set My face against that man [who engages in Moloch worship] and his family and will cut him off from his people.* (Lev. 20:5)

In no context other than blood and idolatry is the expression “set My face against” used. Idolaters, says Maimonides, believed that blood was the food of the spirits, and that by eating it, they would have “something in common with the spirits.” Eating blood is forbidden because of its association with idolatry.[1]

Nahmanides says, contrariwise, that the ban has to do with human nature. We are affected by what we eat:

> *If one were to eat the life of all flesh, and it would then attach itself to one’s own blood, and they would become united in one’s heart, and the result would be a thickening and coarseness of the human soul so that it would closely approach the nature of the animal soul which resided in what he ate…*

Eating blood, implies Nahmanides, makes us cruel, bestial, animal-like.[2]

Which explanation is correct? We now have copious evidence, through archaeology and anthropology, that both are. Maimonides was quite right to see the eating of blood as an idolatrous rite. Human sacrifice was widespread in the ancient world. Among the Greeks, for example, the god Kronos required human victims. The Maenads, female worshippers of Dionysus, were said to tear living victims apart with their hands and eat them. The Aztecs of Central America practised human sacrifice on a vast scale, believing that without its meals of human blood, the sun would die: “Convinced that in order to avoid the final cataclysm it was necessary to fortify the sun, they undertook for themselves the mission of furnishing it with the vital energy found only in the precious liquid which keeps man alive.”

Barbara Ehrenreich, from whose book Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War,[3] these facts come, argues that one of the most formative experiences of the first human beings must have been the terror of being attacked by an animal predator. They knew that the likely outcome was that one of the group, usually an outsider, an invalid, a child, or perhaps an animal, would fall as prey, giving the others a chance to escape. It was this embedded memory that became the basis of subsequent sacrificial rites.

Ehrenreich’s thesis is that “the sacrificial ritual in many ways mimics the crisis of a predator’s attack. An animal or perhaps a human member of the group is singled out for slaughter, often in a spectacularly bloody manner.” The eating of the victim and his or its blood temporarily occupies the predator, allowing the rest of the group to escape in safety. That is why blood is offered to the gods. As Mircea Eliade noted, “the divine beings who play a part in initiation ceremonies are usually imagined as beasts of prey – lions and leopards (initiatory animals par excellence) in Africa, jaguars in South America, crocodiles and marine monsters in Oceania.”[4] Blood sacrifice appears when human beings are sufficiently well organised in groups to make the transition from prey to predator. They then relive their fears of being attacked and eaten.

Ehrenreich does not end there, however. Her view is that this emotional reaction – fear and guilt – survives to the present as part of our genetic endowment from earlier times. It leaves two legacies: one, the human tendency to band together in the face of an external threat; the other, the willingness to risk self-sacrifice for the sake of the group. These emotions appear at times of war. They are not the cause of war, but they invest it with “the profound feelings – dread, awe, and the willingness to sacrifice – that make it ‘sacred’ to us.” They help explain why it is so easy to mobilise people by conjuring up the spectre of an external enemy.

War is a destructive and self-destructive activity. Why then does it persist? Ehrenreich’s insight suggests an answer. It is the dysfunctional survival of instincts, profoundly necessary in an age of hunter-gatherers, into an era in which such responses are no longer necessary. Human beings still thrill at the prospect of shedding blood.

Maimonides was right to see in the blood sacrifice a central idolatrous practice. Nahmanides was equally correct to see it as a symptom of human cruelty. We now sense the profound wisdom of the law forbidding the eating of blood. Only thus could human beings be gradually cured of the deeply ingrained instinct, deriving from a world of predators and prey, in which the key choice is to kill or be killed.

Evolutionary psychology has taught us about these genetic residues from earlier times which – because they are not rational – cannot be cured by reason alone, but only by ritual, strict prohibition, and habituation. The contemporary world continues to be scarred by violence and terror. Sadly, the ban against blood sacrifice is still relevant. The instinct against which it is a protest – sacrificing life to exorcise fear – still lives on.

Where there is fear, it is easy to turn against those we see as “the other” and learn to hate them. Which is why each of us, especially we leaders, have to take a stand against the instinct to fear, and against the corrosive power of hate. All it takes for evil to flourish is for good people to do nothing.

Shabbat shalom.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, III:46.

[2] Nahmanides, Commentary to Leviticus 17:13.

[3] Barbara Ehrenreich, Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War (New York: Metropolitan, 1997).

[4] Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1994).

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. *See* https://rabbisacks.org/destructive-and-self-destructive-tzav-5779/

A New Perspective on Taking Out the Trash

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2021

Let’s start with some facts:

Each day in the Temple, sacrifices were offered on a stone altar. The altar had several stations with wooden pyres, upon which a variety of sacrifices were offered.

As could be imagined, this resulted in a fair amount of debris. The kohanim (priests) were mandated to remove the ashes whenever there was a significant accumulation. This was called “removal of the ashes.”

In addition, each morning before the daily offering began, a kohen was required to carry out a symbolic removal of the ashes, taking some of the ashes from the altar with a shovel and placing them in a heap on the side. This was known as “the separation of the ashes.”

In both cases the Torah addresses the attire to be worn when carrying out the tasks.

When mandating the removal of the ashes, the Torah instructs:

> *He [the Kohen] should remove his clothes and wear different clothes; he shall then remove the ashes to a clean place outside the camp*.1

Rashi elucidates:

> *In order that he does not sully his regular clothes while removing the ashes. By way of analogy, the clothes a servant wears to cook his master’s meal should not be worn when pouring the master’s drink.” Rashi adds that the “other garments” were inferior to those normally worn.*

It is understandable that Rashi feels the need to provide an explanation, as there is a clear problem with the text. No one needs to be told that before you put on a new set of clothes, it is necessary to remove the clothes one is already wearing! So why does the text specifically instruct the kohen to remove his clothes before continuing with the real point, which is that he should wear different clothes? Rashi therefore explains that removing the clothes is the real reason for the change. The goal is not the new outfit, but to prevent the original one from being sullied.

The remainder of Rashi's commentary, however, remains a mystery. Which part of the text compels Rashi to continue with what appears to be a new point, about how the kohen should be wearing different clothes for different tasks? And what is added with the analogy of a servant preparing food that could not be understood without it? The problem is even greater considering that Rashi insists the new clothes be of lesser importance than the ones removed, despite the fact there does not seem to be any indication of this in the text itself!

It may be fairly assumed that we are missing something here.

The Rebbe answers this by way of a keen observation that seems to have been overlooked.

As mentioned earlier, there were two tasks relating to the ashes: the daily symbolic separation, and the occasional substantial removal. The text we read above about the kohen changing his clothes refers to the removal of the ashes, but immediately before this there is a verse about the separation of the ashes, the symbolic removal of ashes that takes place early each morning.

> *The kohen shall wear his linen shirt and linen pants. He shall separate the ashes which the fire shall consume upon the altar, and he shall place [the ashes] next to the altar.*

In other words, the kohen is supposed to wear his linen garments for this task of separating the ashes. But hold on, is this not the same type of garment he is instructed to wear for the removal of the ashes? Indeed, it is. So the Torah first instructs the Kohen to don linen garments to do the symbolic separation, and then instructs him to change out of his linen clothing and put on another set of linen clothes in order to do the larger task of removing the ashes to outside the camp when necessary.

This leaves us with an astonishing situation. The kohen is already wearing linen clothes to conduct the daily separation, yet he is being told to remove those and put on another set of linen clothes to do something that looks pretty similar to the original task. Why should the kohen change into new linen clothes when he has already changed into linen clothes to do the separation of the ashes? What could possibly be the point in that?

Both tasks - separating and removing the ashes - were messy jobs. True, removing the ashes was the much bigger task and was more likely to get the clothes dirty than the more modest removal of the ashes to the side of the altar. But how does that make any difference? Whyever should the kohen switch clothes between one not particular clean task and one that is even messier? If the kohen is already wearing linen clothes for the separation of the ashes, why ask him to change into a different set of linen clothes for the removal of the ashes? It really stretches credulity to think that this would make any sense at all.

This problem, says the Rebbe, is what Rashi is really trying to address. Rashi is introducing us to a concept of hierarchy of dress. It may seem that both the symbolic separating of ashes and the more substantial removal of the ashes are largely of a kind, but that misses an important point. Separation of ashes wholly takes place in the Temple (it is placed by the side of the altar), whereas the removal of ashes involves taking it to be disposed of beyond the boundaries of the Temple. That is why the clothes worn for the internal job of separating the ashes were to be different from the clothes worn for the external task of removing the ashes.

Rashi portrays this via the analogy of a master and his servant. Both cooking and serving drinks are largely the same idea: providing food for the master. But no rational person would equate them. Cooking is in the kitchen, behind the scenes. The kitchen is a messy place, and the food preparation that takes place there will almost certainly result in the servant's clothes being sullied. By contrast, serving the drinks takes place in the banquet hall in the presence of guests. Serving drinks should not necessarily result in the servant's clothes being dirtied.

Removal of the ashes is a lower task than separating the ashes – they are not to be treated as equal. Removal of the ashes is like the servant in the kitchen. Hence, says Rashi, it follows that the kohen should change his clothes between separating the ashes and removing the ashes; he should be wearing "lesser garments" when doing the latter. The kohen should undergo a sort of "costume change" between two acts which are similar but of unequal prestige.

But this gives rise to a question: if the two tasks are unequal, why change clothes altogether? Would it not be better if a more junior Kohen did the lesser task? If indeed removing the ashes is far inferior to separating the ashes, why would both tasks be done by the same person? To use Rashi's analogy, would the cook also serve as the butler? Surely, these

are quite separate roles for distinct people! Basically, the senior kohen would eschew such an unpopular task and relegate this for the novice kohen. Yet, this entire discussion of Rashi is predicated on the assumption that the same kohen is doing both (and thus changing clothes in between).

Here the Rebbe leaves us with a profound lesson. The same kohen who does the popular jobs has to be ready to do the unpopular ones. You don't get to pick and choose. The senior kohen must not excuse himself from the unpleasant and messy undertakings. He must not avoid the jobs that force him to leave the Temple area. This is not how it should work. Perhaps there is a hierarchy of tasks – as Rashi says – but that does not mean there should be a hierarchy of people. Let the kohen who enjoys doing the elevated activity know that he has just as much responsibility to complete the less desirable activity. If he needs to change his clothes in between, so be it.

Get out there and get your hands dirty, if that is what is needed.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Leviticus 6:4.

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Seder: ASKING THE FOUR QUESTIONS

By Rabbi Yosef Marcus *

LIKE THE LOVE FOR A CHILD

It was handed down in the name of the Baal Shem Tov that there are two versions to the introduction to the Four Questions:

1) "Father, I want to ask of you four questions";

2) "Father, I will ask of you four questions."

Each version, however, begins in an identical manner—"Father". This refers to our Father in Heaven—to whom all of Israel ask the Four Questions.

(Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch).

The child's asking stimulates G-d's love for us, like the love of parents for their young child, as in the verse (Hosea 11:1) regarding the time of the exodus: For Israel is a youth, [therefore] I love him....

The Torah in several instances describes us as being G-d's children.

The above verse, however, emphasizes that G-d's love for us is like a parent's love for a young child.

Parents love their children because the parent and child are of one essence.

But this love is most felt for young children. As children mature, the parents begin to love them for their accomplishments and qualities as well, for their wisdom, good character, or the honor and care they show to their parents.

This latter love obscures to some extent the innate, unconditional parental love.

The love for a young child, by contrast, who is not yet wise, or good, or helpful, is pure parental love, the unconditional love of two beings that are of one essence. The love for the young child is therefore stronger and more evident, since it is not obscured by a conditional love.

Similarly, when we speak of G-d's love for us in the way a parent loves a young child, we refer to this essential, unconditional love borne of our inherent bond with G-d.

Staying Young

When we become "mature" and self-aware because of our wisdom and accomplishments, we obscure our essential oneness with G-d with our sense of self and separateness. But when we humble ourselves like a small child before G-d, when we see our wisdom and accomplishments as an extension of our service of G-d, the oneness is restored—we rediscover our youth and the special divine attention that comes with it.

(The Rebbe)

– * from Haggadah for Passover

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Left- and Right-Brain Judaism

The institution of the Haftarah – reading a passage from the prophetic literature alongside the Torah portion – is an ancient one, dating back at least 2000 years. Scholars are not sure when, where, and why it was instituted. Some say that it began when Antiochus IV's attempt to eliminate Jewish practice in the second century BCE sparked the revolt we celebrate on Chanukah. At that time, so the tradition goes, public reading from the Torah was forbidden. So the Sages instituted that we should read a prophetic passage whose theme would remind people of the subject of the weekly Torah portion.

Another view is that it was introduced to protest the views of the Samaritans, and later the Sadducees, who denied the authority of the prophetic books except the book of Joshua.

The existence of haftarot in the early centuries CE is, however, well attested. Early Christian texts, when relating to Jewish practice, speak of "the Law and the Prophets," implying that the Torah (Law) and Haftarah (Prophets) went hand-in-hand and were read together. Many early Midrashim connect verses from the Torah with those from the haftarah. So the pairing is ancient.

Often the connection between the parsha and the haftarah is straightforward and self-explanatory. Sometimes, though, the choice of prophetic passage is instructive, telling us what the Sages understood as the key message of the parsha.

Consider the case of Beshallach. At the heart of the parsha is the story of the division of the Red Sea and the passage of the Israelites through the sea on dry land. This is the greatest miracle in the Torah. There is an obvious historical parallel. It appears in the book of Joshua. The river Jordan divided allowing the Israelites to pass over on dry land: "The water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away … The Priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground." (Josh. ch. 3).

This, seemingly, should have been the obvious choice as haftarah. But it was not chosen. Instead, the Sages chose the song of Devorah from the book of Judges. This tells us something exceptionally significant: that tradition judged the most important event in Beshallach to be not the division of the sea but rather the song the Israelites sang on that occasion: their collective song of faith and joy.

This suggests strongly that the Torah is not humanity's book of God but God's book of humankind. Had the Torah been the our book of God, the focus would have been on the Divine miracle. Instead, it is on the human response to the miracle.

So the choice of haftarah tells us much about what the Sages took to be the parsha's main theme. But there are some haftarot that are so strange that they deserve to be called paradoxical, since their message seems to challenge rather than reinforce that of the parsha. One classic example is the haftarah for the morning of Yom Kippur, from the 58th chapter of Isaiah, one of the most astonishing passages in the prophetic literature:

> Is this the fast I have chosen – a day when a man will oppress himself? … Is this what you call a fast, "a day for the Lord's favour"? No: this is the fast I choose. Loosen the bindings of evil and break the slavery chain. Those who were crushed, release to freedom; shatter every yoke of slavery. Break your bread for the starving and bring dispossessed wanderers home. When you see a person naked, clothe them: do not avert your eyes from your own flesh. (Is. 58:5-7)

The message is unmistakable. We spoke of it in last week's Covenant and Conversation. The commands between us and God and those between us and our fellows are inseparable. Fasting is of no use if at the same time you do not act justly and compassionately to your fellow human beings. You cannot expect God to love you if you do not act lovingly to others. That much is clear.

But to read this in public on Yom Kippur, immediately after having read the Torah portion describing the service of the High Priest on that day, together with the command to "afflict yourselves," is jarring to the point of discord. Here is the Torah telling us to fast, atone and purify ourselves, and here is the Prophet telling us that none of this will work unless we engage in some kind of social action, or at the very least behave honourably toward others. Torah and haftarah are two voices that do not sound as if they are singing in harmony.

The other extreme example is the haftarah for today's parsha. Tzav is about the various kinds of sacrifices. Then comes the haftarah, with Jeremiah's almost incomprehensible remark:

> For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey Me, and I will be your God and you will be My people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you. (Jer. 7:22-23)

This seems to suggest that sacrifices were not part of God's original intention for the Israelites. It seems to negate the very substance of the parsha.

What does it mean? The simplest interpretation is that it means "I did not only give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices." I commanded them but they were not the whole of the law, nor were they even its primary purpose.

A second interpretation is the famously controversial view of Maimonides that the sacrifices were not what God would have wanted in an ideal world. What He wanted was avodah: He wanted the Israelites to worship Him. But they, accustomed to religious practices in the ancient world, could not yet conceive of avodah shebalev, the "service of the heart," namely prayer. They were accustomed to the way things were done in Egypt (and virtually everywhere else at that time), where worship meant sacrifice. On this reading, Jeremiah meant that from a Divine perspective sacrifices were bedi'avad not lechatchilah, an after-the-fact concession not something desired at the outset.

A third interpretation is that the entire sequence of events from Exodus 25 to Leviticus 25 was a response to the episode of the Golden Calf. This, I have argued elsewhere, represented a passionate need on the part of the people to have God close not distant, in the camp not at the top of the mountain, accessible to everyone not just

Moses, and on a daily basis not just at rare moments of miracle. That is what the Tabernacle, its service and its sacrifices represented. It was the home of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, from the same root as sh-ch-n, "neighbour." Every sacrifice – in Hebrew korban, meaning "that which is brought near" – was an act of coming close. So in the Tabernacle, God came close to the people, and in bringing sacrifices, the people came close to God.

This was not God's original plan. As is evident from Jeremiah here and the covenant ceremony in Exodus 19-24, the intention was that God would be the people's sovereign and lawmaker. He would be their king, not their neighbour. He would be distant, not close (see Ex. 33:3). The people would obey His laws; they would not bring Him sacrifices on a regular basis. God does not need sacrifices. But God responded to the people's wish, much as He did when they said they could not continue to hear His overwhelming voice at Sinai: "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good" (Deut. 5:25). What brings people close to God has to do with people, not God. That is why sacrifices were not God's initial intent but rather the Israelites' spiritual-psychological need: a need for closeness to the Divine at regular and predictable times.

What connects these two haftarot is their insistence on the moral dimension of Judaism. As Jeremiah puts it in the closing verse of the haftarah, "I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," (Jer. 9:23). That much is clear. What is genuinely unexpected is that the Sages joined sections of the Torah and passages from the prophetic literature so different from one another that they sound as if coming from different universes with different laws of gravity.

That is the greatness of Judaism. It is a choral symphony scored for many voices. It is an ongoing argument between different points of view. Without detailed laws, no sacrifices. Without sacrifices in the biblical age, no coming close to God. But if there are only sacrifices with no prophetic voice, then people may serve God while abusing their fellow humans. They may think themselves righteous while they are, in fact, merely self-righteous.

The Priestly voice we hear in the Torah readings for Yom Kippur and Tzav tells us what and how. The Prophetic voice tells us why. They are like the left and right hemispheres of the brain; or like hearing in stereo, or seeing in 3D. That is the complexity and richness of Judaism, and it was continued in the post-biblical era in the different voices of halachah and Aggadah.

Put Priestly and Prophetic voices together and we see that ritual is a training in ethics. Repeated performance of sacred acts reconfigures the brain, reconstitutes the personality, reshapes our sensibilities. The commandments were given, said the Sages, to refine people.[1] The external act influences inner feeling. "The heart follows the deed," as the Sefer ha-Chinuch puts it.[2]

I believe that this fugue between Torah and Haftarah, Priestly and Prophetic voices, is one of Judaism's great glories. We hear both how to act and why. Without the how, action is lame; without the why, behaviour is blind. Combine Priestly detail and Prophetic vision and you have spiritual greatness.

[1] Tanhuma, Shemini, 12.
[2] Sefer ha-Chinuch, Bo, Mitzvah 16.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"Behold, I send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And he [Elijah] will turn [back to God] the hearts of the parents through their children and the hearts of the children through their parents" (Malachi 3:23-2)

The Shabbat before Passover is called Shabbat Hagadol (the Great Sabbath), a phrase deriving from the last verse of the prophetic portion read on that day which declares that God will send Elijah the Prophet on the "great day" of the Lord right before the coming of the redemption.

Let us attempt to link Elijah to our Passover Seder in a way more profound than merely opening the door for him and offering him a sip of wine.

Our analysis begins with another Seder anomaly, the fact that we begin our night of freedom with the distribution of an hors d'oeuvre of karpas (Greek for vegetation or vegetable, often parsley, dipped in a condiment).

The usual explanation for this is that vegetation emerges in the springtime; Passover is biblically called the Spring Festival, and so we dip a vegetable in salt water, reminiscent of spring renewal emerging from the tears of Egyptian enslavement. Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, in his late 19th-century Haggada, suggests another interpretation. The Hebrew word "karpas" appears in the opening verses of the Book of Esther, in the description of the "hangings" that were found in the gardens of King Ahasuerus's palace, where the great feast for all his kingdom was hosted; karpas white cotton joined with turquoise wool. Rashi connects the term "karpas" in the sense of material with the ketonet passim, the striped tunic that Jacob gave to his beloved son, Joseph.

The Jerusalem Talmud additionally suggests that we dip the karpas in haroset (a mixture of wine, nuts and dates), adding that haroset is reminiscent of the blood of the babies murdered in Egypt. In our case, the karpas would become symbolic of Joseph's tunic, which the brothers dipped into goat's blood and brought to their father as a sign that his son had been torn apart by wild beasts when in fact they had sold him into Egyptian slavery.

Why begin the Seder this way? The Talmud criticizes Jacob for favoring Joseph over the other brothers and giving him the striped tunic. This gift, a piece of material with little monetary value, engendered vicious jealousy resulting in the sale of Joseph and the eventual enslavement of the Israelites for 210 years.

The point of the Seder is the retelling ("haggada") of the seminal experience of servitude and freedom from generation to generation. Through this, all parents become teachers. They must inspire their children to continue the Jewish narrative of identification with the underdog and the outcast. They must imbue in their offspring insistence upon freedom for every individual created in God's image and faith in the ultimate triumph of a world dedicated to peace and security for all.

This places an awesome responsibility on the shoulders of every parent: to convey the ethical monotheism, rooted in our ritual celebrations and teachings, to their children and eventually to all of humanity. Hence, parents must be warned at the outset not to repeat the tragic mistake of Jacob, not to create divisions and jealousies among their children. Instead, we must unite the generations in the common goal of continuing our Jewish narrative.

What has this to do with Elijah the Prophet, who is slated to be the herald of the Messiah, the announcer of the "good tidings of salvation and comfort"? Our redemption is dependent on our repentance and the most necessary component of redemption is "loving our fellow as we love ourselves" – the great rule of the Torah taught by Rabbi Akiva.

Loving humanity must begin with loving our family; first and foremost our nuclear family. We read in the prophetic portion of this Shabbat that Elijah will bring everyone back to God by uniting parents with their children and children with parents. The biblical source of sibling hatred (the Joseph story), which has plagued Jewish history up to and including the present day, will be repaired by Elijah, who will unite the hearts of the children and the parents together in their commitment to God.

Toward the end of the Seder, we open the door for Elijah and welcome him to drink from the cup of redemption poured especially for him. But if Elijah can visit every Seder throughout the world, surely he can get through even the most forbidding kind of door.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, teaches that we open the door not so much to let Elijah in as to let ourselves out. The Seder speaks of four children; But what about the myriad "fifth

children" who never came to a Seder? We must go out after them and bring them in – perhaps together with Elijah, whom we will need desperately to unite the entire family of Israel around the Seder table.

OTS Dvar Torah

Gratitude from Time Immemorial
Rabbanit Sally Mayer

Why does the korban toda – the thanksgiving offering – involve so much bread, which is eaten very hastily; and how does birkat hagomel – the thanksgiving prayer – substitute for it after the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed?

The Torah describes the thanksgiving offering in Parashat Tzav. It is a type of shelamim offering ("peace offering") brought by a Jew after Hashem delivers him or her from hardship. The offering is comprised of a calf or a kid, like any other korban shelamim, yet a few things set this offering apart from the others. First, unlike ordinary peace offerings which can be eaten within the same day, at night, or on the following day, this offering may only be eaten within a very short time – the day it was offered or that night, and our Sages shortened this allotted time, ending it at midnight of the day the offering was made. Second, the offering is brought along with a very large minhah (flour) offering, consisting of 20 esronim of fine flour, which is used to prepare 40 baked units. In today's terms, this would be equivalent to about 26 kilograms of flour, and all of this must be eaten in less than one day! One more unique characteristic of this offering is that ten of the loaves are leavened, unlike the matza offered along with any other offering. What is the meaning of all of these unique characteristics?

When is the thanksgiving offering brought? The Gemarah lists the classic reasons: seafarers, desert wanderers, the sick who were healed, or released prisoners, as we read in Psalm 107, which repeats the following verse four times: "Let them praise Hashem for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind." Some interpret that the thanksgiving offering can be brought to express gratitude for other situations as well, and according to Rabbeinu Bahye, a bride and groom should also bring an offering for having been brought together!. There is a midrash aggadah on Vayikra that describes the thanksgiving offering as Hashem's favorite, since it is given "in earnest," not because of a sin or holiday we were commanded to observe, but rather because a person had felt the need to thank the Master of the Universe.

Let's revisit our question: Why bring so much bread and be required to eat it so quickly? In the Netziv's commentary on the Torah, Ha'amek Davar, the author explains that the purpose of this offering is to "recount the kindness of Hashem that He had bestowed upon him (the one making the offering)." With so much food, many people would need to be invited to help eat all of it, and in doing so, the miracle would be publicized, and the gratitude expressed by the offerer wouldn't go unnoticed.

And why should leavened bread be offered, when usually minha offerings were made into matza? There is only one other offering that is similar in this sense: the kivsei atzeret, a communal offering brought during the holiday of Shavuot. This is a peace offering brought along with two loaves of bread, and they too are baked as leavened bread. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that the kivsei atzeret are akin to a national thanksgiving offering, whereby the entire nation expresses its gratitude to the Creator. This offering is symbolized by chametz – bread that was fully baked, as opposed to matza, where the baking process is stopped in the middle.

While we no longer bring thanksgiving offerings nowadays, we do have birkat hagomel, a blessing we make when we are miraculously saved. This blessing also has the "element of the public." Gratitude must be expressed in the presence of a quorum of ten, just as in the case of the thanksgiving offering, when many people are invited and the miracle is publicized. This offering is also the origin of the wonderful tradition of holding a se'udat hodayah, a meal to express thanksgiving, and inviting guests to partake of it. And when we recite birkat hagomel, we say "shegemalani kol tov", instead of just "tov," referring to the specific miracle for which this blessing is being made? I heard from Rabbi Mordechai Willig that this blessing gives us the opportunity to take a step back and express our gratitude for all of the hidden goodness that the Hashem bestows upon us every day, rather than just for one specific miracle.

May it be the will of Hashem that we witness the miracle of a refua shelema for the entire world, and may we merit to stand up in public and recite: "Let them praise Hashem for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind."

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Yakov Haber
Inward Growth, Outward Expansion

Parashas Tzav begins with the mitzvah of terumas hadeshen, the daily removal of some ash from the sacrificial altar in the mishkan and later the mikdash. As mentioned by the Torah (Vayikra 6:4) and expanded upon by the Oral Tradition, the officiating kohen donned priestly garments when doing so albeit of lesser value than his usual ones (see Rambam, Hilchos Temidin uMussafin 2:10 and Kessef Mishneh ibid.) The kohen went to the top of the altar, scooped a shovel full of ash and placed it on the side of the mizbei'ach. Rashi (ibid.) already notes that a mound of ash (the tapuach) was present in middle of the altar. Only a small amount of ash was removed each day and only when the altar was overflowing with ash would it be cleaned out totally. (See further on for a debate concerning this last point.)

What is the meaning behind this mysterious mitzvah? Seifer HaChinuch presents a straightforward rationale; we honor the House of G-d by cleaning and maintaining it properly. But this does not explain why only a little bit of ash is removed each day. If the goal is cleanliness, should not all the ash be removed each day? Indeed, Rambam (ibid. 2:13) seems to maintain that outside of festivals, the entire mound of ash on the altar (the tapuach) was removed after the terumas hadeshen by other kohanim. But the initial removal of only part of the ash remains mysterious. Other Rishonim maintain that the whole mound was not removed unless there was no more room (see above Rashi and Mishneh Lamelech ibid.). The mystery thickens when we turn to a related mitzvah - that of hatavas hamenorah. Each morning and afternoon a kohein would clean out the menora from the previous days lighting (ibid. 3:10). This service requires a kohen (Hilchos Bias Mikdash 9:5) as does the terumas hadeshen (ibid. 9:8), but the most famous of avodos, the lighting of the menorah itself, is valid if done by a zar, a non-kohein. Rambam (ibid. 9:7) even maintains that it is not only valid ex post facto, if done via a zar, but he may light it initially! (See Ra'avad ibid.) All these anomalies certainly require study.

I once heard from Rav Noach Isaac Oelbaum shlit"a in the name of sifrei chassidus that the main component of the avodash hamenorah was the hatava, the cleaning out, for this represents the elimination of bad qualities or insufficient or impure aspects of Divine service. A person should constantly strive to climb ever higher in his avoda, never satisfied with his current level, but he also must endeavor not to be discouraged by failures in his efforts. Every day is an opportunity to do hatavas hamenora, to clean out the past failures and start fresh. Once this is done, avodas Hashem is much easier as represented by the fact that the hadlakas hamenora does not even require a kohen. The harder part of the work is eliminating deficiencies. An oft-quoted comment of the Vilan Gaon states, "It is easier to learn the entire shas then change one midda ra'ah (bad quality)!" This is the higher avoda as indicating by the fact that it requires a kohen. Perhaps the same approach can be given to explain one meaning behind the daily terumas hadeshen. Had the Torah merely required removal of the ash of the mizbei'ach, this might lead to the erroneous impression that the cleaning is not an act of Divine service but is merely a hechsheir mitzvah, a preparatory act, for that day's korbanos. (See Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch where he makes a similar distinction although he explains the terumas hadeshen in an entirely different, insightful way.) The requirement of priestly garments for this service further underscores that this too is an act of avodas Hashem.

The incense altar was also cleaned every day; this cleaning was called dishun mizbei'ach hapenimi (Hilchos Temidin uMussafin 3:4 ff.). This too requires a kohein (see Hilchos Bias HaMikdash 9:8). Much has been written by the commentaries distinguishing between the role and symbolism of the various vessels of the Temple. The incense altar, the outer altar and the menora all symbolize different aspects of Divine service. One approach opines that the incense altar represents the service the soul, the outer sacrificial altar the service of the body, (see Keli Yakar on Shemos 30:1) and the candelabrum the study of Torah, specifically Torah sheb'al peh. Once can suggest that each aspect requires a hatava or a dishun, a constant self-analysis of how each of these aspects of Divine service can be improved. This approach could help explain one aspect of the significance of these aspects of the Temple service.

Torah was given to klal Yisrael not just to individuals. The phenomenon of "as one man with one heart" at Mount Sinai was not just a statement of Jewish unity, but a necessary prerequisite for the giving of the Torah for it was a gift to the Jewish people not just to each person individually. We are, to quote Rav Hirsch and Rav Soloveitchik, "a covenantal community" which is charged to bring the truth of G-d and His teachings to the world. Consequently, so much emphasis is placed on ahavas Yisrael, interpersonal relationships and communal service. But in order to be a more perfect member of this great community and to be able to more fully serve its other members, each individual also needs to strive to become a better person and Jew. When asked whether Yeshiva students should spend more time on kiruv and less time in Yeshiva, my Rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, answered, "The Jewish people don't need half-baked potatoes!" The more knowledgeable you are, the better you can serve the community.[1]

The worldwide spread of disease currently raging (Hashem yatizleinu b'karov!) and the almost global quarantine-like conditions (whether actual or virtually so) can give an opportunity to engage in self-introspection, in the mitzvos bein adam l'atzmo (between a man and himself); to engage in a terumas hadeshen of sorts which is a precious aspect of avodas Hashem. The inability to engage in communal prayer, a central feature in tefila, should be utilized to perfect our kavana and length of our prayers; in a word, to improve our communication with Hashem. To be sure, opportunities to help other people in need abound, and one should certainly take advantage of them, but one should also strive to become a better person in their internal self. News articles have been publicized that domestic violence cases are unfortunately skyrocketing due to the current situation. This is an unfortunate consequence of spending more time with family when one is not interested in self-growth. If one is and the Torah certainly adjures us to do so then, aderaba, now is a time to work more on shalom bayis and being a good parent to our children assuring that the mesorah is warmly given over to the next generation.

As our sedarim this year are projected to be more parallel to the "שה לבית אבות" (one sheep per family with no others allowed in that group) of the first Passover in Egypt and not like the possibility of "chabura" (a pre-arranged group not restricted to the family exclusively) of subsequent Paschal offerings, let us reapply ourselves to becoming better people, better spouses, better parents so that when b'ezras Hashem soon when we can fully exit our homes, we can engage all aspects of avodas Hashem with even more fervor and perfection not just as individuals but as a holy nation. Sifrei chassidus compare sin to a spring; when the person is ready for teshuva, he is ready to fly even higher. Hopefully, we will be able to utilize this trying, but potentially elevating, time to emerge even better when Hashem has mercy on the world and brings salvation.

[1] This seems to be in contrast to the well-known analogy of the Chafetz Chaim who, when exhorting all to redouble efforts to bring people back to Judaism dismissing the claim that one doesn't know enough Torah or is not worthy for the task, stated, "a fire can be put out with dirty water also!" But there is no contradiction; each idea must be applied in the right time and place.

Rabbi Daniel Stein
Preparing for Pesach

At the beginning of Parshas Vayikra, Hashem called to Moshe before their conversation inside the Ohel Moed. Rashi explains that even though Hashem revealed himself to the prophets of the other nations abruptly and without warning in a manner which is described as "and Hashem happened to meet Balaam" (Bamidbar 23:4), Hashem called to Moshe prior to speaking with him as an expression of personal affection. The Sfas Emes explains further that Hashem announced his meeting with Moshe beforehand in order to give Moshe time to properly prepare himself for their encounter. Rav Tzadok Hakohen (Pri Tzaddik), derives from here that in order for any spiritual experience to be meaningful and leave a lasting impact upon us we must first ready ourselves sufficiently beforehand. Only if we make a concerted effort to appreciate the value and significance of what is about to occur can we internalize and assimilate the message and lesson that is being conveyed.

Whenever we experience a moment of genuine spiritual inspiration, if we are unprepared for it in advance, its effectiveness will be muted and its ability to serve as a catalyst for real change will invariably be diminished. At the time of keriyas Yam Suf the people present pointed at Hashem and unequivocally declared, "This is my God and I will glorify him" (Shemos 15:2). The Yalkut Shimoni (section 244) comments that even the maidservants at keriyas Yam Suf were granted a more intense divine revelation than that which was experienced by both Yechezkel and Yishayahu. Nonetheless, despite this awesome and overwhelming event the maidservants did not become prophetesses, they remained maidservants. Rav Chaim Shmuelevtiz (Sichas Mussar) suggests that this was because the maidservants entered into the moment unprepared, they invested nothing in advance, and therefore they received nothing in return. The degree to which a spiritual experience impacts upon us is directly dependent and contingent upon the amount of effort we expended preparing for it beforehand.

The Gemara (Gittin 77a) states that the three days prior to Shabbos, from Wednesday to Friday, are attributed to the following Shabbos, and the three days following Shabbos, from Sunday to Tuesday, are related to the previous Shabbos. The Shem Mishmuel explains that the holiness of Shabbos continues for an additional three days precisely because we invested three days beforehand. Since we prepared for three days in advance of Shabbos, the impact of the Shabbos can be felt for an additional three days after Shabbos, corresponding exactly to the measure of effort we invested beforehand. For this reason as well, the Gemara in Gittin claims that the influence of yom tov lasts for a period of thirty days following the conclusion of yom tov. This too is a function of the requirement mentioned in the Gemara (Pesachim 6a) to prepare before Pesach for a period of thirty days. Since we prepared for a period of thirty days before yom tov, the influence of the yom tov also continues for an additional thirty days.

However, according to some rishonim (see Biur Halacha 429:1) the obligation to prepare for thirty days prior to yom tov is limited to the yom tov of Pesach. This is supported by the Gemara (Megillah 32a) which implies that on every other yom tov it is sufficient to review the laws of that particular yom tov on the day of yom tov itself. Pragmatically, the yom tov of Pesach might demand extra preparation since it encompasses so many intricate and complicated laws. However, perhaps the yom tov of Pesach needs a greater investment of time beforehand since the impact of Pesach must endure well beyond the conclusion of the yom tov. It is during the yom tov of Pesach that we must cultivate and refortify our foundation of emunah and bitachon that will sustain us throughout the coming year, therefore, in order to create this effect, we must prepare well in advance of Pesach as well.

As a result of the coronavirus crisis which has been gripping our community and the entire world, preparing for Pesach this year will undoubtably require an even greater effort than usual. However, if we invest properly in preparing for Pesach, may the themes of Pesach define our home and our lives throughout the coming year, and may we be zoche to a refuah and a redemption as individuals and as a community, culminating with the ultimate geulah be'meheirah be'yameinu.

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THOUGHTS
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Exodus was more than an event in the past. It was a precursor of redemp-tion in the future. Israel, as Moses warned, would not dwell securely in its land. It would forget its moral and spiritual vocation. It would be attracted to the pagan culture of its neighbours. By so doing it would lose its reason for existence and find itself unable, at times of crisis, to summon the shared vision and collective energy needed to prevail against neighbouring imperial powers. It would suffer defeat and exile. But despair would never prevail. In the past, God had brought His people from slavery to freedom and from exile to the land, and therefore He would do so again. The Jewish people never completely lost faith in God, because its Prophets knew that God would never completely lose faith in His people. His-tory intimated destiny. What happened once would happen again. That is what lies behind the words with which the Haggadah begins: "Now we are here; next year in the land of Israel. Now – slaves; next year we shall be free." The Jewish people kept the vision alive. It is not too much to say that the vision kept the Jewish people alive...

That is what Pesach was during more than eighteen centuries of exile and dispersion: a seed planted in Jewish memory, waiting to be activated, to grow. Without it, Jews would certainly have disappeared. Lacking hope of return – hope tempered by faith into a certainty-like steel – they would have made their peace with their condition, merged into their surrounding societies and ambient cultures, and vanished, like every other culture deprived of a home. Pesach, like a seed frozen in suspended animation, contained the latent energy that led Jews in the twentieth century to create the single most remarkable ac-complishment in the modern world, the rebirth of Israel, the land, the state, the nation, and the people. Micah's vision, and Ezekiel's, and Moses', came true. [*Pesach and the Rebirth of Israel,The Jonathan Sacks Haggada]*

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

That Moses' name is not mentioned even once in the Haggadah is one of the fascinating paradoxes in our tradition – the person who dedicated his entire life towards redeeming people is removed from the limelight on the one night when we focus all our attention on our enslavement in Egypt. As far as paradoxes go, this one is rich in irony; a text about redemption without the name of the redeemer.

Besides this Greek source of the word, there are those Sages who link the word karpas to the story of Joseph.

Rashi does it linguistically. In his commentary on the verse in which Joseph's coat of many colors is mentioned (k'tonet Pasim in Gen. 37:31), Rashi writes that the word passim, "… denotes a cloak of fine wool…" and he goes on to quote a verse from Megillat Esther in which the text describes the wealthy and rich embroidery of King Ahashveraus' palace: "There were hangings of white, fine cotton (Karpas)…" (Esther 1:6) Note the presence of 'pas' in both words.

What Rashi did linguistically, Rabenu Menoah (of Narbonne, late 13th century) in his commentary on certain sections of Mishne Torah (Laws of Chametz and Matzah, CH. 12, Hal. 8) expresses directly by explaining that the karpas we take at the beginning of the seder, "recalls for us the coat of many colors, which Jacob our Father made for Joseph and which was the crucial factor in the Jews' enslavement in Egypt." This idea is also discussed by Rabbi Solomon Kluger, (1785fi1869) in Yeriot Shlomo, his commentary on the Haggadah as well as other special prayers, that the only reason we ever got to Egypt was the result of Joseph being sold by his brothers.

But the connection between Joseph and aspects of the Passover seder is already hinted at in the Talmud. After the lamb was sacrificed in the Holy Temple, it was then brought to the place where it was going to be eaten. A Braita at the end of the fifth chapter of B.T. Pesachim discusses how the animal was slung over one's shoulder in its skin. To this discussion, R. Ilish adds one word, "Tayot," (B.T. Pesachim 65b) which Rashi explains is a reference to the manner in which Ishmaelite traders transport animals.

Although we know very little today about their techniques, R. Ilish's additional comment (as interpreted by Rashi) steers our mind back to another group of Ishmaelite traders who appeared on the horizon at a crucial moment in Joseph's life, providing Judah with the opportunity to declare: "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood. Come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites…" (Gen. 37:26-27) without the Ishmaelites, Joseph would have never ended up in Egypt.

The connection between aspect of the haggadah to the Joseph story is also evident in the charoset, featured on the Seder plate. According to the Yerushalmi, the blend of apples, date and wine into which we dip the maror (bitter herb) symbolizes the heinous act of the brothers when they dipped Joseph's coat – the k'tonet passim – into goat's blood, compounding their evil by allowing their father to believe that Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast.

The Joseph story involved two areas of mishaps. The first was the havoc that resulted from Jacob favoring Joseph over the other brothers. (Gen. 37:31) Jacob may have been justified in his love simply because Joseph was the child of his beloved Rachel. He may well have been the most talented, the most brilliant, the most obedient of all the sons, nevertheless the sibling rivalry Jacob put into play opened up a can of worms which we are suffering to this very day! Our lack of unity –and recent three elections – has its origins in the divided house of Jacob-Israel.

But on this night of the Seder, each and every father is given the opportunity to begin to turn things around. With the entire family gathered around the table, all the preparation and hard work creating an atmosphere of intense awareness, the Pesach haggadah allows the father to put certain ideas into practice – aspiring to achieve a desired equality and love between the children. This may not be an easy task, but it is of immeasurable importance. Our children did not ask to be born, and every child deserves to be loved and accepted unconditionally!

On a simple level, the youngest child, often the most overlooked, is given a measure of affirmative action this night, starting with the honor of asking the Four Questions. Soon after the theme of the night moves to the issues raised by the Four Children, but just as important as the issues they raise are their unique differences. What becomes clear to us – particularly in our generation – is the fact that they are all there, lovingly included in the seder, including the wicked child, whose cynical questions must be softened by familial affection. This means that we, the parents,

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have a chance to look at our children around the table and finally give each one the love that he or she needs and deserves!

The Talmud declares that it's forbidden for a father to single out one child over the others, citing Jacob as an example. (B.T. Shabbat 10b) Indeed, failure to do so leads toward broken families, brothers and sisters who don't speak to each other, resentment, pain, disgrace, and all kinds of emotions that fracture the unity of a family.

On the night of the Seder every parent becomes a teacher, and on this night every father has to remember Jacob's mistake. This is the first 'dipping'. And the second 'dipping' is that the fundamental sin of the Jewish people results from causeless hatred, demonstrated by the brothers' hatred toward Joseph, resulting in exile and slavery. Only if we overcome this other aspect of our lives – which we usually blame on all sorts of factors, like Jacob's choice of Joseph over the other brothers – do we have a chance to begin mending the rips and cracks in out national fabric.

The Seder not only looks backwards but it looks forward as well. The family heads have to be sensitive to sibling rivalry, finding ways to acknowledge the uniqueness of each child. And if we succeed on this level, implanting family structures which are loving and sharing and protective and caring, then the ground is being paved for the coming of the next redemption.

Quotes from the Roshei HaYeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Quote #1 from the Rosh Yeshiva
There are two parties that are "deprived" [of their due credit] at the Seder - Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish people. Moshe Rabbeinu['s credit being shirked] can be explained easily - we need to emphasize the Almighty's role in the redemption, to the exclusion of all others who were involved in the process. Thus, we cannot act to offset this. However, the commitment and love displayed by the Jewish people in following Hashem out of Egypt into the desert - (Yirmeyahu 2:2), is an aspect deserving of our attention and focus at the Seder! **-HaRav Yehuda Am ital zt"I, Leil HaSeder 5761**

Quote #2 from the Rosh Yeshiva
"The Torah speaks to four sons:' Two pedagogic directives issue from this passage. The first is the need for careful differentiation in the fields of education and outreach. There is no one answer, eternal and triumphant, to every question. Rather, the Torah teaches us that each and every generation, society and cultural milieu requires its own type of response. As the questioners differ one from the other in background and attitude, so must the answers.

The second lesson is that answers to the generation's questions must be prepared in advance. "And it will be that when (or if) your son asks you tomorrow..:' - the Torah is telling us that it is not enough to respond to current questions; thought must be devoted to questions the future will bring, and our responses must be made ready. **-Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"I**

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

That's Our Story and We're Sticking to It!
1. Kadesh – 2. Urchatz – 3 Karpas – 4. Yachatz – 5. Maggid – 6. Rachtzah – 7. Motzi – 8. Matzah 9. Maror 10. Korech – 11. Shulchan Orech -12. Tzafun – 13. Beirach – 14. Hallel – 15. Nirtzah – The 15 Steps of the Seder (As Outlined in the Pesach Haggadah)

Probably the longest part of the Haggadah and the Seder experience is the 5th step, Maggid. A five year old granddaughter who lives in Lakewood New Jersey came to us in Monsey for Chol HaMoed, after making their family Seder at home. When I asked her how the Seder was, her comment was, "Maggid was long like the Garden State Parkway!" It's an in depth and involved telling of a story. What kind of story is it? What's the purpose in retelling and reliving this ancient slice of history?

In Hebrew a Nagid, is a leader or a prince. A maggid is a leader with words. He tells inspirational stories. The Haggadah, from the same root word, is a coach, a guide, leading us to understand well our personal and national story.

One of the most important pieces of advice I ever received was initially very shocking to me. I was beginning a career project learning with doctors, lawyers, professionals, millionaires and billionaires, men of industry. So I asked a senior colleague who had been in this field for many decades which books I should be reading and which periodicals I should be subscribing to. He chuckled quietly to himself and said one thing, "Know your story!" That was it. I took it to heart and I went home and I started to write down in sequence the story of my life. Every time I would meet somebody new I would share some part of the story of my life. Where I came from and how I came to where I am now. Sometimes I tell the one minute elevator version and other times the epic tale. The writing down and telling over is one of the most therapeutic exercises I have ever engaged in. Why?

The stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves are the template for the experiences of our lives. If I am interviewing a new teacher I like to ask a few open end questions and then I listen to the story. "I see you worked here for a year then there for a year. Why did you change?" If the answer that this one messed me over and then that one messed me over, then I am alerted to the fact that I am being invited to be the next one to mess him over. I resist. When Hagar was running from Sara because she couldn't take the heat in the kitchen, she confronted an angel. The angel asked her two questions, "Where are you coming from and where are you going?" Her answer was, "I am fleeing Sara…" The angel told her to go back and submit herself to Sara. What did he hear in that story? I know what I am running away from. I don't know where I am going to. That's a formula for a repeat performance.

If someone sees themselves as a victim and they are the victim in the telling of their life story, then mysteriously they will tend to re-experience victimhood. That's the story!

If someone retells the story with a positive spin then everything changes. When driving a car the steering wheel turns the front wheels, which alters the direction of the vehicle. With a boat it's just the opposite. I once took my whole family on a boat trip and I was made to be the captain, the pilot after a brief crash course. (I don't know why they call it a crash course). I learned then that when we move the rudder which is behind the boat submerged in the past, the boat moves in a new direction.

Somebody came to a counselor and poured out their heart spelling out a life of woe, filled with suffering and pain and rejection, and loss. After listening carefully and validating their feelings, the counselor said to the client, "After having heard all of this, now I have two choices. I can either pity you or respect you. Which do you want?!"

If we look carefully at our story on Pesach, and this is the story we are telling now for 3333 years, we see a picture emerging that has stood for us in all generations. The story we tell about ourselves is, "We are incredibly resilient. We have a special and everlasting relationship with HASHEM. We have an important date with destiny in Jerusalem. With such a story each moment that passes and every move we make is another baby or giant step closer. That's our story and we're sticking to it!

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

"Who Passed Over The Houses of the Children of Israel" Based on an article by Harav Yaakov Medan

I. "It Is the Sacrifice of the Lord's Passover"
And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say to you, "What do you mean by this service?" that you shall say, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover (pesach), who passed over (pasach) the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote Egypt, and delivered our houses"... (Shemot 12:26-27)
The Torah explains the term "pesach" with the fact that God passed over (pasach) the houses of the children of Israel and rescued them. The accepted uFor the Lord will pass through to smite Egypt; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two sideposts, the Lord

will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer (mashchit) to come into your houses to smite you. (12:23)nderstanding of this verse is that God Himself came down to smite the firstborn of Egypt, as Chazal have expounded: "For I shall pass through the land of Egypt" - I Myself, and not an angel; "And I shall smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt" - I Myself, and not a seraph; "And against all the gods of Egypt I shall execute judgment" - I myself, and not a messenger; "I am the Lord" - I am He, there is no other. (Pesach Haggada)

It was God Himself who saw the paschal blood on the doorposts of the houses of Israel, passed over them, and refrained from smiting them. According to this understanding, God's "passing over" means that He refrained from taking action. When God smote the firstborn of Egypt, He refrained from harming the firstborn of Israel. This interpretation gave rise to the popular expression "pose'ach al shtei ha-se'ipim" in reference to a person who refrains from deciding which path to choose.
I have three difficulties with the accepted explanation.

1) How did the blood on the doorposts cause God to refrain from smiting the firstborn of Israel (unless this was a "royal decree," without reason, that the houses with blood on their doorways would not suffer harm)?

2) The plain sense of the verses seems to imply just the opposite - God Himself did not strike the firstborn of Egypt, but it was precisely His agent, the :"destroyer" (mashchit), who did so
For the Lord will pass through to smite Egypt; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two sideposts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer (mashchit) to come into your houses to smite you. (12:23)

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you (le-mashchit), when I smite the land of Egypt. (12:13)

3) The source of the expression "pose'ach al shtei ha-se'ipim" is found in the words of the prophet Eliyahu on Mount Carmel: "How long will you go hopping between 2 branches? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Ba'al, then follow him" (I Melakhim 18:21). The original meaning of the expression is not "refraining from taking either path," but rather following both! The people of Israel in the days of Achav worshipped both God and Ba'al, like a bird who builds its nest on 2 branches (se'ipim), hopping back and forth {pose'ach) between them.

II. "And He Said to the Angel That Destroyed, 'It Is Enough, Now Hold Your Hand"'

The source of the derasha in the Pesach Haggada seems to be a passage cited in 2 places in the Yerushalmi:
When the Merciful came to redeem Israel, He sent neither an agent, nor an angel, but rather it was He Himself. As it is written: "And I shall pass through the land of Egypt" - He and His entire entourage. (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 2:1; see also Horayot 3:1)

In this derasha, what is attributed to God is the redemption of Israel, not the smiting of the firstborn.

It seems, then, that God did not pass over the houses of Israel in the sense of skipping from one house to the next and refraining from acting upon them. To the contrary, He passed over them in the sense that His Shekhina hovered over them. He handed over the act of destruction to an agent, and it was that agent who smote the firstborn of Egypt. But God was not prepared to hand over to an agent the task of protecting His firstborn son, Israel, so that the destroyer should not enter through his doorway. He Himself - as it were - hopped from one Israelite house to another, stood over them and prevented the destroyer from entering and causing harm. The paschal blood placed on the doorposts of the houses was like sacrificial blood, which in later generations would be placed on the corners of the altar. Every Israelite house achieved the status of an altar, and the Shekhina rested upon it, in the sense of "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar" (Amos 9:1).

We find a similar relationship between God and His angel in another place as well. This is what was said at Mount Moriah, when God revealed Himself to David, His anointed one: And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. And as He was about to destroy, the Lord beheld, and He relented of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, "It is enough, now hold your hand." And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Yevusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord standing between the earth and the heaven, with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces . And David said to God... "Let your hand, I pray You, 0 Lord, my God, be on me, and on my father's house, but not on Your people, that they should be plagued." Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David that David should go up, and set up an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Yevusite. (I Divrei Ha-yamim 21:15-18)

The angel was the destroyer, and God protected His people and did not allow the destroyer to destroy them. His protection of His people came simultaneously with the setting up of the altar on Mount Moriah and with the designation of the place where the Shekhina would reveal itself.

Ill. "He Will Defend It and Deliver It; He Will Pass Over It and Spare It"

God acted in the same manner on Pesach of a later generation, when the armies of Sancheriv, king of Ashur, laid siege to Jerusalem during the days of Chizkiyahu. At that time, the Assyrian king boasted about his strength mockingly (see Yeshayahu 10:14). Sancheriv likened the gods of the nations to birds that fled their nests instead of protecting their eggs, and this was also the way he related to the God of Israel. To this, the prophet responded : "As birds hovering, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem; He will defend it and deliver it; He will pass over it {paso'ach) and spare it." (31:5)

For surely our God is not like their gods, and our God - who is likened to a bird - will protect His nest, Jerusalem, and its residents. He will pass over and hover over Jerusalem, and from the heights of His holy heavens, He will give it protection.

And, indeed, this is what happened, as on the night of Pesach at midnight (see 37:36). The destroying angel smote the armies of Ashur, and the Shekhina hovered, passing over Jerusalem and protecting it so that the destroyer should not enter. There is an important lesson to be learned from this: We are the children of God, and He Himself in all His glory protects us. He who dares cast out his defiled hand at us will not go unpunished. *Translated by David Strauss*

Leil HaSeder: Eliyahu, the Unifier of Worlds: By Rav Elyakim Krumbein

The image of Eliyahu the Prophet breaks down one of the fundamental assumptions of our existence, of a great divide separating our material world from the upper spiritual realms. Eliyahu frequently appears before the Sages, always in the guise of a comfortable inhabitant of both worlds and as a link between them. Abravanel (Melakhim 2:2) attributes this to Elisha's request of Eliyahu to place upon him "a double amount of his spirit:' Elisha expressed the desire that Eliyahu would continue to cause his spirit to rest upon him even after Eliyahu's ascent to heaven. Elisha's stance on the separating line between the 2 worlds was the bridgehead that allowed Eliyahu's personality to continue to have an impact. There is no doubt, Abravanel concludes, that Eliyahu'sappearances in the study halls ofthe sages"was the consequence of Elisha'srequest that Eliyahu should continue to communicate with him all of his life; this possibility remained operative for the sages:' Eliyahu appears to be a phenomenon sui generis, but it seems that in fact a general truth is reflected through him. The Or Ha-chaim (Bemidbar 21 :17) writes:

The main part of a person's reward for the performance of the mitzvot only occurs in the

spiritual world... and this makes it necessary for a person to leave this material world in order to receive his just reward from God's gracious hands. We see that death is the result of human sin, which implies that in the absence of sin, human beings would be immortal and therefore lacking their eternal reward! The mystics explain, however, that in the absence of sin a person would ascend heavenward while alive and inhabit the upper chambers. An example of this is the fate of Eliyahu... who ascended heavenward to receive his reward and escaped the taste of death.

A delineation between the worlds is neither necessary nor intrinsic. If we would merit it, all of us - and not only Eliyahu - would be able to freely experience passage between them. R. Zadok Ha-kohen of Lublin expressed the idea contained here (Resisai Layla 11):

In truth, all the matters of this world are also by the hand of God, and this world and the next are not at all different realities. Both of them are called "Olam," a term which is all-encompassing. The sole difference between the is that one of them is called "Ha-zeh" or "this world"because it is apparent to the eye; the other is called "Ha-ba"or"the next world,"because it is hidden (ne'elam).
The link between these worlds is the source of all unification. It should therefore not surprise us that Eliyahu appears as the one who effects unity in various spheres of human life, as the verse states (Malakhi 3:24): "He will return the heart of parents to children, and the heart of children to their parents:'The Mishna at the end of Eiduyot ascribes to Eliyahu the role of reconciling disagreements and forging peace. Our Sages further state (Kiddushin 70a): "Whoever marries a woman who is improper for him - Eliyahu binds him and God lashes him," because such a person has transgressed by desiring an inappropriate unification.

The Question - The Key To Unification
Occasionally, a person merits discovering a spiritual deficiency within himself, but does not know how to fill it. He is trapped by the conceptual limits of the material world and sanctity lies beyond his purview. He needs a guide to show him the way to unify the spiritual realm and the material one, and he, too, can derive lessons from Eliyahu.
Eliyahu is charged with another task- "Let it remain in abeyance until Eliyahu comes,""The Tishbi will resolve difficulties and questions:' Eliyahu is responsible for resolving doubts and answering difficulties. Eliyahu's revelations are tied to a question. Any other appearance of his is without meaning. "Should Eliyahu appear to inform us that we may not conduct the chalitza ceremony with a sandal, we would not listen to him" (Yevamot 102a). We know that this is permissible, and whatever Eliyahu reveals to us without being asked will not change our minds. The key to Eliyahu's revelations, to the unification of the worlds, is the question. A halakhic query leads to a halakhic resolution. If we seek an existential revelation, then we are required to ask an existential question.

The questions which are in the realm of "teiku" or "let it remain in abeyance" are those which human reason cannot resolve. These constitute the link between this world and the next, because they bring us close to the limits of our insight. A man lives his everyday life according to his reason, but as soon as he realizes that his intellect cannot solve his true problems - to understand his life and his world he stands at the threshold of the next world. One modern philosopher set himself a double goal: firstly, to resolve all the problems that have confronted philosophers from time immemorial. Next, to demonstrate how the resolution of these questions lacks meaning. The true questions will continue to gnaw away at us, and there is no answer to them. These questions are not serene ones for politely discourse, but rather arise as cries of anguished despair. They arise out of the realization that the human intellect, with all its glory, is powerless to answer them. The solution to these problems exists, but it is beyond our grasp.

Elisha expressed just such a question as his mentor was about to leave him: "Where is Hashem, the God of Eliyahu?" According to the text, this cry brought about the resting of Eliyahu's spirit upon him. While Eliyahu was alive, Elisha could learn Torah from him and could benefit from his guidance. Now, however, Eliyahu had vanished, and although Elisha did his best to stem the waters of the Jordan River as he had been taught, it was to no avail. The answer was to be found with his mentor, beyond the divide between the worlds. At that moment, Elisha realized in the depths of his heart that this world without the next is an impossible goal, a riddle that cannot be solved; it is like the waters of the Jordan that slip away from his attempts to stem them and mock his efforts. Elisha reaches the moment of crisis, and at that moment the question bursts forth from the depths of his being. Only then does Eliyahu descend in the whirlwind to unify this world with the next, as the response that unites with the question.

This notion constituted an integral part of Eliyahu's training while he was yet alive. At Mount Carmel Eliyahu asks the people (I Melakhim 18:21): "For how long will you hesitate between the choices?" In the absence of this question, Eliyahu knows that even the descent of a heavenly fire will not change the situation. First it is essential to raise one's consciousness to realize the deficiency of not having posed the question. The people did not respond to his query; was their silence an indicator that the question had in fact pierced their callous hearts? In the depths of their souls did they come to realize that lives of hypocrisy lack meaning and that there is no reason to go on without a revelation from above? The results seem to indicate that Eliyahu's attempt failed. The people did not arise as a single entity to cast off the yoke of Ba'al worship, and Queen lzevel continued with her evil machinations. Although with their mouths they cried out, "Hashem is God!" they were perfectly content to continue leading their lives in a world understood as a self-contained unit, which did not need any sort of meaning from higher realms. It is even possible to bring down fire from heaven, but if that fire does not come to answer a soul-wrenching question, it will return to its heavenly source and life will continue unchanged. The chasm between the worlds will endure.

A Person Knows Everything - Except To Ask
For the modern man, this world is enough. The scientific explanation of life and the world describes, in a numerical and quantitative fashion, the inter-relationship of the components of existence. We fool ourselves into believing that science addresses the spiritual content of the world and presents us with an adequate explanation. Modern man therefore has no chance of discovering Eliyahu, who unifies the worlds. Modern man comes to the next world only through death, which is the absolute negation of his life in this world.

This, however, is not a new phenomenon. According to our sages, Achav claimed that he had erected an idolatrous image on every furrow, and that it was impossible to traverse the fields because of the all of the rain that fell as a result (Sanhedrin 113a).This represents the construction of an illusory mechanistic model of existence, which is self-sufficient and has no room for a spiritual dimension. The pressing of a button, the entering of a number into an ATM brings a person complete satisfaction. The behavior of the gods is completely predictable - one need only supply their needs and the rains will surely come. Eliyahu realized that it is impossible to bring a people with such an attitude to the next world except through the vehicle of "death," which is the complete abnegation of this world. And so the rains were halted, until the right hour would come for the event at Mount Carmel when the people's eyes might be opened. They might then realize that the world is an unfathomable mystery, when all the mechanistic explanations are nothing more than diversions and superficial illusions.

Eliyahu On Seder Eve
Questions stand at the center of the Seder experience. With great insight, the Haggada distinguishes between different types of questioners. The wise son realizes that notwithstanding all of his wisdom, he still does not understand. He understands the statutes and laws intellectually but is still searching for their deeper meaning. The wicked son shows no interest in answers, posing theoretical questions to demonstrate his perspicacity. The simple son has not studied; his spiritual needs

consist in acquiring the basic knowledge that he lacks.

It appears that the greatest educational effort of the Haggada is directed towards the child who does not know how to ask. Great thought was expended by the Sages and by those who came after them to properly fulfill the mitzva of "You initiate him:' There is no indication whatsoever that this child is mentally deficient or intellectually lacking. His only limitation is that he does not know how to ask, he is afraid of admitting that everything is so incomprehensible. On the contrary, it is precisely the intellectually gifted who are likely to suffer from this deficiency. Those Seder rituals that are uncommon and even seem strange provide a significant allusion to our existential state in this world. Their goal is to bring each one of us to recognize the boundaries of our understanding, and to deeply desire to transcend those limitations by posing the QUESTION. The hope is that then "God will fulfill all of our requests" and the door will be opened for the entrance of Eliyahu the Prophet. *Translated by Michael Hattin*

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The Chagiga of the Fourteenth of Nissan: Covenant and Community
Dr. Alan Jotkowitz

In addition to the regular korban chagiga (festive sacrifice) brought on the first day of Pesach as on every holiday, the Mishna in Pesachim (69b) teaches that under certain circumstances, a korban chagiga would be brought on the 14th of Nissan as well:

When does one bring a chagiga with the [korban pesach]? When [the pesach] is brought on a weekday, in a state of tahara (purity), and the number of Pesachim is small (mu'at).[1] But when [the pesach] is brought on Shabbat, in a great quantity (merubeh),[2] or in a state of tum'a (impurity), we do not bring a chagiga with it. A chagiga may be brought from the flock, from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats, from male or female animals; and it may be eaten for two days and one night.

The Gemara (70a) infers from the fact that one does not bring a korban chagiga if the 14th of Nissan is Shabbat, or if one is in a state of tum'a, that it is not an obligatory korban. Why bring this chagiga at all, if it is not obligatory? The Gemara quotes a baraita to explain:

The chagiga that accompanies the pesach is eaten first, so that the pesach will be eaten in a state of satiation [al hasova].

The implication from this Gemara is that the chagiga of the 14th is a Rabbinic enactment, instituted for the purpose of ensuring that each person would eat enough to be full when eating the korban pesach. The Midrash Halakha (Sifrei Devarim 129), however, implies that the chagiga of the 14th is included in the Torah's command: "…of the flock and of the herd" [Devarim 16:2]. "Of the flock" – for the pesach sacrifice; "and of the herd" – for the chagiga offering."

The Rambam, apparently referencing both the Gemara and the Sifrei, writes: When we offer the pesach in the first month, we sacrifice thanksgiving offerings (shlamim) together with it on the 14th… and this is what is known as the "chagiga of the 14th, about which it is written in the Torah, "You shall offer a Pesach unto the Lord your God, of the flock and of the herd." When do we bring this chagiga together with it? When it falls on a weekday, and in purity, and in a small quantity. But if the 14th falls on Shabbat, or when the pesach is brought in a state of [national] impurity, or if the pesach sacrifices are large in volume, then we do not bring a chagiga offering together with it; the pesach alone is offered. The chagiga of the 14th is voluntary and not obligatory. (Laws of the pesach Sacrifice 10:12-13)

The obvious question is: Why is this chagiga voluntary, despite the Sifrei's Torah source for it and in contrast to the obligatory chagiga of every other holiday?

Korban and Covenant - In order to answer this question, we have to understand the nature of the 14th of Nissan and what we are celebrating – namely, the covenant between God and the Jewish People. The whole korban pesach ceremony represents a rejection of Egyptian culture and beliefs, as Shemot Rabba (16, 3) states:

"Draw and take for yourselves sheep" [Shemot 12:21] – as it is written, "All who worship idols shall be shamed" (Tehillim 97:7). When the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moshe to slaughter the pesach sacrifice, Moshe said: Master of the world – how can I do this thing? How can You not know that sheep are the gods of the Egyptians? As it is written, "Shall we then offer up the god [literally, 'the abomination'] of the Egyptians before their eyes, without having them stone us?" (Shemot 8:22). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: By your life, Israel will not leave here until they have slaughtered the gods of the Egyptians before their eyes, that I may make known to them that their gods are worth nothing…[3]

Once they had demonstrated their rejection of Egypt's gods by slaughtering the korban pesach, the Jewish People could then accept the yoke of Heaven and enter into a covenant with God. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, zt"l, writes regarding this covenant:

It means that until the people had signified their consent, the revelation could not proceed. There is no legitimate government without the consent of the governed, even if the governor is Creator of heaven and earth. I know of few more radical ideas anywhere. To be sure, there were sages in the Talmudic period who questioned whether the acceptance of the covenant at Sinai was completely free. However, at the heart of Judaism is the idea – way ahead of its time, and not always fully realised – that the free God desires the free worship of free human beings. God, said the rabbis, does not act tyrannically with His creatures.[4]

The korban pesach is one of only two positive mitzvot for which non-performance is punished with karet, being cut off from the Jewish people; the other is brit mila. Both of these mitzvot represent the covenant with God, and bringing the korban pesach each year represents renewal of that eternal covenant.

Now it becomes obvious why the korban chagiga of the day is voluntary. The korban pesach represents renewing the covenant; attaching an optional second korban to it lends a voluntary aspect to that renewal. Every year, the Jewish People accept God's sovereignty voluntarily; so, too, they bring the chagiga of the 14th voluntarily. And that is perhaps why the Rambam emphasizes the point that the korban "is voluntary and not obligatory."

Covenant without Korban - Are there any echoes of this yearly voluntary acceptance of the covenant in a time when we are no longer able to bring korbanot?

The Mishna (50a) states: In a place where the people have the custom to do work (melakha) on erev Pesach until midday, one may work; in a place where they have the custom not to do work, one may not work.

After midday, everyone agrees work is forbidden: some say the prohibition is biblical, because it is the time of the sacrificing of the korban pesach (Tosafot 50a s.v. makom shenahgu, based on the Yerushalmi); others are of the opinion that work is prohibited only on a Rabbinic level, so people will have time to prepare for the holiday (Rashi 50a. s.v. shelo la'asot).

Before midday, work depends on custom; Chazal left it up to the people to decide the character of the day. Is the day of the renewal of the covenant, even in the absence of the korban pesach, a holiday or a regular workday?

The Rambam writes: After midday on Pesach afternoon, a person who works at that time should be placed under a ban of ostracism. Needless to say, if he was not placed under a ban of ostracism, he should be given stripes for rebelliousness. For the 14th of Nissan differs from the day preceding other holidays, because at that time the chagiga is brought and the pesach is slaughtered. Therefore, the performance of labor on the 14th of Nissan is forbidden by Rabbinical decree, as on Chol Ha-Mo'ed. [The rulings pertaining to the 14th of Nissan] are, however, more lenient than [those pertaining to] Chol Ha-Mo'ed. Moreover, it is forbidden to perform labor on [the 14th of Nissan] only from midday onward, for this is the time when the sacrifice is

offered. From sunrise until noon, [the practice] depends on [local] custom. In places where it is customary to perform labor, one may. In places where it is not customary to perform labor, one may not. (Laws of the Holidays 8:17-18)

The Rambam explicitly ties abstention from work to the korban chagiga, even though the korban is only voluntary, and leaves the parameters of the prohibition up to local custom. During the times of the Temple, it was up to the Jewish People to decide whether or not to celebrate the 14th of Nissan as a holiday by bringing an extra korban; after the destruction of the Temple, it remained in the people's jurisdiction to determine the nature of the day by abstaining from or permitting work.[5]

The Pesach and the Chagiga - The Gemara notes that Ben Teima disagrees with the Mishna above, and has a different perspective on the chagiga of the 14th:

Ben Teima says: the chagiga that is brought along with the pesach [on the 14th] is similar to the pesach and [like the korban pesach] may be eaten only for a single day and the following night. (Pesachim 70a)

The Gemara questions Ben Teima's comparison to korban pesach with a series of questions. Does the chagiga have to be eaten roasted like the pesach? Does the chagiga have to be a one-year-old male sheep or goat like the pesach? Does the prohibition of "breaking a bone" while eating likewise apply to the chagiga?

In the final analysis, the Gemara determines that all three halakhot do in fact apply to the chagiga of the 14th. Why, then, did the Gemara need to analyze each question independently? Couldn't it have offered just one affirmative answer?

In order to answer this question, we need a deeper understanding of the mitzva of korban pesach. Unlike other korbanot, the korban pesach involves two separate mitzvot: the sacrificing of the korban and the eating of the korban. The Bet Halevi explains (volume 1, chapter 2) that in the case of a regular korban, there is no personal obligation to eat the meat; rather, the sacrificial process demands that the meat be eaten. That requirement relates to the meat itself and does not have to be fulfilled by any particular individual; it is a chovat cheftza, obligation regarding an object, i.e., the meat. The korban pesach, on the other hand, includes a chovat gavra – an obligation upon each person – to eat the korban.[6]

Understanding the distinction between these two mitzvot of the korban pesach provides a framework within which we can analyze its details. The prohibition of breaking the bones is clearly related to the mitzva of eating the korban pesach. As the Sefer Hachinuch explains (mitzva 16), sons of kings do not eat like dogs, gnawing and breaking the bones. The type of animal used for the korban, however, is related to the mitzva of sacrificing the korban pesach; as discussed above, we sacrifice a sheep to symbolize the slaughtering of the Egyptian gods.

What about the mitzva to roast the korban pesach? Is that related to sacrificing the korban or to eating it? On the surface, it might seem to relate to the eating of the korban: as the Sefer Hachinuch explains (mitzva 7), we eat roasted meat on Pesach night because it is "the way of the sons of kings and the officers to eat roasted meat, because it is good and tasty."

However, there is a suggestion in the Sifrei in Parashat Re'eh that the roasting of the korban pesach, like other aspects of the service, must be done lishma – purely for the sake of the mitzva – rather than for any personal benefit. This requirement would indicate that the roasting relates to the sacrifice rather than to the eating of the korban. (Rav Zolty, zt"l, offers other proofs for this contention.)[7]

Perhaps both aspects, the sacrificing as well as the eating, are expressed in the mitzva to roast the korban pesach.

With this analysis, we can understand why the Gemara highlights all three details in questioning whether the chagiga is truly comparable to the korban pesach. The question of breaking the bones addresses whether the chagiga shares the eating aspect of the korban pesach; the question of the identity of the korban probes whether it also shares the sacrificial laws; and the discussion of roasting emphasizes that according to Ben Teima, the chagiga shares both aspects with the pesach.

Taking all this into account, we have a new understanding of the chagiga of the 14th: While the Tana of our Mishna treated the pesach and chagiga as two separate korbanot, Ben Teima sees the chagiga as an expansion of the korban pesach that assumes the same laws with regard to both the sacrificial procedure and the eating of the korban.[8]

Chagiga and Community - Why, then, according to Ben Teima, do we bring a chagiga of the 14th at all?

Rashi explains our original Mishna differently from the Rambam (whose understanding was assumed above). In his view, we bring the chagiga of the 14th when the pesach is insufficient to satiate all those who registered – i.e., when we expand the number of people with whom we are celebrating the holiday, so that there is not enough meat in the korban pesach to satisfy them all. Through the chagiga, our personal holiday is transformed into a communal one. After all, on the 14th of Nissan, not only did we each make a covenant with God but we also became the nation of Israel. This beginning of peoplehood is worthy of being celebrated as a community, and the chagiga of the 14th enables us to do so while still fulfilling the requirement to eat the korban pesach in a state of satiation.[9]

As Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l, explains: Interestingly, the symbol of redemption in the Torah is the korban pesah, the paschal offering, which is a very strange sacrifice. The concept of havura, community, is completely non-existent regarding other offerings: shelamim, hatat, ola, and asham. Pesah has been linked up by the Torah with havura to such an extent that one sage is of the opinion that an individual cannot offer the paschal lamb; only a group may do so (Pesahim 91a). The pesah differs from all other sacrifices because it is a symbol of herut, freedom. The Torah calls the paschal lamb, "seh le-veit avot, seh la-bayit, a lamb according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a household" (Ex. 12:3), because freedom expresses itself in the realm of bayit, of community, of being together. Bayit is a new category which was revealed to the Jews as they gained their freedom.

The Rav also writes: A new fellowship was formed around the paschal lamb; a new community sprang into existence. Being together, living with each other, sharing something many possess in common was made possible by the ceremonial of the paschal lamb. The Halakha coined the term havura with reference to the group gathering together for this ceremonial.[10]

These ideas of covenant and community may explain why there are two mitzvot related to the korban pesach. The mitzva to sacrifice the pesach commemorates the covenant between God and the Jewish People, and the mitzva to eat calls on us to celebrate with our fellow Jews the birth of a new nation.[11] And these two aspects might also be present in the chagiga of the 14th. The korban is voluntary because acceptance of the covenant is voluntary – but the Jewish People chose to bring it, in order to celebrate the holiday together as a community and not as individuals.

At no time in recent memory has the importance of community been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to factors beyond our control, we live in a time when the number of pesachim is small. And when it is most needed, we all sorely miss the love and support that our communities provide. However, our Pesach seder is also a celebration of hope. At the end of our sedarim, we will joyfully proclaim, "Next year in Jerusalem!" We look forward to celebrating with our extended family and community, together in health, marking the renewal of our eternal covenant with the One in Heaven and the solidarity and unity of the Jewish People.

[1] Translated in accordance with Rambam's commentary on the Mishna (6:3).
[2] According to Rambam's commentary; see previous note. Presumably, the reason for this

limitation is that the high numbers of Pesachim would make additional Chagigot too onerous for the Kohanim. See below for another explanation of the terms mu'at and merubeh.
[3] For further discussion of the idea of the korban pesach as a representation of the covenant between God and the Jewish People, see Rav Yonatan Grossman's essay available at https://www.etzion.org.il/en/korban-pesach-defining-israel-gods-people.
[4] Available at https://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/12812.
[5] As stated, Rashi (50a s.v. shelo la'asot) maintains that the reason for the prohibition of work on erev Pesach is so that one will not forget to burn one's chametz or to bring the korban pesach. Other Rishonim, based on the Yerushalmi (Pesachim 4:1 and 4:6), maintain that the day of the bringing of the korban pesach is itself a holiday. For further discussion of this issue, see the article by Rabbi Yair Kahn available at https://www.etzion.org.il/en/prohibition-work-erev-pesach.
[6] For further discussion, see the article by Rabbi Moshe Taragin available at https://www.etzion.org.il/en/eating-korban-pesach-0.
[7] Mishnat Ya'avetz, Orach Chaim 24. I first learned this source from Rabbi Shalom Rosner.
[8] The argument between the Tana of the Mishna and Ben Teima, regarding whether the chagiga of the 14th is an independent korban or an extension of the korban pesach, might be reflected in two other disagreements: (1) Rabbi Yishmael maintains that the beracha on the korban pesach also covers the chagiga of the 14th, while Rabbi Akiva disagrees; see the Mishna in Pesachim 120a. (2) Is the chagiga of the 14th sacrificed at the time of the korban pesach, after the daily Korban Tamid of Mincha? For further discussion, see the Tosafot Rid (Pesachim 69b), who maintains that the chagiga is sacrificed after the Tamid, and the Mishneh Lamelekh, Laws of the Vessels of the Sanctuary 6:9, for an extended discussion of the matter. It is interesting to note that even according to the Tana of our Mishna, one aspect of the pesach might be reflected in the chagiga of the 14th: The Tzlach maintains that everyone agrees the prohibition of "breaking the bones" applies to the chagiga, because that halakha is related to the eating of the korban rather than to the sacrificing of the korban. There is also a discussion of whether semikha [leaning], nesachim [libations], and waving of the breast and thigh – obligatory for a korban shelamim – apply to the chagiga of the 14th. See Pesachim 96b with Rashi and Meiri ad loc. And see Rashi (Pesachim 89b s.v. v'al chagigato) regarding applying the unique law of registering for the korban pesach to the chagiga of the 14th as well.
[9] There is an interesting suggestion (see Rashi, Shemot 12:48) that a new convert brings a korban pesach even if it is not Pesach, perhaps to mark the dual aspects of conversion: establishing a covenant with God and becoming part of the Jewish People.
[10] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesah and the Haggadah, eds. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (Jersey City, 2006), pp. 43, 23.
[11] For further discussion of this point, see the article by Rabbi Yair Kahn available at https://www.etzion.org.il/en/ha-chodesh-ha-zeh-lakhem-rosh-chodashim.

OTS Dvar Torah

"Then", Moshe and the Children of Israel shall sing

By Rabbanit Rachel Reinfeld-Wachtfogel

On the seventh day of Passover, we will read (individually this year, in our homes) a passage of the Torah describing one of the greatest and most formative events in the history of the Jewish people – the splitting of the Red Sea. How is this event, which transpired over three thousand years ago, connected to us? To address this question, we'll revisit some of the verses and midrashim that describe the event.

Having walked on dry land within the sea and seen the water that stood like walls "to their right and left", the people of Israel "… saw the wondrous power which Hashem had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared Hashem; and they had faith in Hashem and His servant Moses." Numbers (14:31). Immediately thereafter, the text reads: "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to Hashem. I will sing to Hashem…" (ibid., 15:1).

These verses have sparked many questions. Why now, finally, did the Israelites believe in Hashem? How can we explain this new faith, after they had already proclaimed their faith earlier, when they were still in Egypt, after Moses had shown them the signs, "… and the people were convinced when they heard that Hashem had taken note of the Israelites…" (Exodus 4:31)? Also, what does the word "" az" – "then" means here, and how does this conjunction link the recognition of Hashem that we read of in the previous verse with shirat hayam, the Song at the Sea. The word "will sing" is also puzzling. Why is the future tense used, rather than az shar, "and then, it [the nation] sang"? Alternatively, the verse could have said vayashir, another biblical past tense (the inverted past)?

Faith for Generations - We'll begin by answering how the faith expressed at the Red Sea differed from the faith the people already had when Moses came to them to tell them of the redemption that was on its way and the faith derived from their witnessing of the ten plagues and other great miracles in Egypt? The midrash (Shemot Rabbah on Parashat Beshalach, paragraph 23:2) explains that the nation had become weak in their faith, but then, "since they had come to the sea and had witnessed the greatness of the Holy One Blessed Be He and how He had exacted justice from evildoers… immediately, 'they had faith in Hashem.'" Owing to this faith, the divine spirit rested upon them, and they chanted this song, as it is written: "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to Hashem – 'then' is nothing but an expression of faith".

The author of the Sefat Emet expands on the unique quality of this new faith in Pesach 5639: "This is faith for generations. The Israelites witnessed [Hashem's] great hand and believed in the Holy One, Blessed Be He, that whenever they are beset by distress, darkness and diaspora in the future, their faith in the Holy One shall not subside… And just as the redemption from Egypt encompassed all of the redemptions, so too, in all of the actions, the outcry, the faith and the songs formed an opening and a gateway for all generations." Just as the redemption from Egypt acts as a prototype for all future redemptions, providing hope in imminent redemptions, so, too, the faith on the sea serves as a prototype and a source of inspiration for all of the songs and faith of the Jewish people, in all generations. This helps us understand the use of the future tense in the song that was sung that day: "they shall sing".

The King, the Holy One Blessed Be He - Now, let's shift our focus to the meaning of the conjunction "then", connecting the splitting of the Red Sea and new faith in G-d, and the Song of the Red Sea. Through Psalm 93, which discusses the splitting of the Red Sea, the Midrash (ibid., 1) explains precisely what had happened "then", at that revelation at the sea:

Brachia said, in the name of R. Abahu: Although You have existed for all time, You have not ascended Your throne and You weren't recognized in Your world until your children sang a song. That is why the verse states "Your throne stands firm from of old" (Psalms 93:2).
Though Hashem has existed from the time of creation, and even before that, "once You stood at the sea, and we sang a song to you with, az, then, Your kingship and throne became established (there), and His name became recognized in His world!" The greatness of the moment of song in the word az is the crowning of the Holy One, Blessed Be He in our world, by His nation. The Midrash expresses the idea that "there is no king without a nation", and until the nation crowns the king, even if that king has been ruling the world from the moment of its inception, the king does not sit on His royal throne until He is crowned, since "in multitudes there is glorification of the king". The Baal Hatanya, in Shaar Hayichud Veha'emuna, chapter 7, writes wonderful things about this: "Behold, for all know that the purpose of the creation of the world is to bring about the revelation the kingship of the Blessed One, for there is no king without a nation… for even if He were to have begotten a great many sons, kingship over them would not be relevant there, nor would it apply if only ministers had accepted [the kingship], only with multitudes there is glorification of the King". We have an opportunity to continue crowning the Holy One, Blessed Be every day, by saying the Song of the Sea during the Shacharit prayer.

Retroactive gratitude to Hashem - Another commentary on the expression az, which links what Israel had experienced in the past with the revelation of faith and song, appears in the Sefat Emet (ibid., 5641). The author explains that the expression manifests a retrospective understanding the people had for what they went through. "This means that they believed, retroactively, in the entire diaspora, and accepted it with love, and they broke out in song over everything, even those things that

hardened Pharaoh's heart". With these wondrous words, the Sefat Emet tells us that faith revolves not only around redemption and salvation by Hashem, but also around the understanding that even the terrible suffering we endure (in every generation) comes from Hashem, and that it isn't without reason, even if we don't understand the reason. Therefore, they sang a song – they sang about the everything, redemption, but also exile. The author of the Sefat Emet ends with words of encouragement: "… and thus, we should recognize this diaspora, as it is written: 'I will show him wondrous deeds, as in the days when You sallied forth from the land of Egypt'" (Micah 7:15).

During these troubling times, when we have been holed up in our homes, feeling as if we were exiled from our synagogues, detached from the family gatherings of the Pesach festival and everything else with which we are familiar, we can still cling to the words "then" Moshe and the Children of Israel shall sing. Let us keep in mind that at the end of this process, we will express our gratitude for both the exile and the redemption (even if we can't understand the need for this exile). We will continue crowning Hashem as our King every day, when we recall our departure from Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea, on Shabbatot and on the days of Pesach, and in so doing, we'll be proclaiming our faith in Hashem even when in exile, for the Jewish People, standing in the Red Sea, planted within us the seeds of faith for generations, and that faith endures even during times of darkness and disease.

We pray to Hashem to bolster the faith in our hearts at this time, and we wish good health and a speedy recovery to each and every person, wherever he or she may be.

BS"D

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A **GUIDE TO EREV PESACH THAT OCCURS ON SHABBOS**

By: Rabbi Dovid Heber

Note: This article was originally written for Kashrus Kurrents 2001 and revised for the 2021 Passover Guide. The halachos apply whenever Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos. The next occurrences will take place in 2025 and then not again until 2045.

Many of us are quite familiar with the regular Erev Pesach routine: The bechorim go to a siyum, the chometz is burned, and we prepare for the Seder. However, every so often,1 Erev Pesach occurs on Shabbos and we must modify our routine. Let us review the halachos of Shabbos Erev Pesach.

Thursday – Taanis Bechorim/Bedikas Chometz

On a regular Erev Pesach the first-born males (bechorim) are obligated to fast. This year the fast is pushed back to Thursday. Those bechorim who do not wish to fast should attend a siyum. Thursday night after tzeis hakochavim (when it gets dark), one should immediately perform bedikas chometz. A bracha and Kol Chamira (same as usual) are recited.

Friday – Erev Shabbos

Chometz which is necessary for Friday night and Shabbos morning meals should be placed in a disposable container away from all Pesach food. Although chometz may be purchased and eaten all day Friday, the custom is to sell and burn the chometz before the sof zman biur chometz (i.e., end of the 5th halachic hour of the day) corresponding to when that time occurs on the actual day of Erev Pesach. Burning it later could lead to confusion in subsequent years. Kol Chamira is not recited at the time of burning. All keilim should l'chatchila be kashered by this time. Bedi'eved one could kasher keilim until candle lighting on Friday.

The following preparations for the Seder should be made on Erev Shabbos: Roast the egg and z'roa, check and clean lettuce leaves, chop the nuts for the charoses, and grate the horseradish. Food cooked for Shabbos and Yom Tov should be kosher l'Pesach and cooked in Pesach pots.

After chatzos (midday) on a regular Erev Pesach, one may not perform various melachos (e.g., shaving, doing laundry).2 These halachos do not apply this year since Erev Shabbos is not actually Erev Pesach.

Friday Evening And Shabbos Day

Except for Hamotzi, all meals should be eaten on Pesachdig utensils. These utensils should not be brought to the table until after all crumbs have been cleared away. Alternatively, one may use disposable utensils.

The procedure for Hamotzi for all Shabbos meals is as follows:

Place the lechem mishneh on tissues or paper napkins on the table. No Kosher l'Pesach utensils should be on the table with the rolls.

Eat the rolls carefully over tissues/napkins, so that any remaining crumbs can be wrapped in the tissues and flushed or shaken out of the napkins and flushed.

It is advisable to use small fresh rolls for lechem mishneh (fresh rolls make fewer crumbs).

Clear the table of all chometz.

Discard all disposable items (e.g., plastic tablecloth, plates) used with chometz into a trash can.

Serve the rest of the Kosher l'Pesach meal on Pesachdig or disposable dishes.

For children who may leave crumbs, egg matzah may be substituted. Because the bracha on egg matzah is a matter of dispute, adults should use rolls for lechem mishneh.

After making Hamotzi and eating more than a kebei'a (i.e., more than two kezeisim) of the roll, adults may eat egg matzah until the sof zman achilas chometz.

On Shabbos Erev Pesach, regular matzah may not be eaten by anyone except children under six.

If one is concerned with eating any bread indoors, one may eat outdoors on the porch or in the backyard (if it is permissible to carry – i.e., within a reshus hayachid). Recite Hamotzi, eat the rolls, then sweep the crumbs off the table and off the porch. One may not sweep the crumbs into the wind or out of an eruv. Alternatively, eat over tissues or napkins and flush as above. One may finish the meal inside. Birchas Hamazon should l'chatchila be recited where the bread was eaten.

Shabbos Morning Meal

Shacharis on Shabbos morning should be scheduled earlier than usual because one must recite Hamotzi on lechem mishneh and finish all bread before the sof zman achilas chometz (i.e., end of the 4th halachic hour of the day).

After disposing of all chometz, one must recite the same Kol Chamira that is usually said when burning the chometz. This must be done before the sof zman biur chometz (end of the 5th halachic hour). It is recited even if it was already recited by mistake on Friday at the time of biur chometz.

One may continue his Kosher l'Pesach meal and recite Birchas Hamazon after these times.

Shabbos Afternoon Meal

During seuda shlishis on an ordinary Shabbos, one must have lechem mishneh and l'chatchila eat more than a kebei'a (i.e., more than two kezeisim) of bread after the time of Mincha Gedola (1/2 halachic hour after chatzos/midday). On this Shabbos, one may not eat bread or matzah at this time. What is the solution?

One should eat "other foods" during the afternoon meal, such as fish, fruits or Shehakol cakes (cakes made only from potato starch) any time between Mincha Gedola and sunset. However, if one eats these foods after the beginning of the tenth hour, one should be especially careful not eat too much thereby diminishing his appetite for the Seder.

For those who follow the custom of eating gebrokts on Pesach, cooked

products containing matzah meal (e.g., kneidlach) may be eaten if they are consumed before the 10th hour of the day. Baked matzah meal products, including cakes, may not be eaten anytime during the day.3

Splitting The Morning Meal

If time permits, it is preferable to "split the morning meal" by doing the following:

Recite Hamotzi and eat more than a kebei'a from the rolls.

Recite Birchas Hamazon and take a walk outside.

Then, wash for seuda shlishis and recite Hamotzi.

Be careful to finish the bread and dispose of the crumbs by the times indicated above.

If one "splits" the morning meal in this way, one must still eat something after Mincha Gedola as described above to fulfill the mitzvah of seuda shlishis in the prescribed time according to most opinions.

Motzei Shabbos And The Seder

All preparation for Yom Tov and the seder may not begin until Shabbos is over (tzeis hakochavim). As previously indicated, some preparations should be done before Shabbos. One may also wish to set the Seder table before Shabbos and eat in the kitchen on Shabbos to allow the Seder to begin as early as possible after Shabbos.

Kiddush and Havdalah (yaknahaz)4 are recited together at the Seder as printed in the Haggadah. One should recite Borei Me'orei Ha'aish using the Yom Tov candles, putting them together side by side while upright. They should not be tilted to touch each other. Alternatively, one may recite the bracha using a non-frosted incandescent light bulb which was turned on before Shabbos (or was turned on by a timer that was set before Shabbos).

At the Seder there is one change to the Haggadah: In the bracha of Asher G'alanu prior to the second cup of wine, we reverse the order and say min hapesachim u'min hazevachim (instead of the opposite order). This is due to the change in the order of korbanos when Pesach occurs on Motzei Shabbos.

Final Thoughts

When Erev Pesach occurs on Shabbos, it affords a rare opportunity to rest on Erev Pesach.

When I was a student in yeshiva, I once commented to Mr. Hyman Flaksz"l, the Executive Director of the Vaad Hoeir of St. Louis, that when Erev Pesach occurs on Shabbos, preparations are so difficult. He answered, "This type of year is my favorite year. My work in the field of kashrus is so hectic before Pesach. With a Shabbos to rest, I can come to the Seder feeling like a mentch!"

Today, I understand exactly what he meant. As we all prepare for Pesach, amidst the hectic frenzy, we can look forward to the rare5 Erev Pesach which affords us an extra special Yom Menucha.

1. This occurs on average once every nine years, as frequently as every three years (e.g., 2005 and 2008), and as infrequently as every 20 years. For example, it did not occur between 1954 and 1974.

2. For a complete discussion, see "The Busiest Day of the Year: The Laws of Erev Pesach" at www.star-k.org.

3. Whether or not one eats gebroks, baked (and certainly cooked) matzah meal products may be eaten on Friday night.

4. Yaknahaz is a well-known acronym for Kiddush and Havdala on Motzei Shabbos. It stands for Yayin, Kiddush, Ner, Havdala and Zman (i.e., Shehecheyanu).

5. All the following events are unique to the rare year when Erev Pesach is Shabbos:

Purim and Lag Ba'omer are on Friday

Fast of B"HB falls on Pesach Sheini

We recite the Slichos before Rosh Hashana for eight days, the most days possible.

During the following Tishrei we read the Torah for 11 days in a row – from Monday, Erev Sukkos, through Thursday, Isru Chag, more than is done at any other time.

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fw from Hamelaket@gmail.com

From:<shul@yimidwood.org>

Date: April, 2008

Subject: [yimidwood] erev pesach on shabbos

Some Practical Guidelines for Erev Pesach:

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Option 1

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

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

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

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

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

Kol chamira should now be said.

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

Dessert should be served after bentching. (3)

Option 2

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

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

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

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

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

Seudah Shelishis

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

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

Those who eat gebrukt can eat cooked – but not baked - foods made from matzoh meal; e.g. kneidlach. However, mezonos foods may not be eaten in the last quarter of the day, so as to leave an appetite for the seder. Therefore, kneidlach and the like should not be eaten after 4:00 PM.

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

NOTES:

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

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

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

If, however, the bread portion of the meal, and the remainder of the meal,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From**: Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>
3:39 PM (4 hours ago)
Rav Frand
Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya
Pesach: Reaching the Level of Ahavas Chinam
This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #1026 – Salt on the Table. Good Shabbos & Chag Kosher V'somayach!
I recently read a story which is not related to the parsha, but certainly falls into the category of inyanei d'yoma (contemporary events).
Rav Avraham Yitzchok HaKohen Kook (1865-1935), the first Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael in modern times, was an outstanding genius, but he was a controversial figure. Certain rabbinic personalities of the "old yishuv" took issue with many of his ideas and positions. Rav Kook was speaking somewhere, and a zealot started yelling at him in the middle of his drasha. The outburst did not faze Rav Kook — he continued with his drasha — but it was certainly a bizayon (embarrassment) for this Torah giant.
Later that same year, Pesach time rolled around. Rav Kook distributed maos chittim [kimcha d'Pischa – i.e., charity funds for the Passover holiday] to those with financial needs for the upcoming holiday. He presented his gabbai [secretary] with a list of the poor people to whom the charity funds should be distributed. Lo and behold, this very zealot who had so inappropriately embarrassed the Chief Rabbi earlier that year, was on the list to receive maos chittim.
The secretary told Rav Kook, "I refuse to give him the money! How could you give such a person money after what he did to you?" Rav Kook told his gabbai, "If you do not deliver the money to him, I will!" The Chief Rabbi explained his rationale for giving him the money: Chazal say that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam (unjustified hatred of one Jew for another). There is a famous maxim that if the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam, the only way it will be rebuilt is with ahavas chinam (unjustified love of one Jew for another).
Rav Kook explained: Ahavas chinam means that you like the person for no reason, just like sinas chinam means that you hate the person for no reason. But Rav Kook analyzed as follows: When one Jew loves another Jew for "no reason," that is not really ahavas chinam, because there is a mitzvah of vahavta l'reyacha ka'mocha (love your fellow Jew like yourself). I need to love every Jew according to Biblical law. Thus, the fact that I love another Jew cannot be called ahavas chinam — that is an ahava for which we are bound by oath from the time of Har Sinai! What then is ahavas chinam, asked Rav Kook? It is when a person insults you and embarrasses you, and you have every justification in the world to put him on your 'enemies' list and to totally ignore him, and nevertheless you show him love and compassion, and give him money when he is in need. That is ahavas chinam.
Pesach is approaching. During Nisan, the Jews were redeemed, and in Nisan we are destined to be redeemed. This is the time to practice "ahavas chinam." This is conjecture on my part, but perhaps this is why Rav Kook waited until before Pesach to give him money. He specifically wanted to do an act of ahavas chinam for which we will merit the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash — during the month in which we are destined to be redeemed.
The Ben Ish Chai cites an insight on the following question from the Mah Nishtana: "On all other nights we do not dip even once; tonight, we dip two times." The Ben Ish Chai explains that one dipping commemorates "And they dipped the tunic in blood" (Bereishis 37:31), and the other one commemorates "You shall take a bundle of hyssop and dip it into the blood…" (Shemos 12:22). At the Seder, we dip one time to commemorate the brothers taking Yosef's coat and dipping it in blood and we dip a second time to commemorate the bundle of hyssop (agudas eizov) that we dipped in blood in Egypt on the night prior to the Exodus. The Ben Ish Chai comments: If we want to atone for the sin of hatred between brothers, the way to do it is to take an "agudas eizov," i.e., to come together as an agudah achas (a unified group) to do Hashem's will with total dedication.
Tisha B'Av is normally the time that we talk about ahavas chinam. However, as we all know, the truth of the matter is that there is a tremendous connection between Tisha B'Av and Pesach. The first day of Pesach always falls on the same day of the week as the coming Tisha B'Av. We know, likewise, that we eat an egg by the Seder, to remind us of the Destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, to remind us of Tisha B'Av. There is thus a thematic connection between Pesach and Tisha B'Av.
This is the connection, says the Ben Ish Chai: If we want to achieve atonement for the sin of dipping Yosef's tunic in blood, if we want to merit the promised redemption in Nisan, the way to achieve that is "and you will take a bundle of hyssop" – to forget some of our petty differences, and to in fact come together b'agudah achas, so that, Please G-d, "we will eat there from the sacrifices and the Paschal offerings" speedily in our days, Amen.
Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. ...A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit http://www.yadyechiel.org/ for further information.
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from: Team **TorahAnytime** <info@torahanytime.com
date: Mar 25, 2021, 6:32 PM
subject: Inspiration For Your Pesach

Rabbi YY Jacobson
4 Lessons for the 4 Sons
כְּנֶגֶד אַרְבָּעָה בָנִים דִּבְּרָה תּוֹרָה
Concerning four sons did the Torah speak
These few words contain volumes of lessons about education and pedagogy. Among many, there are four messages our Sages mean to convey with this brief statement:
1) אַרְבָּעָה בָנִים –There are four sons. There is no one child because everyone is different. Never make the mistake that one cookie-cutter model encompasses all children.
2) בָנִים –They are all your children. Never look at any of these children and write them off or reject them. They may be from one extreme to another, but they are all your children.
3) דִּבְּרָה תּוֹרָה – Torah has something to say to each one of these children. No child is ever too far for Torah to inspire and uplift them and provide them with joy and wholesomeness in life. The Torah speaks to every child's needs.
4) אַרְבָּעָה בָנִים דִּבְּרָה תּוֹרָה –The conversation the Torah has with each of them is a different one. The Torah offers a unique message for every individual in every circumstance of life.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter
Cry, Cry and Cry
וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ד'
And we cried out to Hashem
I have often been asked what my Pesach seder looks like in my home. While we certainly have our fair share of noise and ups and downs throughout, there is one part during which all of my family joins together.
It is before the words in the Haggadah which describe how the Jews cried out to Hashem amid their pain. Every year without fail, I tell my family the same story.
It was the Shabbos before Pesach, and to the chagrin of many families in the town, the landowner made his way over. "No rent?" he yelled. "Out!" "But, it is Passover…" "Out!" the landowner yelled again.
The homeowner was very dejected. Where would he and his family go for Pesach? He didn't have the means to pay the rent at the moment, but he didn't want to be evicted either. But upon the encouragement of his wife, he gathered himself together and traveled to hear the Apter Rav deliver his widely attended Shabbos HaGadol speech he gave every year before Pesach.

As he soon discovered, though, the shul was packed with people from wall to wall. There was no way to get in, let alone to find a place to stand. And so, with no other resort, the man put his head to the window just enough that he could hear something to repeat to his wife.
"There are two blessings that we say: Go'el Yisrael and Ga'al Yisrael. The former is said every day, and refers to Hashem being our Redeemer on an ongoing basis. The latter, in contrast, refers to unique times during the year when Hashem opens certain doors of redemption, which we can grab hold of and slowly work our way in. We take the opportunity to look at the larger picture, the bigger door of geulah, and from there practically make our way inside on a daily basis."
The poor Jew was now even more despondent. "I'm going to tell this idea to my wife and the landowner as he throws me out? Hebrew grammar is the last thing he is interested in …"
But then, just as the poor yid began walking away, he heard the Apter Rav loudly proclaim, "Suppose there's a yid named Yankel who lives in a distant village, and suppose the landowner told him, 'No rent? Out!' The yid wants to give up on everything he has. But he is forgetting one simple thing. You can cry out to Hashem. Cry and cry. The Jews cried in Egypt, and roused the merits of all previous generations all the way back to our Avos. When we cry, we do the same. We invoke the merits of our fathers, grandfathers and so on, all the way to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov."
The Ohr HaChaim further says that the words, "Hashem saw the Children of Israel, and G-d knew" (Shemos 2:25), refers to the greatest degree of connection between Hashem and the Jewish people. "And Hashem knew" speaks to the most intimate relationship possible. A person can cry a thousand times, until he cries one cry which is so sincere and pristine that, all of a sudden, Hashem turns to him in a way He never turned to him before in his life. When Hashem simply sees you screaming out to Him amid your pain, that itself helps to remove the agony.
A number of years ago, I was asked to speak to a group of people undergoing very difficult situations. I stood up and just read these words of the Ohr HaChaim again and again and again until there was an ocean of tears. There is no magic wand to relieve pain, but there is a cry to Hashem which He sees and hears. And once He sees your genuine cry, whether you can explain it or not, the pain is lifted.
As the yid heard these words and explanation of the Apter Rav, he told his family, "During the night of the seder this year, we are going to cry and scream." Sure enough, it was the night of the seder, and as they reached the words, "And the Jews cried out," the entire family began screaming and yelling. The landlord came rushing in, flustered to see an entire family in what appeared to be a frenzied state. And as the story goes, he pitied the man and his family and gave the yid a new lease on life.
If you scream, Hashem listens. And so, as is the custom in my home, as we reach the words of Va'nitzak during the seder, all of my children and grandchildren await their turn to tell us someone we should cry for. This one needs a child, this one needs a shidduch, someone needs better health … and we daven for each and every one of them. We cry about a certain neighbor, about an elderly gentleman down the block, and someone sick in shul. We cry for the full gamut of people needing Hashem's help.
Well before Pesach, my family begins preparing names we will daven for. We write down everyone's names and create lists of people we can cry our hearts out for.
You may be surprised to know how many people have told us that that they've started doing this in their homes during the seder, and how many prayers have been answered. May Hashem help that we all find it within our hearts to cry out on this night, because all we need is to get His attention, and the refuah and yeshuah are around the corner.

Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky
My Brother
לֹא לָנוּ ד' לֹא לָנוּ
Not for our sake, Hashem, not for our sake…
Years ago, as a young man enjoyed the smooth ride in his new car, he pulled up to the local supermarket to buy some groceries. While looking for a place to park, he caught sight of his friend's younger brother gazing at his car. Rolling down his window, the young man called out to the boy, "Do you like the car?" "I really do. Where did you get it?" "My brother bought it for me," the man replied.
Still entranced by the sight of the car, the boy stood there. The man figured that he would respond as any other typical boy would, "Oh, I wish I had a brother like that!" But this boy was different; he had a different look on the matter. "Wow!" he said, "I wish I could be a brother like that."
Caught off guard by such a comment, the man said to the boy, "Would you like to go for a ride?" With his face breaking out in a smile, the little boy excitedly nodded his head. "Can we drive to my house?" asked the boy. The man figured that the boy wished to show off the elegant car to his friends, to which he happily complied.
When the man finally pulled into the driveway of the house, the boy turned to the man and shyly asked, "Could you wait just a moment?" Running inside, the little boy soon came out carrying his younger brother who could

not walk. He had polio. As he brought him close to the car, he clenched his brother tightly and said, "Can you see that? His brother bought him that car. One day I will buy you a car like that so it will be easier for you to get around. Right now it's a bit hard for you to do so, but that will one day all change."
Just listen to the beautiful message of this little boy: "Everybody wishes they had a brother like that; but how many people wish they could be a brother like that." We would live as much happier, thoughtful and selfless people if we would only adopt such an attitude.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein
The Strange Stick
וְאָתָא חוּטְרָא וְהִכָּה לְכַלְבָּא
And the stick came and hit the dog
I was once about to write out a check for a tzedakah collector who came to my office when he asked if I could wait a minute. "Before you give me a check, would you mind if I ask you a question on the Haggadah? It is the easiest question you have ever heard. If you can answer it, I don't want the check; but if you cannot answer it, please double the amount."
Presented with this challenge, I liked what I heard. "Are you sure it's an easy question?" I asked. "It's the simplest question you ever heard on the Haggadah!" "Okay," I said, "go ahead."
"In Chad Gadya, we read how a man purchased a goat for two zuzim. Along came a cat and ate the goat; along came a dog and ate the cat; along came a stick and hit the dog; fire then burnt up the stick; water then extinguished the fire; the cow then drank the water; the slaughterer then slaughtered the cow; the angel of death then killed the slaughterer; and then Hashem smote the angel of death.
"Everything naturally makes sense in the sequence of events. Cats eat goats, dogs eat cats, water extinguishes fire, cows drink water and so on. But I have one question. How did the stick hit the dog? Sticks don't walk. It should have said that a person came with a stick and hit the dog. But it doesn't say that."
Thinking to myself how I have been reading the Haggadah for decades and never even considered this question, I sat there silently. "Double the check please," he said. And I did.
"Let me tell you the answer," he continued. "The Haggadah was written in this way for a reason. When you read the story of Chad Gadya, everything appears to occur naturally. But there is something the author of the Haggadah put into the middle of the story that doesn't make sense at all. A stick appears on its own and hits the dog. When you read this, you immediately raise your eyebrows and say, 'Wait a second! How did the stick get there?' And then you realize that it must be Hashem holding the stick. And if that is so, the same is true of all the other 'natural' events. Even the cat eating the goat and the water extinguishing the fire is the hand of Hashem. Nothing is natural and happens by itself."
After the man finished explaining this, I said, "I will triple your check." I was taken aback by this answer.
Throughout all the hardships in our lives, we can never think it is natural. At the end of the Haggadah when we read about the events of Chad Gadya, we are meant to think of all the incidents in our own personal lives. And then we are to realize that even the stick that hits and the hardships that confront us are from Hashem. He is behind our lives every step of the way.

Rabbi Avraham Schorr
What's on your Mind?
אֶחָד מִי יוֹדֵעַ אֶחָד אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ…
Who Knows One? I Know One…
As we conclude the Haggadah and reach the crescendo of the seder, one of the last recited refrains is that of Echad Mi Yodei'a. On the surface, this song seems to be relatively simple and straightforward. We all know that there is one G-d, two Luchos, three Avos, four Imahos and so on. It cannot be that the Haggadah is merely reminding us of these common knowledge facts. What place then does such a song have as we reach the highpoint and climax of the seder?
The answer is that Echad Mi Yode'ia is far deeper than it seems. It is placed at the very conclusion of the Haggadah because precisely then we have reached the highest of heights, and feel tremendously uplifted and close to Hashem. Imagine then if someone were to ask you, "Who knows one?" What will be the first thing which comes to mind? After an entire Leil Ha'Seder, permeated with sanctity and spirituality, our almost automatic reaction will be "Hashem." That is the only answer we think of.
The same is with two. "Who knows two?" "Two Luchos," we say. We do not respond to two or three or four, "I have two swimming pools, three cars and four houses." We ask and answer such simple questions because we intend to highlight that these most fundamental concepts are so ingrained within us. When we think of "one," "two" or "three," all that we think about are these ideas.
Occupying our mind front and center with utmost clarity are these facts – there is one G-d in heaven, two Luchos, five books of the Torah and so on. There is nothing else on our radar after such an exhilarating and inspiring seder.
And now you can answer the ultimate question, "Who knows why we sing Echad Mi Yodei'a?" "I do."

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from: Team TorahAnytime <info@torahanytime.com> via em.secureserver.net
date: Mar 25, 2021, 6:32 PM
subject: Inspiration For Your Pesach

Rabbi YY Jacobson
4 Lessons for the 4 Sons
כְּנֶגֶד אַרְבָּעָה בָנִים דִּבְּרָה תּוֹרָה
Concerning four sons did the Torah speak
These few words contain volumes of lessons about education and pedagogy. Among many, there are four messages our Sages mean to convey with this brief statement:
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Rabbi Fischel Schachter
Cry, Cry and Cry
וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ד'
And we cried out to Hashem
I have often been asked what my Pesach seder looks like in my home. While we certainly have our fair share of noise and ups and downs throughout, there is one part during which all of my family joins together.
It is before the words in the Haggadah which describe how the Jews cried out to Hashem amid their pain. Every year without fail, I tell my family the same story.
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The homeowner was very dejected. Where would he and his family go for Pesach? He didn't have the means to pay the rent at the moment, but he didn't want to be evicted either. But upon the encouragement of his wife, he gathered himself together and traveled to hear the Apter Rav deliver his widely attended Shabbos HaGadol speech he gave every year before Pesach.

As he soon discovered, though, the shul was packed with people from wall to wall. There was no way to get in, let alone to find a place to stand. And so, with no other resort, the man put his head to the window just enough that he could hear something to repeat to his wife.

"There are two blessings that we say: Go'el Yisrael and Ga'al Yisrael. The former is said every day, and refers to Hashem being our Redeemer on an ongoing basis. The latter, in contrast, refers to unique times during the year when Hashem opens certain doors of redemption, which we can grab hold of and slowly work our way in. We take the opportunity to look at the larger picture, the bigger door of geulah, and from there practically make our way inside on a daily basis."

The poor Jew was now even more despondent. "I'm going to tell this idea to my wife and the landowner as he throws me out? Hebrew grammar is the last thing he is interested in …"

But then, just as the poor yid began walking away, he heard the Apter Rav loudly proclaim, "Suppose there's a yid named Yankel who lives in a distant village, and suppose the landowner told him, 'No rent? Out!' The yid wants to give up on everything he has. But he is forgetting one simple thing. You can cry out to Hashem. Cry and cry. The Jews cried in Egypt, and roused the merits of all previous generations all the way back to our Avos. When we cry, we do the same. We invoke the merits of our fathers, grandfathers and so on, all the way to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov."

The Ohr HaChaim further says that the words, "Hashem saw the Children of Israel, and G-d knew" (Shemos 2:25), refers to the greatest degree of connection between Hashem and the Jewish people. "And Hashem knew" speaks to the most intimate relationship possible. A person can cry a thousand times, until he cries one cry which is so sincere and pristine that, all of a sudden, Hashem turns to him in a way He never turned to him before in his life. When Hashem simply sees you screaming out to Him amid your pain, that itself helps to remove the agony.

A number of years ago, I was asked to speak to a group of people undergoing very difficult situations. I stood up and just read these words of the Ohr HaChaim again and again and again until there was an ocean of tears. There is no magic wand to relieve pain, but there is a cry to Hashem which He sees and hears. And once He sees your genuine cry, whether you can explain it or not, the pain is lifted.

As the yid heard these words and explanation of the Apter Rav, he told his family, "During the night of the seder this year, we are going to cry and scream." Sure enough, it was the night of the seder, and as they reached the words, "And the Jews cried out," the entire family began screaming and yelling. The landlord came rushing in, flustered to see an entire family in what appeared to be a frenzied state. And as the story goes, he pitied the man and his family and gave the yid a new lease on life.

If you scream, Hashem listens. And so, as is the custom in my home, as we reach the words of Va'nitzak during the seder, all of my children and grandchildren await their turn to tell us someone we should cry for. This one needs a child, this one needs a shidduch, someone needs better health … and we daven for each and every one of them. We cry about a certain neighbor, about an elderly gentleman down the block, and someone sick in shul. We cry for the full gamut of people needing Hashem's help.

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You may be surprised to know how many people have told us that that they've started doing this in their homes during the seder, and how many prayers have been answered. May Hashem help that we all find it within our hearts to cry out on this night, because all we need is to get His attention, and the refuah and yeshuah are around the corner.

Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky
My Brother
לֹא לָנוּ ד' לֹא לָנוּ
Not for our sake, Hashem, not for our sake…

Years ago, as a young man enjoyed the smooth ride in his new car, he pulled up to the local supermarket to buy some groceries. While looking for a place to park, he caught sight of his friend's younger brother gazing at his car. Rolling down his window, the young man called out to the boy, "Do you like the car?" "I really do. Where did you get it?" "My brother bought it for me," the man replied.

Still entranced by the sight of the car, the boy stood there. The man figured that he would respond as any other typical boy would, "Oh, I wish I had a brother like that!" But this boy was different; he had a different look on the matter. "Wow!" he said, "I wish I could be a brother like that."

Caught off guard by such a comment, the man said to the boy, "Would you like to go for a ride?" With his face breaking out in a smile, the little boy excitedly nodded his head. "Can we drive to my house?" asked the boy. The man figured that the boy wished to show off the elegant car to his friends, to which he happily complied.

When the man finally pulled into the driveway of the house, the boy turned to the man and shyly asked, "Could you wait just a moment?" Running inside, the little boy soon came out carrying his younger brother who could not walk. He had polio. As he brought him close to the car, he clenched his brother tightly and said, "Can you see that? His brother bought him that car. One day I will buy you a car like that so it will be easier for you to get around. Right now it's a bit hard for you to do so, but that will one day all change."

Just listen to the beautiful message of this little boy: "Everybody wishes they had a brother like that; but how many people wish they could be a brother like that." We would live as much happier, thoughtful and selfless people if we would only adopt such an attitude.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein
The Strange Stick
וְאָתָא חוּטְרָא וְהִכָּה לְכַלְבָּא
And the stick came and hit the dog

I was once about to write out a check for a tzedakah collector who came to my office when he asked if I could wait a minute. "Before you give me a check, would you mind if I ask you a question on the Haggadah? It is the easiest question you have ever heard. If you can answer it, I don't want the check; but if you cannot answer it, please double the amount."

Presented with this challenge, I liked what I heard. "Are you sure it's an easy question?" I asked. "It's the simplest question you ever heard on the Haggadah!" "Okay," I said, "go ahead."

"In Chad Gadya, we read how a man purchased a goat for two zuzim. Along came a cat and ate the goat; along came a dog and ate the cat; along came a stick and hit the dog; fire then burnt up the stick; water then extinguished the fire; the cow then drank the water; the slaughterer then slaughtered the cow; the angel of death then killed the slaughterer; and then Hashem smote the angel of death.

"Everything naturally makes sense in the sequence of events. Cats eat goats, dogs eat cats, water extinguishes fire, cows drink water and so on. But I have one question. How did the stick hit the dog? Sticks don't walk. It should have said that a person came with a stick and hit the dog. But it doesn't say that."

Thinking to myself how I have been reading the Haggadah for decades and never even considered this question, I sat there silently. "Double the check please," he said. And I did.

"Let me tell you the answer," he continued. "The Haggadah was written in this way for a reason. When you read the story of Chad Gadya, everything

appears to occur naturally. But there is something the author of the Haggadah put into the middle of the story that doesn't make sense at all. A stick appears on its own and hits the dog. When you read this, you immediately raise your eyebrows and say, 'Wait a second! How did the stick get there?' And then you realize that it must be Hashem holding the stick. And if that is so, the same is true of all the other 'natural' events. Even the cat eating the goat and the water extinguishing the fire is the hand of Hashem. Nothing is natural and happens by itself."

After the man finished explaining this, I said, "I will triple your check." I was taken aback by this answer.

Throughout all the hardships in our lives, we can never think it is natural. At the end of the Haggadah when we read about the events of Chad Gadya, we are meant to think of all the incidents in our own personal lives. And then we are to realize that even the stick that hits and the hardships that confront us are from Hashem. He is behind our lives every step of the way.

Rabbi Avraham Schorr

What's on your Mind?

אֶחָד מִי יוֹדֵעַ אֶחָד אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ…

Who Knows One? I Know One…

As we conclude the Haggadah and reach the crescendo of the seder, one of the last recited refrains is that of Echad Mi Yodei'a. On the surface, this song seems to be relatively simple and straightforward. We all know that there is one G-d, two Luchos, three Avos, four Imahos and so on. It cannot be that the Haggadah is merely reminding us of these common knowledge facts. What place then does such a song have as we reach the highpoint and climax of the seder?

The answer is that Echad Mi Yode'ia is far deeper than it seems. It is placed at the very conclusion of the Haggadah because precisely then we have reached the highest of heights, and feel tremendously uplifted and close to Hashem. Imagine then if someone were to ask you, "Who knows one?" What will be the first thing which comes to mind? After an entire Leil Ha'Seder, permeated with sanctity and spirituality, our almost automatic reaction will be "Hashem." That is the only answer we think of.

The same is with two. "Who knows two?" "Two Luchos," we say. We do not respond to two or three or four, "I have two swimming pools, three cars and four houses." We ask and answer such simple questions because we intend to highlight that these most fundamental concepts are so ingrained within us. When we think of "one," "two" or "three," all that we think about are these ideas.

Occupying our mind front and center with utmost clarity are these facts – there is one G-d in heaven, two Luchos, five books of the Torah and so on. There is nothing else on our radar after such an exhilarating and inspiring seder.

And now you can answer the ultimate question, "Who knows why we sing Echad Mi Yodei'a?" "I do."

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Date: Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 12:06 PM
Subject: Your Haggadah Compendium; Dazzling Dead Sea Scroll Discovery; Ochberg's 197 Orphans

Home » Jewish Holidays » Passover » The Haggadah

Aish.com Haggadah Compendium: Inspiring Insights to Share at Your Passover Seder

Mar 14, 2021 | by aish.com

Aish.com Haggadah Compendium: Inspiring Insights to Share at Your Passover Seder

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Matzah, Leaven, and Attaining Freedom, by Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt

Leaven and matzah share the same ingredients – grain and water. Only leaven has had time (18 minutes to be precise) to rise and matzah has not. Leaven is essentially matzah that has been puffed up by air. And yet, leaven – in particular bread – is so much more attractive and enticing than matzah. Bread is simply matzah that looks and tastes better.

We become enslaved to life's luxuries, not its necessities.

Before Passover, we spend time searching our homes for this leaven. The evening before Passover, we get it all out into the open and then the next day we burn it. And for seven days we don't eat or even possess leaven.

Leaven represents personal slavery and matzah represents personal freedom. We become enslaved to life's luxuries, not its necessities. I have yet to meet someone addicted to eating broccoli or drinking water, addicted to spending time with their children. As the Beatles said, "The best things in life are free, but you can save them for the birds and bees." We become addicted to the leaven, those things which look good, appeal to our desires, urge us to engage in them – but ultimately offer nothing more (and often much less) than the "best things in life." I have met plenty of people addicted to chocolate. Chocolate provides less nutrition than broccoli – and yet we desire them in inverse proportion to their value.

A few days before Passover, we search our hearts for "leaven" as well. We look inside of ourselves to see where we are enslaved.

Let me give a very relevant example: smartphones. I wake up in the morning and my beloved is next to my bed; it's my alarm after all. My first thought is not how can I thank God for the gift of life today, rather let's see the life changing messages on Whatsapp. No, not "let's see", rather "I need to see, I MUST see". The news might be next. What's happened overnight? My world has surely changed in cataclysmic ways. I absolutely, positively HAVE to know…

So, without any possible option otherwise, I check Whatsapp and the news, as well as my emails; one person has Whatsapped me a very unfunny meme and I have emails from Amazon, Google and LinkedIn and, lo and behold, the news tells me that the world is exactly the way I left it the previous evening. The addiction offered me something so exciting and glamorous – and delivered only disappointment.

Passover is a time when freedom is in the air. A time not to just think about freedom but to embrace freedom and, indeed, be free.

So, on the eve of Passover, we have searched our homes for leaven and have it all on the table. We have journeyed inside and found our areas of spiritual enslavement. And now we burn it all.

For me, burning my leaven means making a decision that for seven days I am not interested slavery. For seven days I am going to look in a different direction. For seven days, I am going to be free of this way of life that enslaves me. On other days of the year it would be madness to think this possible. To make a decision to change habits of a lifetime and for the decision to last forever. But Judaism believes that the spiritual season of Passover is propitious for such overnight changes in direction.

Try suddenly stopping smoking for seven days, with an eye on it lasting forever, at another time of year. Or being completely disinterested in your desire for sugar. Or try to decide you are not going to follow the thoughts of anger when they come. Will it happen? The coming week of Passover, there is a guarantee that it will. Our willpower is magnified and we can be different and then live with those changes as long as we decide to do so. If we genuinely burn our leaven, it will be gone.

This Passover, my smartphone is going in my drawer for seven days. And I can't tell you how exciting that sounds to me! Wow – seven days of freedom from my taskmaster.

So, spend some time during the next few days making a list of your slaveries, your addictions. I suggest you write them all down (password protected!) and then pick two or three to break free from on Passover. I usually print a piece of paper with them on and burn that paper with my leaven. On the eve

of Passover, make your decision. You are going to be free for the next seven days. Stick to your guns and watch Passover work its beautiful magic.

Why Tonight Is Called a Seder, By Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

The Hebrew word "Seder" means order. It hints to the idea that everything that happens to us is not coincidence or happenstance. What we experience in our lives, in truth, has seder, order, even when it may not seem apparent to us. Our lives are overseen by the Master of the Universe. And it's this awareness we are aiming to discover on Seder night. – Based on the Maharal of Prague

Karpas: Dipping the Vegetable in Salt Water, by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

In the Hebrew language, every letter also represents a number, a word, and a concept.

For example, the letter aleph, the first letter of the alphabet, has the numerical value of one. Aleph is also a word which means to champion, or to lead.

The second letter of the alphabet, bet, has the numerical value of two and also means house – bayit in Hebrew.

Hebrew letters are actually linguistic repositories for numerous concepts and ideas. Words, too, become not only an amalgam of random sounds, but precise constructs of the conceptual components of the object with which the word is associated.

When we analyze the word Karpas and break it down to its four component parts – its four letters of kaf, reish, peh and samech, – we discover an encoded message of four words which teaches a basic lesson about how to develop our capacity for giving.

Ka
Kaf
Palm of hand
R
Reish
One who is impoverished
Pa
Peh
Mouth
S
Samech
To support

The first letter of Karpas means the palm of the hand. The second letter means a poor person. When taken together these two letter/words speak of a benevolent hand opened for the needy.

But what if you are a person of limited means, with precious little to give? Look at the second half of the word Karpas. The letter peh means mouth, while the final letter samech means to support. True, you may not be capable of giving in the material sense, but you can always give with your words. Words of kindness and concern. Words of empathy and understanding. Words that can lift an impoverished soul and provide a means of support where nothing else will do.

We dip the Karpas in saltwater. Saltwater recalls the bitter tears shed in Egypt. But there is more. The Jewish people, though awash in the tears of bondage, were able to preserve their ability to give. Rather than succumb to the morass of self-pity, they were able to maintain their dignity through giving.

Charoses: Never Give Up Hope, By Slovie Jungreis Wolff

Charoses, a sweet mixture made of apples, walnuts, wine and cinnamon, symbolizes the mortar used by the Jewish nation to make bricks while enslaved.

But there is also a deeper and most beautiful meaning to the apples on our Seder plate.

Charoses symbolizes the apple trees under which the Jewish women gave birth. They concealed their pain so that they would not be detected by the Egyptians. The slavery and suffering had stripped the men of hope. They separated from their wives and thought that bringing children into such a dark world was pointless. It was the women who never gave up. They chose to give birth beneath the apple trees which first produce fruit and then protective leaves. They declared with perfect faith that they would do the same. First they would give birth to their fruit and undoubtedly they would be sheltered from Above.

The women sweetened the bitterness of harsh slavery. When tasting the maror, the bitter herb, we dip it into some charoses to remember this courageous message. Life is both bitter and sweet. The bitter is tempered through hope. Faith keeps us going.

Yachatz: Why Break the Matzah? By Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

Why do we break the matzah in half at the start of the Seder, the ritual known as Yachatz? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l (1903-1993) offered a unique answer. When the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt there were those slaves who found themselves in better conditions than others. Some had the privilege to work for more merciful masters and lived under better conditions; others found themselves in much worse circumstances. Those who were fortunate to have more would break their bread and share it with those who had less.

On the night of the Seder, we emulate the ways of our predecessors and we do the same. We are teaching that this is the way of loving kindness to share with others, even in the most dire of conditions.

We find ourselves in an unprecedented time. These are days of crisis. Often the common response in such scenarios is to behave selfishly. Our natural instincts tell us that we need to take care of ourselves and our own family members. We have all seen footage and reports of people hoarding food and toilet paper etc. in the panic and stress of this situation.

We are challenged during these days to be people of loving-kindness and maintain a deep sense of solidarity toward one another even under harsh conditions. During the pandemic we have witnessed endless examples of heroic kindness. This has always been our path, symbolized by breaking the matzah in half.

Food for the Body, Food for the Soul, by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

The Seder begins with an invitation. We cannot truly rejoice with our family while we forsake those who are not as fortunate. "All who are hungry, let them come and eat with us; all who are needy, let them come and observe the Passover with us."

"All who are hungry" and "All who are needy" – what is the difference between them? Aren't the needy those who have no food, the very same ones already described as the hungry?

It appears the text is suggesting that there are two different kinds of deprivation to which we need to be sensitive. The hungry are those who lack physical nourishment. It is their stomachs which need to be filled. The needy are those who desperately require spiritual sustenance. It is their souls that beg to be sustained so that their lives may have meaning.

There are only two blessings which have their source in the Torah. The first is on food. When we complete a meal we are commanded "and you will eat and you will be sated and you shall bless the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 8:10). The second is for the study of Torah – "For I will proclaim the name of the Lord [the Torah], and you will ascribe greatness unto our God [with a blessing] (Deuteronomy 32:3).] Why precisely these two? Because a human being is a combination of body and soul and both of these components require nourishment in order to survive. Food is what allows us to live; Torah is what gives us a reason for living. Food sustains our bodies; Torah wisdom sustains our souls. Both are essential. That is why both require a blessing.

And that is also why we invite two kinds of disadvantaged. The hungry are those who lack food. For them we provide physical nourishment. The needy are those who seek meaning to their lives and who thirst for the peace of mind that comes from faith and commitment to Torah. Let both be a part of our Seder and become sated.

Bread of Affliction, Bread of Freedom, by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
At the beginning of the story we call matzah the bread of affliction. Later on in the evening, though, we speak of it as the bread of freedom they ate as they were leaving Egypt in such a hurry that they could not wait for the dough to rise. Which is it: a symbol of oppression or liberty?
Also strange is the invitation to others to join us in eating the bread of affliction. What kind of hospitality is it to ask others to share our suffering? Unexpectedly, I discovered the answer in Primo Levi's great book, If This is a Man, the harrowing account of his experiences in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. According to Levi, the worst time was when the Nazis left in January 1945, fearing the Russian advance. All prisoners who could walk were taken on the brutal death marches. The only people left in the camp were those too ill to move.
For ten days they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. Levi describes how he worked to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them dying. He then writes:
"When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three, with typhus) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working. And so it was agreed."
Only a day before, says Levi, this would have been inconceivable. The law of the camp said: "Eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbor." To do otherwise would have been suicidal. The offer of sharing bread "was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from Haftlinge [prisoners] to men again."
Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us. That is how we turn affliction into freedom.

What Pesach Means, by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
What does the word Pesach actually mean? Most commonly it is translated to mean 'pass over', which relates to the episode of God miraculously 'passing over' the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. However the great commentator on the Torah, Rashi (Exodus 12:13), offers another explanation: Pesach means love. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine preferred this explanation.
On the final night the Israelite slaves spent in Egypt, when they sat confined in their homes, the verse says that God 'pasach' over their homes. What does 'pesach' mean? Not passed over. Rather, the Jew felt surrounded by God's love. They felt the Divine's warm embrace.
This is the true meaning of the festival and one we wish to infuse within our souls at the Seder. Even if one sits alone this year, or away from close family and friends, one must know that they are not alone; God is right there at our side.
The Exodus was distinct because of an act of faith by our ancestors. Two million people entered a desolate and barren desert, where there was neither food nor water for such a multitude, clinging only to the belief that God would provide for them.
Early in the Haggadah a new name of God is introduced: 'HaMakom', which translates as 'place' ('Baruch Hamakom Baruch Hu'). Why the change of name? When we speak of God as HaMakom, the Midrash explains it to mean "God is the place of the world." This teaches that God embraces everybody and never deserts anyone.
The Torah attaches a mighty title to this festival: 'Leil Shimurim', a 'Night of Watching' (Exodus 12:42), a term which conveys the essence of the celebration: God is watching over us.
The story of leaving Egypt, the centerpiece of the Seder's celebration symbolizes the absolute, unwavering trust in God that is the foundation of spirituality.

The Four Questions, by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
The Haggadah speaks of four children: one wise, one wicked or rebellious, one simple and "one who does not know how to ask." Reading them together the sages came to the conclusion that 1. children should ask questions, 2. the Pesach narrative must be constructed in response to, and begin with, questions asked by a child, 3. it is the duty of a parent to encourage his or her children to ask questions, and the child who does not yet know how to ask should be taught to ask.
There is nothing natural about this at all. To the contrary, it goes dramatically against the grain of history. Most traditional cultures see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. "Children should be seen, not heard," goes the old English proverb. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. In Judaism the opposite is the case. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow.
Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a faith based on asking questions, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself. "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" asked Abraham. ""Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people?" asked Moses. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" asked Jeremiah. The book of Job is largely constructed out of questions, and God's answer consists of four chapters of yet deeper questions: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? ... Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? ... Will it make an agreement with you and let you take it as your slave for life?"
In yeshiva the highest accolade is to ask a good question: Du fregst a gutte kashe. Isadore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, "My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, 'What did you learn today?' But my mother used to ask: 'Izzy, did you ask a good question today?' That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist."
Judaism is not a religion of blind obedience. Indeed, astonishingly in a religion of 613 commandments, there is no Hebrew word that means "to obey." When Hebrew was revived as a living language in the nineteenth century, and there was need for a verb meaning "to obey," it had to be borrowed from the Aramaic: le-tsayet. Instead of a word meaning "to obey," the Torah uses the verb shema, untranslatable into English because it means 1. to listen, 2. to hear, 3. to understand, 4. to internalize, and 5. to respond. Written into the very structure of Hebraic consciousness is the idea that our highest duty is to seek to understand the will of God, not just to obey blindly. Tennyson's verse, "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die," is as far from a Jewish mindset as it is possible to be.
Why? Because we believe that intelligence is God's greatest gift to humanity. Rashi understands the phrase that God made man "in His image, after His likeness," to mean that God gave us the ability "to understand and discern." The very first of our requests in the weekday Amidah is for "knowledge, understanding and discernment." One of the most breathtakingly bold of the rabbis' institutions was to coin a blessing to be said on seeing a great non-Jewish scholar. Not only did they see wisdom in cultures other than their own. They thanked God for it. How far this is from the narrow-mindedness than has so often demeaned and diminished religions, past and present.
The historian Paul Johnson once wrote that rabbinic Judaism was "an ancient and highly efficient social machine for the production of intellectuals." Much of that had, and still has, to do with the absolute priority Jews have always placed on education, schools, the bet midrash, religious study as an act even higher than prayer, learning as a lifelong engagement, and teaching as the highest vocation of the religious life.

But much too has to do with how one studies and how we teach our children. The Torah indicates this at the most powerful and poignant juncture in Jewish history - just as the Israelites are about to leave Egypt and begin their life as a free people under the sovereignty of God. Hand on the memory of this moment to your children, says Moses. But do not do so in an authoritarian way. Encourage your children to ask, question, probe, investigate, analyze, explore. Liberty means freedom of the mind, not just of the body. Those who are confident of their faith need fear no question. It is only those who lack confidence, who have secret and suppressed doubts, who are afraid.

The Wicked Son, by Rabbi Henry Harris

Our sages draw a connection between the words rasha (wicked) and ra'ash (noise or commotion). The prophet likens the rasha to "the driven sea, incapable of quiet" (Isaiah 57:20) - more frenetic than foe. What does that mean?

With inner calm and quiet, we navigate life's waves. We face obstacles and conflicts, but through an uncluttered mind the divine gift of wisdom finds its way to our heart. We fall, and we learn.

When our minds are noisy – filled with stress, anger, fear – divine wisdom is drowned out. We solve difficulties often by creating new ones. We're destructive, not villainous. This is the rasha.

Consider the rasha's question. The Hagaddah says, "What is this service to you?" – "to you" but not to him. Because he excludes himself from the community, he denies the essence [of Judaism].

Insecure and prone to despair, the "wicked son", the rasha, isolates himself; he's dismissive. "I feel low. Lofty commandments aren't accessible to me. I'll tear them down." He might even want to come close; he doesn't know how.

Lost in the noise, he doesn't see how his misunderstanding contradicts the essence of Judaism and holds him back. He believes that a relationship with God is for those who feel exalted. Since he doesn't feel that connection, he mistakenly concludes that he's excluded, shut out.

But the truth about Judaism – and the fundamental lesson of Passover – is that God's love for us is unconditional. Feeling low and unworthy is more a testimony to our noisy mind than God's. No matter how low, how far, how unworthy we might feel, God doesn't waver. He just asks that we consider His view of us and make an effort.

Our job is to see beyond the wicked son's noisy mind; he's more "temporarily unsettled" than villain. The four sons at the Seder are not defined personalities anyway; they're aspects in every child, in every one of us. At times we are full of wisdom, and other times we close down, insecure, trapped by our inner noise.

So we stand up to the wicked son with compassion.

"Blunt his teeth," says the Haggadah, "and tell him, 'It is because of this [service] that God did for me when I left Egypt.'"

"You're mistaken," we say. "It's not a function of how exalted we feel that makes us worthy of leaving Egypt. It's a function of this – the act of sincere service and effort – that enables us to go."

Pharaoh's Hard Heart, by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

In the book of Exodus, the Torah reports that the Egyptian court magicians were able to duplicate the first two plagues. For this reason Pharaoh was convinced that he was facing a force with which he could at least contend. However, the great biblical commentator Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) explains that a close reading of the text reveals that in truth the Egyptian magicians were no match for Moses and his brother Aaron. In fact, the best the Egyptians could do was to turn a small bottle of water into blood. They certainly couldn't transform the mighty Nile into a bloody waterway. Yet despite these feeble attempts to duplicate the plagues, Pharaoh continued to cling to his conviction not to free the Jews – despite Moses' warning of even more dire consequences.

There is a little bit of Pharaoh in us all.

Life is a battle. We all want to do what is right and good. But it's such a struggle. And when locked in this pitched battle, we often give in to our impulse towards rationalization. Rationalization affords us a respite, as it enables us to justify actions which deep down we know are not for us.

This remarkable ability, when viewed from a distance, would often be laughable if it weren't so destructive. Like Pharaoh and his magicians, clinging to straws, we seek to excuse some actions and justify others, while hurtling unchecked towards our own self-destruction.

Sometimes the pattern is like this: You consider a course of action, carefully weigh all the options and permutations, and finally arrive at a conclusion. Your decision has been made and you're off and running. At first the going is smooth, but soon you find that you keep stubbing a toe. Then you twist an ankle, injure a knee, throw out your back, and eventually run face-first into a brick wall which everyone saw but you.

Dazed and bruised, you ponder a most ancient riddle: "Where did that come from?" The answer may well lie in the fact that the only thing harder than admitting you've made a mistake is running headlong into the consequences. Such was Pharaoh... and such is life.

To admit that the sum total of all our careful calculations and detailed planning is nothing more than a brilliantly charted course to failure is simply too much to bear. Our egos just won't allow us to hear of such nonsense. So we don a pair of designer blinders sporting the Pharaoh logo and rush off into the grasp of everything we wanted to avoid.

Or, unlike Pharaoh, we can refuse to shut our eyes – and have the courage to sacrifice our egos, before we sacrifice ourselves.

(excerpted from the Passover Survival Kit Haggadah)

Rabbi Akiva in Bnei Brak, By Slovie Jungreis Wolff

Our Haggadah speaks of a famous Seder that took place in Bnei Brak. There were many great rabbis sitting together. One rabbi mentioned is Rabbi Akiva, who was actually the younger scholar hosting the elders. The rabbis spoke about the exodus until their students came in to say, "Rabbis, it is time to recite the morning Shema prayer!"

This Seder invite Rabbi Akiva into your hearts. He will give you strength. He will empower you with courage.

Rabbi Akiva lived in the darkest of times. The holy Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. The Romans had conquered the land. The spirit of the Jewish nation had been crushed; their soul trampled upon. Studying Torah and doing mitzvot were met with imprisonment, torture and death. Soon the long and bitter exile would begin. The Jews would be put into chains and sold in the Roman slave market. Who could think about joining a Seder in such darkness? Who could feel inspired and speak about the exodus in Egypt when despair was in the air?

This is exactly why the sages met in the home of Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Akiva was the eternal optimist. He refused to surrender to depression. Where others saw the end of the road, he saw the beginning of the journey. His eye was always on the future. His heart was eternally filled with faith.

We meet Rabbi Akiva once again when he is walking with his peers up to Jerusalem When they reached Mount Scopus, they tore their garments from grief at the sight of devastation. As they reached the Temple Mount, a fox emerged from the place that had been the Holy of Holies. The rabbis started to weep. Rabbi Akiva laughed. "Why are you laughing?" they asked. He explained that while they see the destruction of the sacred, he sees the fulfillment of prophecy. Just as the first part of prophecy had been fulfilled, that the Temple would be destroyed, now we must look forward to the second part of the prophecy-the rebuilding of our Temple and return of our people.

We must gather now round the table of Rabbi Akiva. It takes courage to keep a positive spirit. The sages assembled by the spirit who would keep hope and faith alive. As long as we do not get stuck in the blackness of yesterday we can emerge into the brightness of tomorrow. Is it easy? No, it takes all you've got. But if you are able to spend the night recalling the exodus, reinforcing within the understanding that there is a God who watches over

you, cares for you, and takes you out of your personal Egypt, you will make it. We must tap into the eternal optimism of Rabbi Akiva.
When the students came in to say it is time for the morning Shema they were transmitting a message to us, today: Don't give up. Don't fall into despair. The darkest part of the night comes just before dawn.
The morning Shema is a prayer of clear-cut faith. There are no hazy doubts. It is bright and unobscured. We proclaim our unwavering belief with one voice.
We will stand up again. We will feel joy again. We will rebuild.

Plague of Darkness, by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
The Torah says that the plague of Darkness was so severe that "one person was unable to see the person right next to them." The spiritual master, the Chidushei Harim says that the worst plague is when we fail to see our fellow human beings who are abandoned or in pain and we fail to reach out to them.
Dayeinu: Who Packed Your Parachute? By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
Charles Plum, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Communist prison. He survived that ordeal and one day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam and you were shot down!"
"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.
"I packed your parachute," the man replied, "I guess it worked!"
That night, Plumb couldn't sleep. He kept wondering what this man might have looked like in a sailor uniform. He wondered how many times he might have passed him on the ship and never acknowledged him. How many times he never said hello, good morning or how are you. Plumb was a fighter pilot, respected and revered, while this man was just an ordinary sailor. Now it grated on his conscious.
Plumb thought of the many lonely hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the fabric together, making sure the parachute was just right and going to great lengths to make it as precise as can be, knowing that somebody's life depended on it. Only now does Plumb have a full appreciation for what this man did. And now Plumb goes around the world as a motivational speaker asking people to recognize who is packing your parachute.
Have we thanked those who contributed to the lives we are blessed to live? Imagine if our kindergarten teacher got a note from us thanking her for nurturing us with love. Imagine if our high school principal, our childhood pediatrician, our housekeeper growing up who cleaned our room, out of the blue got a gesture of gratitude showing that we cared enough to track them down and say thank you after all of these years. Did we express enough appreciation to the person who set us up with our spouse, gave us our first job, safely delivered our children?
We all have family, friends, mentors and neighbors whose efforts shaped who we are today. Freedom means knowing that we didn't get here on our own. This Passover, let's sing our own personal dayeinu and repair our ingratitude by saying thank you to those who packed our parachutes.

Insights Pesach Edition - Nissan 5781
Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim / Talmudic University
Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig
This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Tzipora bas Tzvi.
"May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

Theme of Pesach
Every year, as we gather with our family and loved ones to participate in the Seder, we seek ways to make the Seder meaningful and relevant. Some families buy new Haggadahs each year; some incorporate show-and-tell themes for the children; others painstakingly listen to every Dvar Torah that the children bring home in the Haggadahs they prepared in school (and for some unknown reason their teachers thought the Dvar Torah to be both meaningful and relevant).
The Seder is, or should be, a deeply meaningful experience; in fact, the Seder is the most widely observed ritual by Jews of all levels of observance. So what is the message that we should take away from this experience? Clearly, we shouldn't make the most memorable part of the Seder the fact that the Ma Nishtana was repeated in eleven different languages.
A good place to start is by examining the mitzvos of the evening. Upon taking a closer look, it should become obvious that the messages of the evening are rather contradictory: The four cups of wine, representing the four types of redemption, are drunk in a manner befitting kings. Pesach is called Zman Cheiruseinu – the time of our freedom. Yet the mitzvah of matzah – Lechem Oni – represents our being slaves and impoverished. The Torah refers to Pesach as "Chag Hamatzohs" – meaning that an overriding theme of the holiday is the servitude.
It isn't even as if we are transitioning from being slaves to being redeemed; the mitzvos are interspersed throughout the Seder – and the last thing we eat is the Afikomen, which is the taste we are supposed to retain. How do we reconcile this inherent contradiction?
There is a fascinating Rashi on the verse, "And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Hashem your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm..." (Dvarim 5:15). Rashi explains that the reason we must remember that we were slaves in Egypt is to understand that this is the very reason Hashem took us out of Egypt: "Hashem redeemed you in order for you to be his servant and fulfill his Torah and mitzvos." In other words, being slaves in Egypt both educated and prepared us to be proper servants to Hashem.
While the obvious difference between being servants to Pharaoh and being servants to Hashem is that Hashem has only our interest at heart, in truth, the difference is much, much deeper. Hashem created the world with a mission to be fulfilled. This mission, in essence, is for mankind to perfect itself and seek a relationship with Him. It is only through this relationship that we achieve eternality and an everlasting existence.
Klal Yisroel are therefore Hashem's ambassadors to the world. This is a very lofty position. We are part of Hashem's "management team" to see that His will for us and the world is fulfilled. The Torah is Hashem's manual for the world and the path to its perfection. This is why Hashem, upon our leaving Egypt, marched us straight to Mount Sinai to accept the Torah.
This leads us to a VERY important point, and likely the most significant difference between being servants to Pharaoh and servants of Hashem: At Mount Sinai we were ASKED to accept the Torah and the inherent responsibilities that come along with that commitment. The entire episode is referred to as Kabolas HaTorah. In other words, "our acceptance" is a critical component of this servitude. We are freely choosing this responsibility and that is what gives us a world standing. We represent Hashem and therefore have an elevated status. This is why a tiny country, buried in the Middle East, is a focus of such devotion and enmity. The entire world, at least subconsciously, recognizes the position that the Jewish people hold within the world.
This position is what gives us an elevated status; we are truly part of Hashem's kingdom. Thus, we have to live up to what it means to be both sons of the King and His ambassadors to the world. Therefore, on Pesach, while we celebrate our leaving Egypt, we also reaffirm our servitude to Hashem. This is represented by the matzah. The wine represents the role we have chosen for ourselves as Hashem's ambassadors to the world, which will lead to the ultimate redemption and the entire world's recognition of Hashem's unity and that we are all one.

Ha Lachma Anya
We begin the main body of the Haggadah with the section known as Maggid. This section of the Haggadah begins with the introductory paragraph of Ha Lachma Anya. This section contains a very odd statement: "Let all who is hungry come and eat, anyone that is needy come share in the Korban

Pesach." This is the fifth section of the Haggadah; does it not seem like a disingenuous invitation? By this time, even the poorest of folk would have had to make some other arrangements. If this is a real invitation why isn't it recited prior to making Kiddush? What does this have to do with Maggid; why is this the introduction?

The main purpose of this section of the Haggadah is to fulfill the mitzvah of telling over the miracles that occurred to us in Egypt and the story of our redemption. This is supposed to be a very interactive experience. We want everyone to participate.

Yet, often, when people are guests in someone's home they are reticent about jumping in and adding their own ideas and thoughts to the conversation, leaving it to the host to direct the conversation.

There is a well know law that "Ain Oreiach Machnis Oreiach" – a guest is not allowed to invite another guest into someone else's home. The prerogative of inviting guests is solely the domain of the host. Yet everyone at the Seder is reciting the section of Ha Lachma Anya with its invitation to others. How can this be?

Clearly, this invitation isn't to find new guests. This invitation is recited by everyone so that they begin to look at themselves as if they too are hosts of the meal. In other words, the sole purpose of the statement is for everyone to feel comfortable at the meal as if it were their very own meal. This encourages everyone to participate in the conversation and add their thoughts and ideas. That's why it appears as an introduction to Maggid – the main section of the Haggadah; that of discussing all of Hashem's wondrous acts on behalf the Jewish people.

Did You Know...

The Vilna Gaon relates the four cups to four different worlds: this world, the world of Messiah, the world of the resurrection of the dead, and the World-to-Come. One who fulfills the mitzvah of the four cups and the other mitzvot of the Seder is assured of all these worlds.

Maharal connects the four cups with Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah, since it was in their merit the Jewish people were born and redeemed; and also in the merit of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in whose merit the mitzvot of the Passover offering, matzah, and marror were given to the Jewish people.

Bnei Yissachar writes that Israel was given the privilege of the mitzvah of the four cups as a reward for the four virtues they displayed in Egypt. They did not adopt non-Jewish names but rather preserved their distinctly Jewish names; they retained their own Jewish language; they maintained their distinctly Jewish mode of dress; and they did not stoop to the immorality prevalent in ancient Egyptian, but rather maintained their particularly high standard of Jewish morality. Despite being enmeshed in the impurities of Egypt, the fact that they preserved these barriers against total assimilation earned for them the title of "distinguished," in which merit they were redeemed.

The Shulchan Aruch explicitly says that it is possible to add more cups (SA OC 473:3). The one exception is that it is forbidden to add cups of wine between the third and fourth cups (SA OC 479). The Maharal explains that this halacha is connected to the four stages of redemption. It is possible to "interrupt" between the first three stages, but it is forbidden to interrupt between the third and fourth stages. The national independence of the Jewish people, "I will redeem you," has meaning only in context of our identity as Hashem's nation as the recipients of His Torah: "And I will take you to me as a nation, and I will be to you as God," when we accept the Torah (Gevurot Hashem Chapter 60). However, although it's allowed, one should be strict not to drink too much wine so as not to get drunk (and not be able to say the whole Haggadah).

The cup of wine must be filled with a revi'is of wine and one must drink a full revi'is or at least majority of a revi'is.

Rabbi Dovid Feinstein writes that based on measuring large eggs, which should be used for the four cups, a revi'is is 3.3 fl oz.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky writes that a revi'is is 5.1 fl oz.

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https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/1959947/18-thoughts-to-live-by-from-rav-henoch-leibowitz-ztl-13th-yahrtzeit.html

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman for 5tjt.com

18 Thoughts to Live By from Rav Henoch Leibowitz zt"l – 13th Yahrtzeit

March 23, 2021

As we age, we appreciate even more the thoughts and sayings of our Rebbeim who are no longer here. It has been 13 years since Rav Henoch Leibowith zt"l passed away. His dedication to Klal Yisroel, his penetrating approach to both mussar and Gemorah learning, and his inculcating his remarkable values within his students continue to serve as a source of constant inspiration to them.

Presented here below are 18 of his thoughts and sayings.

1 Knowing G-d is to walk in His ways. This means to emulate Him in acts of kindness, in seeking just solutions, and in the performance of truly charitable acts.

2 It is important to seek inspiration from the example of others – just so that we can awaken ourselves to perform a difficult task with joy.

3 When trying to impart a lesson, it is much more effective when they figure out the lesson themselves.

4 Sometimes the motivating force to do the right thing when faced with difficulty is the very absence of anyone else present who is willing to do it.

5 When surrounded by those of lower morality, there is a grave responsibility to gird oneself in strength of character.

6 Talking over and reviewing something deeply with a friend often allows for greater examination of an issue and helps one see the truth.

7 There is often a grave responsibility to think and ponder the gravity of our responsibility.

8 Never despair. It's awful power can warp and destroy the power of the mind.

9 Even the greatest of people are susceptible of giving up hope.

10 Always make the effort – even when the chances look slim. And if you need a miracle, the effort will make it easier.

11 Always make the effort to remain calm, cool, and collected – even when you are involved in earth-shattering matters.

12 Losing it – is a sin.

13 What is the definition of a "sucker?" To people who are far removed from the concept of chessed it is often it is a pejorative term for a "baal chessed."

14 Performing acts of kindness each day, aside from being obligatory, is a means to acquire the character trait of loving others like oneself – step-by-step.

15 Quite often it is improper to join with evil people, even for a worthy goal, because it appears as if you agree with their decisions. The issue is complex and requires consultation with the greatest of Torah leaders.

16 Embedded within the soul of man is a natural tendency toward goodness and fulfilling Hashem's will. Without this, the soul cannot be truly happy, just like a princess who marries a commoner does not find true happiness.

17 Humility is not the negation of the true state of affairs – rather it is the recognition of one's faults and qualities together, with the true and deep realization that all talent comes to him solely by the grace of the Creator.

10 One cannot achieve a state of wholeness merely by focusing on Mitzvos between man and G-d. One must perfect relationships and fulfill all Mitzvos between man and each other as well, in order to achieve the desired shleimus that we must all reach.

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In My Opinion PESACH 5781
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The holiday of Pesach represents many basic values in Jewish life. Foremost naturally is that of liberty and freedom from oppression, slavery, and domination by others. The holiday is described as being the holiday of our freedom. But, there is another basic idea and value that underlies the commemoration of our exodus from Egypt and the beginning of our freedom. That value is the human capacity to believe and keep faith with an ideal that has not yet been realized and that is yet to be exploited. In the retelling of the story of the Exodus, the Bible mentions several times in the narrative of the description of the redemption from Egyptian bondage, the fact that people believed that they would be freed, and that Moshe would be the one that would be able to lead them from bondage to freedom. It was this belief that fueled the entire narrative of freedom and brought about the eventual triumph over Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation. No matter how much lip service we pay to the idea of faith and belief, we always have a tendency to underplay its importance in shaping human events, both individual and communal. But faith, literally, does have the power to move and change the course of human history and personal existence. The Lord may have performed untold miracles in order to extract the Jewish people from under the yoke of Egyptian bondage, but none of this would've been successful had the people not believed it would be successful and that they would achieve their freedom. One of the great ideas in Judaism, especially emphasized in the teachings of the great Chasidic master Rabbi Zadok HaKohein of Lublin is that within events that appear to be negative and tragic, such as the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, there are the seeds of redemption and hope. Even though there are tragedies such as the destruction of millions of Jews in Egypt, at the time of Moses, the inner soul of the Jew had faith that better times would arrive and that the redemption from slavery would actually occur. That path is the definition of faith and belief in Jewish life throughout Jewish history. No matter how difficult and oppressive the situation appeared to be, already hidden within it were the solutions to the problem and the redemption from bondage. An expression of this is to be found in the song attributed to the Jewish partisans in World War II who hid in the forests of Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, from where they continued to harass the Nazi beast. They created a thousand pinpricks that collectively hampered the operations of the German army on the Eastern front. The words to their song in Yiddish, to the effect that, "Do not dare to say that this is our final road." It is this faith that overwrites all obstacles and situations of anguish and despair. The holiday of Pesach always represents a soaring sense of optimism and a deeply abiding faith in the Jewish future and in the redemptive powers of heaven that will be exhibited in the coming of the messianic era. The matzoh that we eat is called, in Jewish tradition, by its Aramaic phrase – the bread of faith. Matzoh is potential bread but it is not yet risen. It appears to be doomed to be flat and crunchy, without much taste or substance. However, we are aware of the potential contained within that matzoh. Jews believe in the power and potential of it to rise and become the fluffy and the most delicious breads and pastry. We celebrate while the matzoh is still in its flattened state. The commandment is to eat it in its raw state so that we can sense the power of its potential, when we will be allowed to eat it after being fully risen and tasty. Our entire fulfillment of the commandment of eating matzoh on Pesach is to reinforce our innate sense of belief and faith in the future and in our ability to realize our individual and national potential. Belief eventually leads to action and action leads to redemption. Chag Sameach Berel Wein

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Weekly Parsha TZAV 5781 Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah begins this week's reading with the verbal commandment – Tzav – ordering Moshe to command and demand from his brother Aaron certain fulfillments of ritual and service in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. The verb that is used is one of strength. Just as in a well-disciplined army, an officer's commands are fulfilled to be able to execute grand strategies, so, too, in Jewish life. The only way that the great strategy of connection with the Creator, living a holy life and being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation can be fulfilled is by obeying and observing commandments.

This is true even if the lowly private does not understand or is not even aware of the grand strategy of the general staff supervising the army. So, too, there are many times in Jewish life when we as individuals may question the validity and necessity of following an order, just as the soldier in the army. But just as simply by joining the Army and becoming a part of it forfeits that soldier's right to disobey orders. The Jewish people at Sinai agreed that they would fulfill God's orders, irrespective of their deeper understanding of those orders themselves. This may sound too authoritarian, even dictatorial, to modern ears and sensitivities. Nevertheless, it was and is the basis for Jewish life throughout the millennia of our existence. There are many things in life that we do simply because we are commanded to do so. If we have belief in the One that commands them despite human questions and doubts, we will always attempt to fulfill our duty and obey the commandment. The text of all blessings, before performing any of the Torah commandments, explicitly states that God has sanctified us by giving us these commandments, and that He commands that we fulfill them to the utmost extent that we can. Over the centuries, there have been many scholarly explanations and reasons given for certain Torah commandments. Times change though, as do societal mores, customs, and social viewpoints. What may have been a perfectly logical and satisfactory explanation for the necessity of a commandment a few centuries ago, may today have no relevance, and be viewed as only hollow words and ideas. But the Torah, which is eternal and given for all times and situations, chose to avoid giving easy explanations as to the reasons for its commandments and demands of the Jewish people. Instead, it relies upon the fact of the binding covenant that the Jewish people entered at Mount Sinai, that has obligated this special people to the Almighty for now and well over three millennia. We certainly wish to understand everything that we can about the competence, direction, and strategy of the Torah. However, we admit that after all is said and done, our ability to understand everything is limited and often fallacious. The bedrock of Jewish life is that we have been commanded and that we are willing to fulfill these decrees fully. Shabbat shalom Chag sameach Rabbi Berel Wein

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The Courage of Identity Crises (Tzav 5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt''l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

Good leaders know their own limits. They do not try to do it all themselves. They build teams. They create space for people who are strong where they are weak. They understand the importance of checks and balances and the separation of powers. They surround themselves with people who are different from them. They understand the danger of concentrating all power in a single individual. But learning your limits, knowing there are things you cannot do – even things you cannot be – can be a painful experience. Sometimes it involves an emotional crisis.

The Torah contains four fascinating accounts of such moments. What links them is not words but music. From quite early on in Jewish history, the Torah was sung, not just read. Moses at the end of his life calls the Torah a song.[1] Different traditions grew up in Israel and Babylon, and from around the tenth century onward the chant began to be systematised in the form of the musical notations known as ta'amei ha-mikra, cantillation signs, devised by the Tiberian Masoretes (guardians of Judaism's sacred texts). One very rare note, known as a shalshelet

(chain), appears in the Torah four times only. Each time it is a sign of existential crisis. Three instances are in the book of Genesis. The fourth is in our parsha. As we will see, the fourth is about leadership. In a broad sense, the other three are as well.

The first instance occurs in the story of Lot. After Lot separated from his uncle Abraham he settled in Sodom. There he assimilated into the local population. His daughters married local men. He himself sat in the city gate, a sign that he had been made a Judge. Then two visitors come to tell him to leave, for God is about to destroy the city. Yet Lot hesitates, and above the word for "hesitates" – vayitmamah – is a shalshelet. (Gen. 19:16). Lot is torn, conflicted. He senses that the visitors are right. The city is indeed about to be destroyed. But he has invested his whole future in the new identity he has been carving out for himself and his daughters. The angels then forcibly take him out of the city to safety – had they not done so, he would have delayed until it was too late.

The second shalshelet occurs when Abraham asks his servant – traditionally identified as Eliezer – to find a wife for Isaac his son. The commentators suggest that Eliezer felt a profound ambivalence about his mission. Were Isaac not to marry and have children, Abraham's estate would eventually pass to Eliezer or his descendants. Abraham had already said so before Isaac was born: "Sovereign Lord, what can You give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen. 15:2). If Eliezer succeeded in his mission, bringing back a wife for Isaac, and if the couple had children, then his chances of one day acquiring Abraham's wealth would disappear completely. Two instincts warred within him: loyalty to Abraham and personal ambition. The verse states: "And he said: Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me…good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham" (Gen. 24:12). Eliezer's loyalty to Abraham won, but not without a deep struggle. Hence the shalshelet (Gen. 24:12).

The third shalshalet brings us to Egypt and the life of Joseph. Sold by his brothers as a slave, he is now working in the house of an eminent Egyptian, Potiphar. Left alone in the house with his master's wife, he finds himself the object of her desire. He is handsome. She wants him to sleep with her. He refuses. To do such a thing, he says, would be to betray his master, her husband. It would be a sin against God. Yet over "he refused" is a shalshelet, (Genesis 39:8) indicating – as some rabbinic sources and mediaeval commentaries suggest – that he did so at the cost of considerable effort.[2] He nearly succumbed. This was more than the usual conflict between sin and temptation. It was a conflict of identity. Recall that Joseph was living in a new and strange land. His brothers had rejected him. They had made it clear that they did not want him as part of their family. Why then should he not, in Egypt, do as the Egyptians do? Why not yield to his master's wife if that is what she wanted? The question for Joseph was not just, "Is this right?" but also, "Am I an Egyptian or a Jew?"

All three episodes are about inner conflict, and all three are about identity. There are times when each of us has to decide, not just "What shall I do?" but "What kind of person shall I be?" That is particularly fateful in the case of a leader, which brings us to episode four, this time with Moses in the central role.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses had, at God's command instructed the Israelites to build a Sanctuary which would be, in effect, a permanent symbolic home for God in the midst of the people. By now the work is complete and all that remains is for Moses to induct his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons into office. He robes Aaron with the special garments of the High Priest, anoints him with oil, and performs the various sacrifices appropriate to the occasion. Over the word vayishchat, "and he slaughtered [the sacrificial ram]" (Lev. 8:23) there is a shalshelet. By now we know that this means there was an internal struggle in Moses' mind. But what was it? There is not the slightest sign in the text that suggests that he was undergoing a crisis.

Yet a moment's thought makes it clear what Moses' inner turmoil was about. Until now he had led the Jewish people. Aaron had assisted him, accompanying him on his missions to Pharaoh, acting as his spokesman, aide and second-in-command. Now, however, Aaron was about to undertake a new leadership role in his own right. No longer would he be one step behind Moses. He would do what Moses himself could not. He would preside over the daily offerings in the Tabernacle. He would mediate the avodah, the Israelites' sacred service to God. Once a year on Yom Kippur he would perform the service that would secure atonement for the people from its sins. No longer in Moses' shadow, Aaron was about to become the one kind of leader Moses was not destined to be: a High Priest.

The Talmud adds a further dimension to the poignancy of the moment. At the Burning Bush, Moses had repeatedly resisted God's call to lead the people. Eventually God told him that Aaron would go with him, helping him speak (Ex. 4:14-16). The Talmud says that at that moment Moses lost the chance to be a Priest: "Originally [said God] I had intended that you would be the Priest and Aaron your brother would be a Levite. Now he will be the Priest and you will be a Levite."[3]

That is Moses' inner struggle, conveyed by the shalshelet. He is about to induct his brother into an office he himself will never hold. Things might have been otherwise – but life is not lived in the world of "might have been." He surely feels joy for his brother, but he cannot altogether avoid a sense of loss. Perhaps he already senses what he will later discover, that though he was the Prophet and liberator, Aaron will have a privilege Moses will be denied, namely, seeing his children and their descendants inherit his role. The son of a Priest is a Priest. The son of a Prophet is rarely a Prophet.

What all four stories tell us is that there comes a time for each of us when we must make an ultimate decision as to who we are. It is a moment of existential truth. Lot is a Hebrew, not a citizen of Sodom. Eliezer is Abraham's servant, not his heir. Joseph is Jacob's son, not an Egyptian of loose morals. Moses is a Prophet, not a Priest. To say 'Yes' to who we are, we have to have the courage to say 'No' to who we are not. Pain and struggle is always involved in this type of conflict. That is the meaning of the shalshelet. But we emerge less conflicted than we were before.

This applies especially to leaders, which is why the case of Moses in our parsha is so important. There were things Moses was not destined to do. He would never become a Priest. That task fell to Aaron. He would never lead the people across the Jordan. That was Joshua's role. Moses had to accept both facts with good grace if he was to be honest with himself. And great leaders must be honest with themselves if they are to be honest with those they lead.

A leader should never try to be all things to all people. A leader should be content to be who they are. Leaders must have the strength to know what they cannot be if they are to have the courage to be truly their best selves.

Parshat Tzav-Shabbat Hagadol (Leviticus 6:1 – 8:36) Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "Behold, I send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And he [Elijah] will turn [back to God] the hearts of the parents through their children and the hearts of the children through their parents" (Malachi 3:23-2)

The Shabbat before Passover is called Shabbat Hagadol (the Great Sabbath), a phrase deriving from the last verse of the prophetic portion read on that day which declares that God will send Elijah the Prophet on the "great day" of the Lord right before the coming of the redemption.

Let us attempt to link Elijah to our Passover Seder in a way more profound than merely opening the door for him and offering him a sip of wine.

Our analysis begins with another Seder anomaly, the fact that we begin our night of freedom with the distribution of an hors d'oeuvre of karpas (Greek for vegetation or vegetable, often parsley, dipped in a condiment).

The usual explanation for this is that vegetation emerges in the springtime; Passover is biblically called the Spring Festival, and so we

dip a vegetable in salt water, reminiscent of spring renewal emerging from the tears of Egyptian enslavement. Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, in his late 19th-century Haggada, suggests another interpretation. The Hebrew word “karpas” appears in the opening verses of the Book of Esther, in the description of the “hangings” that were found in the gardens of King Ahasuerus’s palace, where the great feast for all his kingdom was hosted; karpas white cotton joined with turquoise wool. Rashi connects the term “karpas” in the sense of material with the ketonet passim, the striped tunic that Jacob gave to his beloved son, Joseph.

The Jerusalem Talmud additionally suggests that we dip the karpas in haroset (a mixture of wine, nuts and dates), adding that haroset is reminiscent of the blood of the babies murdered in Egypt. In our case, the karpas would become symbolic of Joseph’s tunic, which the brothers dipped into goat’s blood and brought to their father as a sign that his son had been torn apart by wild beasts when in fact they had sold him into Egyptian slavery.

Why begin the Seder this way? The Talmud criticizes Jacob for favoring Joseph over the other brothers and giving him the striped tunic. This gift, a piece of material with little monetary value, engendered vicious jealousy resulting in the sale of Joseph and the eventual enslavement of the Israelites for 210 years.

The point of the Seder is the retelling (“haggada”) of the seminal experience of servitude and freedom from generation to generation. Through this, all parents become teachers. They must inspire their children to continue the Jewish narrative of identification with the underdog and the outcast. They must imbue in their offspring insistence upon freedom for every individual created in God’s image and faith in the ultimate triumph of a world dedicated to peace and security for all.

This places an awesome responsibility on the shoulders of every parent: to convey the ethical monotheism, rooted in our ritual celebrations and teachings, to their children and eventually to all of humanity. Hence, parents must be warned at the outset not to repeat the tragic mistake of Jacob, not to create divisions and jealousies among their children. Instead, we must unite the generations in the common goal of continuing our Jewish narrative.

What has this to do with Elijah the Prophet, who is slated to be the herald of the Messiah, the announcer of the “good tidings of salvation and comfort”? Our redemption is dependent on our repentance and the most necessary component of redemption is “loving our fellow as we love ourselves” – the great rule of the Torah taught by Rabbi Akiva.

Loving humanity must begin with loving our family; first and foremost our nuclear family. We read in the prophetic portion of this Shabbat that Elijah will bring everyone back to God by uniting parents with their children and children with parents. The biblical source of sibling hatred (the Joseph story), which has plagued Jewish history up to and including the present day, will be repaired by Elijah, who will unite the hearts of the children and the parents together in their commitment to God.

Toward the end of the Seder, we open the door for Elijah and welcome him to drink from the cup of redemption poured especially for him. But if Elijah can visit every Seder throughout the world, surely he can get through even the most forbidding kind of door.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, teaches that we open the door not so much to let Elijah in as to let ourselves out. The Seder speaks of four children; But what about the myriad “fifth children” who never came to a Seder? We must go out after them and bring them in – perhaps together with Elijah, whom we will need desperately to unite the entire family of Israel around the Seder table. Shabbat Shalom!

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights For the week ending 27 March 2021 / 14 Adar 5781 Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com Parshat Tzav What's So Bad About Bread? *“It will be eaten unleavened” (6:9)* I doubt that anyone in the audience watching Grandma's Reading Glass in 1900 realized that they were witnessing the birth of a new language. Grandma's Reading Glass is under a minute long and the plot is thin, to say the least. A small child looks through his mother's magnifying glass, at various objects around the room. What makes the movie a landmark is its use of sustained point-of-view shots. Meaning that, instead of just showing the child looking through the looking glass, the audience is seeing what the child is seeing. Prior to this, watching a film was like watching a play. The camera was set up in front of the scene and stayed put. Grandma's Reading Glass was the beginning of the “language” of film. A language that is so familiar to us now, that we do not even recognize that it has syntax like any other language. But the syntax of film has a limitation. In a movie there is no past or future. Everything in a movie takes place in a continuous present. There is no “was” and no “will be” in a film. To change the tense of a movie, the director has to resort to the “flash-back,” an inelegant device whereby the picture starts to blur and the sound becomes echo-y. It all seems like such a long time ago-o-o-o. And when we cut to that past scene, the language of film reverts to the present tense. We can use this anomaly in the language of film to understand one of Judaism's most basic concepts. Intuitively, time seems eternal. It seems that we are born into a world that has always been here, and we leave a world that will always be. This idea is the basis of all atheism. If time was always here, then there was no creation, and if there was no creation, then — G-d forbid — there's no Creator. The very first word in the Torah — Bereishet — contradicts that intuition. Bereishet, “In the beginning…” can be understood to mean "Beh" — standing for Barah Reishit, meaning, “G-d created the beginning.” Time itself is a creation. It had a beginning. And anything that has a beginning must have an end. Not only did G-d create beginning, but He re-creates that beginning every single nanosecond. The monolith called time does not exist. The language of film, its constant present tense, gives us a way to understand this reality. And there's another even more interesting aspect of film that illustrates this constant creation of time. If you take an old movie film and unwind it, it's made up of thousands of individual pictures. The fact that we don't see a series of still images but a continuous flow of movement is due to something called “the persistence of vision,” which says that the brain will form the impression of movement when slightly different images are presented to the eye faster than around 10 frames per second. The same idea holds true for digital movies. There is no such thing as the continuity of time. There are just individual moments, like a child's “flicker book.” Which brings us to the question: “What's so wrong with bread?’ The Exodus from Egypt saw the creation of a nation which would proclaim to the world the existence of a single Creator Who created everything — including time. It is time that turns matzah into bread. There's no other difference. On the festival of Pesach, where we once again proclaim to the world that there is a Creator, we renourish our souls with the food that rejects the independence of time — the unleavened bread called matzah.

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www.ou.org Parsha Tzav: Increasing Gratitude
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

There are certain phrases or expressions that many of us find hard to say. "I love you" is one of them. Another such phrase is "thank you". Although these words are difficult for us to pronounce, they each reflect powerful emotions and, when finally uttered, have an unbelievable impact upon the person to whom they are addressed. It is wonderful to hear that one is loved, and it is also wonderful to learn that another person is grateful and appreciative of what one has done for him or her. In our tradition, gratitude is a primary value. Bachya ibn Pakuda, in his renowned medieval book Duties of the Heart, stresses the centrality of gratitude in the religious experience. For him, the worship of God begins with a sense of gratitude for being alive, for being healthy, for having one's needs met. It is no wonder, then, that as the book of Leviticus enumerates the many types of sacrificial offerings which comprise the ancient Temple service, the korban todah, or thanksgiving offering, is prominently included. In this week's Torah portion, Tzav, in Leviticus

7:11-18, the sacrifice known as the korban shelamim, or peace offering, is described in detail. Generally speaking, when a person makes a vow to offer such a sacrifice, whether in a time of distress or when remembering God's tender mercies, he must bring an animal offering. He brings it to the Temple, the kohen (priest) performs various ritual procedures, and then most of the meat can be consumed by the individual who donated the offering, as long as he finishes it all during the day he brings it, and the following night and day, providing the individual with much more than 24 hours within which to consume the meat. But the passage which deals with this offering begins with a subtype of the shelamim – the todah. In this instance, besides bringing an animal sacrifice, the donor must also bring four types of bread, and ten breads of each type, totaling forty loaves. The meat and the accompanying loaves of bread must be consumed by daybreak after the night following the preparation of the sacrifice. The late 19th century commentator known as the Netziv suggests that the thanksgiving offering, or todah, must be accompanied by a public celebration with many guests invited. Therefore, unlike the ordinary shelamim, the numerous loaves of bread are prescribed so that all the guests can partake of the meal. The time within which the meat and breads can be consumed is limited to much less than 24 hours, necessitating the invitation of numerous guests to share in the thanksgiving celebration. The Netziv teaches us here that expressions of gratitude should ideally not be kept private. Thankfulness is an emotion to share with others in a public celebration. Not long ago, I came across an article in an academic journal of psychology. The article was entitled Can Prayer Increase Gratitude? The authors quote numerous research studies which correlate gratitude with mental health. They therefore seek ways to promote the feeling of gratitude to foster increased mental health. One way they tried to instill gratitude in their subjects was to encourage them to engage in prayer. How consistent their findings were to the teachings of Judaism! They found that when people engaged in prayer, they became more aware not of what they were lacking, but of the blessings they had to be thankful for. The very act of prayer inculcated an attitude of gratitude. The sacrifices offered in our ancient Temple were forcibly discontinued two millennia ago. Our sages teach us that our prayers, although they are mere words, substitute for the sacrifices of old. Whereas once upon a time a Jew would express his gratitude by bringing a thanksgiving offering, today he recites a prayer instead. The article in the psychology journal teaches us that the relationship between prayer and gratitude is a mutual one. Not only does gratitude lead to thankful prayer, but prayer leads to increased thankfulness. Thus, for those of us who come by our sense of gratitude naturally and with ease, these sacrificial offerings, or these days, the appropriate prayers, can help us express that gratitude. But for those of us whose sense of gratitude is numbed, prayer is one way to free feelings of thankfulness which are otherwise locked up within us. It allows those feelings to well up and to be effectively expressed. We often hear the admonition to "count our blessings". Many of us, either because of our inborn pessimism, or because of the difficulties of life which seem to overshadow our blessings, find it difficult to acknowledge the positives of our life. Without such acknowledgment, gratitude is impossible. In this week's Torah portion, we learn not only that gratitude deserves celebration in the holy Temple, but that temple worship can help us feel grateful for what we do have. And we also learn, following the Netziv, of how worthwhile it is to express gratitude in a circle of family and friends. That gratitude is the most pleasant of human emotions is so well expressed in these lines from the poet Thomas Gray's Ode for Music: Sweet is the breath of vernal shower, The bees collected treasures sweet, Sweet music's melting fall, but sweeter yet The still small voice of gratitude. The sage advice we can derive from this week's Torah portion is: Express gratitude, and not in a "still small voice," but in a resounding and booming voice for others to hear so that they can share in the emotions of the grateful person, and so that the grateful person can feel those emotions in every fiber of his being. to do so..

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rabbibuchwald.njop.org Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message - Tzav 5781-2021 "Understanding Shabbat Hagadol" (updated and revised from Tzav 5762-2002) Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week, we read the second parasha of the book of Leviticus, parashat Tzav. Because it immediately precedes Passover, this Shabbat is known as שַׁבַּת הַגָּדוֹל —Shabbat Hagadol, the great Shabbat. On this Shabbat, a special Haftarah from the prophet Malachi 3:4-24, is read. While there is no universally agreed upon reason for calling the Shabbat that immediately precedes Passover, Shabbat Hagadol, the great Sabbath, there are many traditions explaining this distinguished appellation. Rabbi Abraham Chill in his comprehensive and erudite book, The Minhagim, which explains the customs and ceremonies of Judaism, their origins and rationale, offers several reasons for the name, Shabbat Hagadol. One of the reasons for the name recorded by Rabbi Chill is that tradition maintains that the tenth of Nissan of the year of the Exodus was a Shabbat. It was on that day that, as recorded in Exodus 12, that the Al-mighty called upon the Jews to take a sheep to their homes and keep it there until the 14th of Nissan, at which time they were to slaughter it and prepare it for the Pascal sacrifice. This act of taking the sheep on the part of the enslaved Hebrews, was not at all a simple act. It was, in effect, a brazen act of defiance. After all, the Egyptians worshiped sheep as their G-d. The timorous Hebrew slaves, were thus bidden to take the sheep, in defiance of their masters, in defiance of the entire theology of Egypt, and slaughter it before the Egyptians' eyes. Hence, the Sabbath is called Shabbat Hagadol, the great Sabbath, because it was on this Shabbat that the Jews expressed their open defiance and declared their independence. A second reason recorded by Rabbi Chill, is that "Shabbat" day itself is a day of testimony. The Shabbat testifies that G-d created the heavens and the earth and rested on Shabbat, the seventh day. But, this great act of Divine creation, is often perceived as the act of a remote, transcendent and seemingly distant G-d who created the world. On the other hand, Passover represents an imminent and close G-d who cares about his people and who was actively involved in redeeming even the little Jewish children from the slavery of Egypt. On the Shabbat before Passover, both these ideas are emphasized, the power of G-d and the love of G-d, hence the name, Shabbat Hagadol, the great Sabbath. Another reason enumerated by Rabbi Chill is predicated on the prevailing custom (Talmud, Pesachim, 6a), that 30 days before a holiday Jews begin to study and learn about the customs and practices of the holiday. On the Sabbath before Passover, (except on those years like this one when Shabbat Hagadol falls the day before Passover and the Shabbat Hagadol Discourse is offered the Shabbat before), it was the custom, and still is the custom, for community rabbis to offer a major discourse explaining the often complex issues of the laws and rituals of the Passover holiday. Writes Rabbi Chill, "It is a long and tiring day for the congregants and for the rabbi." In effect, the name "The Great Shabbat, Shabbat Hagadol," reflects the long Sabbath. As previously noted, on this Shabbat, the special Haftarah from the prophet Malachi is read. Malachi 3:23 reads: הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֵת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא, לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם הַשֵּׁם, הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא. Behold I send to you Elijah the Prophet, before the great and awesome day of G-d. There are those who say that the Sabbath is called Shabbat Hagadol because of the word גָּדוֹל –"gadol"–great in the aforementioned verse in Malachi, as if to represent a prayer that this great Sabbath should lead to the great day of redemption and the coming of the Messiah. Jewish traditions and customs are always replete with meaning, and the tradition of Shabbat Hagadol is no exception. The ancient theme of Shabbat Hagadol may teach contemporary Jews that, despite the redemption which took place over 3300 years ago, today's events require of us to be firm and courageous, just as our ancestors were in the days of yore–defiant of their masters, and affirming that, with G-d's help, they will master their fate and defy their own presumed destinies. For contemporary Jews as well, it is a time to affirm both the power and the love of G-d. We must be certain, that despite the challenges and the great turmoil that we witness in the land of Israel and in Jewish world today, G-d's power and love will be there for us, and will rescue and

redeem us as well. However, our salvation does not come without effort or agony. There is, of course, the long-suffering that is always necessary before the redemption. It is during this difficult period, similar to the "long Sabbath," that we must spend learning and mastering G-d's Torah, learning to appreciate the beauty of the festivals and the observances, sparing no effort to uncover new insights within the Passover ritual, that are there just for our picking. It is a long and tiring process, but a process that results in much reward, and a great sense of pleasure and fulfillment. Finally, Shabbat Hagadol marks our commitment to the belief in the imminent arrival of the Prophet Elijah, who will herald the coming of the Messiah. May we be worthy to merit that Shabbat Hagadol 5781 be a great day for us. May this great day signal that the full redemption is at hand, and that Jews the world over shall soon be reunited, reunited in our land, which will become a land of peace, reunited in love of G-d and marked with personal and collective happiness. חַג כָּשֵׁר וְשָׂמֵחַ. We wish all our friends a wonderfully joyous, meaningful and healthy Passover. *Please note: The first two days of the joyous festival of Passover will be observed this year on Saturday night, March 27th and all day Sunday and Monday, March 28th and 29th. The seventh and eighth days of Passover begin on Friday night, April 2nd, and continue through Saturday and Sunday, April 3rd and 4th. May you be blessed.*

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chiefrabbi.org Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis Dvar Torah Pesach: THIS is the guarantee for our survival!

How can we guarantee our Jewish survival? We will give an answer to this question at the seder table. We will raise our cups and declare: "Vehi she'amda la'avoteinu velanu." – "It is this which has stood by our ancestors and us." We recognise that it wasn't only Pharaoh in Egypt who sought to annihilate us but that sadly this has been a recurring theme of our history. "HaKadosh Baruch Hu matzileinu miyadam." – Almighty God has always saved us. But when we say the word 'vehi' – 'it is this' which has stood by us. What is the 'this' that 'vehi' refers to? Many of our commentators answer with reference to the song Echad Mi Yodea (Who Knows One?) at the end of the Haggadah.

So let's have a look at the four letters of 'vehi': והיא. ו – Vav is six and that stands for the Shisha Sidrei Mishnah, the Six Orders of the Mishnah which is the Talmud. ה – Hey is five, representing the Chamisha Chumshei Torah, the Five Books of the Torah. י – Yud is ten and that represents the Asarah Dibraya, the Ten Commandments, and finally, א – Alef of course is one, representing God.

And it's true. This is what has saved us! It's Hashem. It's our obedience to the ten commandments. It's our awareness of everything in the Torah, and it's our study of the Talmud which have guaranteed our Jewish survival. But notice the order of the four. You see, everybody knows that we believe in one true God. Fewer people than that can tell you what the Ten Commandments are. Fewer than that know that there are 613 commandments and are aware of everything in the Torah and even fewer than that have studied Talmudic texts. 'Vehi' teaches us that when it comes to guaranteeing our Jewish survival, Jewish education must be our top priority and we need to deepen our knowledge. We must have an awareness of Talmudic texts, followed by the Torah, an awareness of the Ten Commandments and of course we must believe in Hashem. The deeper and more comprehensive our knowledge, the greater will be our Jewish awareness and the stronger our Jewish identity. So therefore, a great lesson of the Pesach Seder is not just that we should have a lovely and inspirational evening in its own right, but also that it should inspire us to study more throughout the whole year. That's why the passage immediately after "Vehi she'amda" starts with the words, '"Tze ulemad" – "Go out and learn". That should be our motto for Pesach: Tze ulemad: let's appreciate that our commitment to Jewish study and to Jewish education must be a feature throughout the entire year, because the greater the quality of our education, the greater our chances of Jewish survival. I wish you all chag kasher v'sameach. *Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.*

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torahweb.org Rabbi Hershel Schachter Pesach: A Teachable Moment for Ikarei ha'Emunah

Rabbi Hirsch Melech Shapiro (known for his sefer B'nai Yissoschor) writes a very fascinating idea in his sefer Derech Pekudecha. The Chumash records that Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe Rabbeinu that He plans to bring about tremendous miracles in Mitzrayim in order that B'nai Yisroel should tell over these stories to their children and grandchildren so that they should know all about Hashem. It would appear in the Chumash that the main purpose of the mitzvah of sippur yetzi'as Mitzrayim on Pesach night is to convey to our children all of the principles of faith (i'karei ha'emunah) which were demonstrated through all of the eser makos. Although Hashem is invisible, after experiencing the eser makos first hand it became obvious and apparent that there is a G-d in the world. The Torah tells us also that Hashem caused all of the avodah zaras in Egypt to fall apart to demonstrate that there is only one G-d. There were always thinkers who philosophized and suggested that it is physically impossible for the Infinite G-d to communicate with finite man; they claim there cannot be such a thing as prophecy. However, the people realized that Moshe Rabbeinu was a navi.

Included in the ikar ha'emunah of nevuah is the concept of tefillah. Just as G-d can, has, and will communicate with man, so too can man communicate with G-d by davening. The Torah says that B'nai Yisroel prayed and Hashem answered their prayers and took them out of Egypt. There were always thinkers who philosophized that although there is a G-d who created the world, because there is no such thing as spontaneous generation so there must have been a G-d who brought life into existence, but clearly after He created the world, He no longer pays attention to petty things that go on in this world and does not really follow with anything that goes on in this earth. On the occasion of yetzi'as Mitzrayim it was clearly demonstrated that this is not so. The one and only G-d that created the world was fully aware of all that was happening. He punished the wicked and spared the righteous. The story of yetzi'as Mitzrayim demonstrated that there was clearly yedey'a (knowledge) of what was happening and also sechar v'onesh.

The entire Jewish nation heard both Moshe and Aharon deliver prophecies, but noticed that there was a stark difference between the two of them. Aharon's prophecies were all regarding horo'as sha'ah while those of Mosher Rabbeinu were sometimes dinim l'doros and sometimes horo'as sha'ah. The korban Pesach that was brought in Mitzrayim was a blend of dinim l'doros and horo'as sha'ah. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to deliver the prophecy about the upcoming geulah, Moshe Rabbeinu says that when the people will ask me "what is His name, what should I answer"? Hashem gives a very cryptic response and reveals to Moshe Rabbeinu another one of His seven names (zayin sheimos sh'einom nimchokim): Eh'k'ye Asher Eh'k'ye. Rashi, quoting from the Midrash, interprets the meaning of this name / statement to be that Hashem will be with the Jewish people until ge'ulas Mitzrayim will be completed, and Hashem promises that He will again be with the Jewish people in the future during the long galus to bring about the ge'ulah ha'asida. Thus the ikar of be'as ha'Moshiach was also revealed right before yetzi'as Mitzrayim. It is for that reason that on Pesach night, at the conclusion of the seder, we all recite Nishmas Kol Chai, asking for that day to come soon when all of mankind will recognize Hakadosh Baruch Hu as the one and only ruler of the world.

However, the Moshiach will only come when all of mankind is willing to accept the malchus of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. There are many hard core atheists and ovdei avodah zarah who refuse to accept His malchus and because of whom the coming of Moshiach is being postponed. It is for that reason that we pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu right before the conclusion of the Hallel on the seder night, "Shfoch chamoscha...", i.e. it is not fair that this group should hold back the coming of Moshiach. Wipe these people out and the rest of the nations of the world will be ready to accept your malchus. All of these principles of faith of our religion could easily be explained even to young children on Pesach night. According to the simple reading of the pesukim, it would appear that that is the main purpose and should be the main theme of sippur yetzi'as Mitzrayim.

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blogs.timesofisrael.com Tzav: We don't wait on soup Ben-Tzion Spitz

Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use. - Emily Post

Once upon a time there was a concept called "etiquette" which one was expected to demonstrate, beyond the politeness of "please" and "thank you," particularly in dining situations. One learned how to sit and how not to sit, how to handle cutlery, how to eat, how to drink, how to excuse oneself, and much more. One of those rules of etiquette was the idea of waiting to eat, even if the food was on the plate in front of you, until the host started eating. An exception to that, however, was if the food being served was soup. By the time everyone would have been served their soup, the first person's soup would be at best lukewarm or cold. Therefore, etiquette dictates that you may have your soup as soon as it is served. The Bechor Shor on the Torah reading of Tzav comes to a similar conclusion regarding the etiquette of the Kohens who partook of the sacrificial meals at the Temple. The descendants of Aaron, the High Priest, were tasked with the eternal responsibility of serving as priests (Kohens) in the Tabernacle, and thereafter in the Temple. Part of that service included the sharing of sacrificial meals. During Temple times the Kohens served in rotations that were apportioned to a roster of Kohanic families. Each Kohanic family would serve together in the Temple, performing the various ritual duties required in the Temple. The Bechor Shor on Exodus 7:10 explains the different etiquette that accompanied different types of sacrificial meals or foods. In particular, he focuses on two types of grain "Mincha" offerings. One was a simple, uncooked, grain and oil mixture. For this offering, the Kohens needed to wait for the entire family to come together and eat it at the same time. However, the baked offerings were eaten primarily by the Kohens who were responsible and present for the preparation and baking of that particular offering, without having to wait for the entire family to assemble. They were allowed to eat it while it was still hot and not miss out on the pleasure of the hot food by waiting for everyone else to show up. May we always be considerate of others, and may we not demand consideration from others when it needlessly harms or detracts from their experiences. *Shabbat Shalom and Chag Kasher Ve'sameach, Dedication - To the Suez Canal. Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.*

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz Passover - Parashat Tzav: The liberation journey continues

Once a year, we do not suffice with mentioning the Exodus from Egypt, but retell the story of our nation's genesis in detail.

After Shabbat, we will sit down to celebrate Seder night – that festive night that starts off the seven days of Passover. On this night, we will all sit around the holiday table and fulfill the festival's unique commandments and traditions: eating matzah and bitter herbs, drinking four cups of wine, and telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus is an event that accompanies the Jewish nation and each individual Jew throughout life. Every day, in the text of the Shema recited in the morning and evening, we add a section remembering the Exodus from Egypt. In the kiddush on Friday evening and holidays, we say "a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt." Once a year, we do not suffice with mentioning the Exodus from Egypt, but retell the story of our nation's genesis in detail. This is a special commandment given in the Torah for this night: telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. What is the essential part of this story? Of course, the liberation from slavery to freedom. Our ancestors were slaves in Egypt working in hard labor, enslaved to Pharaoh, the Egyptian king. God sent Moses to generate a series of miracles and wonders that ultimately led to the Jewish nation's liberation. This is the structure of the story we tell. First, we describe in detail the difficult hardships suffered during the enslavement in Egypt; then we move on to describe the process of redemption and liberation. Finally, we thank God for the redemption and recite the chapters of the Hallel. We illustrate the story through the night's special commandments. We eat bitter herbs to remind us of our ancestors' bitter time in Egypt; we eat matzah as a reminder of the speed in which they left Egypt; and we drink four cups of wine and sit leaning comfortably as a symbol of the freedom we were privileged to attain. Seder night was set for the 15th of Nisan since that was when the Exodus from Egypt occurred thousands of years ago. Through the story and the illustrations, we relive that moment and awaken the internal movement from slavery to freedom. Though, thankfully, slavery hardly exists in the Western world, internal enslavement to the gratification of needs and the pursuit of pleasure exists in this imperfect world in which we live, perhaps even more than ever. Economic welfare and accessibility have created a situation in which a person can be busy chasing pleasure, without ever gaining a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment. This internal enslavement makes life devoid of significance and makes happiness further from reach. Netanyahu's savior: Meet the Arab Islamist who can sway the election The exodus from slavery to freedom means that a person is no longer confined by his desires or the lowly needs that attract him. A free person is one who can say to himself, "I have values and they overcome the attraction." A person who can control himself is one who is free. A person who can live in a dynamic of giving, rather than taking and drawing from others, is one who is free. A person who has the courage to leave his comfort zone and search for the meaning and purpose in life is one who is taking his first steps on the path to freedom. The Jewish people was liberated from slavery thousands of years ago. But the journey to freedom continues. If we ask ourselves how to go forward in this journey, our Sages answer: "The only free individual is one who engages in [the study of] Torah" (Avot 6:2). Engaging in Torah enlightens a person and helps him seek the truth. The study guides him in how to actualize the higher aspects of his character rather than being enslaved and addicted to attraction and gratification of needs. On this special night, Seder night, each and every member of the Jewish people is called upon to see himself "as though he himself left Egypt." This is an opportunity, a special time, when one gets Divine assistance to quit slavery and get a taste of true freedom, spiritual freedom, which leads one to a life of happiness and joy. *The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*

Shema Yisrael Torah Network Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Tzav פרשת צו תשפ"א

זאת תורת העלה היא העלה על מוקדה על המזבח *This is the law of the Olah/Elevation-offering (that stays) on the flame on the Altar. (6:2)*

The *Korban Chatas*, Sin-offering, is brought when one inadvertently commits a transgression for which the punishment is, when intentional, either *kares*, Heavenly excision, or the death penalty [any of the four forms of capital punishment/execution]. A person brings a *Korban Olah* for a sin which he committed with his mind, in which he had improper, sinful thoughts. Interestingly, when one performs a sin with his hand, his punishment is *chatas*, which is partially eaten by the owners and *Kohanim*. In contrast, when one commits a sin with his mind, he must bring a *korban* which is completely burnt. Why is this?

Simply, I would suggest that a sin which one commits with his mind permeates his entire body, tainting everything, because the mind determines what the body does. *Ramban* observes that the same hand that writes a *Sefer Torah* can commit murder. Is the hand to blame? No! It is the mind that determines and defines the actions of the hand. On the other hand, when hands/actions commit a sin, it is only the hands that have committed the sinful act. It does not affect the other organs of the body. Thus, a *Korban Olah* which atones for the sins of the mind is wholly burnt, and a *Korban Chatas* which atones for actions, is partially eaten by both owner and *Kohen*. The *Nesivos Chaim* (cited in *Nifle'osecha Asichah*) explains that the purpose of a *korban* is to teach its donor what it is that Hashem wants/expects of us and in what manner a Jew should carry out his daily endeavor. It is unrealistic to ask a person that all of his activities should be totally untainted of any physical/material prejudices and interests. We are human, and, as such,

we are prone to human tendencies. We cannot expect a person to execute a *mitzvah* and not derive any physical pleasure or purpose thereby. It is what it is. In the realm of thought, however, we may expect that one's mind be completely in sync with his actions. Upon *davening* (for example), one should maintain *kavanah*, proper intention, focus and devotion. One has no excuse for a "wandering" mind. Therefore, the Torah distinguishes between thought and action with regard to its various *korbanos*. In his inimitable manner, *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita* relates an inspiring story which underscores the importance of proper thought, *kavanah*, when one is engaged in a *davar she'b'kedushah*, holy endeavor. *Horav David Segal HaLevi, zl*, authored the *Turei Zahav* commentary to the *Shulchan Aruch*. The *Taz* (as he is reverently known) is one of *Klal Yisrael's* premier *poskim, halachic* arbiters. In the *Pincas*, notebook, of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, Jewish Sacred/Burial Society, of the city of Lvov, Poland, it is noted that the *Taz* was known to wear an old, torn *Tallis*. It was obvious from the color of the *Tallis* and the pattern of its tatters that he had worn it for quite some time. When it became known that the man who represented the city's spiritual centerpiece, a man known throughout the entire Torah world for his brilliance and erudition, was attired in an old *Tallis*, the women of the community assembled and donated a brand new white *Tallis* made of the finest wool, as befits a Torah scholar of the stature of the *Taz*. They brought the gift to him. He opened up the package and saw the impressive *Tallis* which they had commissioned for him. He remarked, "Thank you. My deepest gratitude to you for the thought. However, I refuse to wear a new *Tallis*. I require my old, torn *Tallis* to serve as a testament on my behalf in Heaven Above that I <u>never</u> had <u>any</u> extraneous thoughts during *Shemoneh Esrai*." His mind was always focused on the words, their meaning and implications. Can we make such a statement? Indeed, *Rav* Zilberstein supplements the story (*Chashukei Chemed Bechoros* 37a) with the following observation: The *Taz* was a saintly angel, an unparalleled *tzaddik*, about whom his *Tallis* could attest such positive testimony. Those of us who are unable to make such a statement, whose *Tallis* cannot (for obvious reasons) vouch to our positive, appropriate focus during *Shemoneh Esrai*, should repair and clean the *Tallis* that we wear, so that we should at least be attired in a clean *Tallis* when *davening* to Hashem. Perhaps this might be a time to mention that this applies to all *devarim she'b'kedushah*, sacred objects: *Tallis; Tefillin*; the clothing we wear to *shul*, which indicates the esteem in which we hold the *shul*, the congregation, the *Shabbos*. Certainly, to find the money to purchase an expensive wardrobe, but continuing to wear an old *Tallis* that could use a cleaning, reflects misplaced values and imperiousness that borders on disdain for a *mitzvah*.

ופשט את בגדיו ולבש בגדים אחרים *And he shall take off his garments, and put on other garments. (6:4)* In his *Sipurei Chassidim, Horav Shlomo Y. Zevin, zl* (cited by *Imrei Shammai*) relates that *Rav* David Tzvi Chein, a *Chabad chassid*, who was *Rav* in Chernigov, was scheduled for his *yechidus* (private interview with the *Rebbe*, during which the *chassid* seeks guidance and inspiration) with *Horav Shmuel, zl*, of Lubavitch. He arrived late, so he decided that he would wait outside the *Rebbe's* study. In that way, when the *Rebbe* would leave, he would quickly ask his question. He was late, and he had to return to Chernigov. As he was waiting, he was joined by the *Rebbe's gabbai*, aide/attendant, who had brought a change of clothes for the *Rebbe*. Apparently, after the *Rebbe* spent a session of *yechidus* with a number of *chassidim*, he perspired heavily and required a new set of clothing. The *gabbai* had a problem with this, "The entire *yechidus* session lasts an hour. Why should the *Rebbe* perspire so much?" *Rav* David Tzvi did not respond (probably because he knew the attendant would not understand). When he did not reply, the attendant asked again, this time even louder, "Why does the *Rebbe* perspire so much?" It was at this point that the *Rebbe's* door opened, and the *Rebbe* stuck out his head to respond to his attendant, "I am dismissing you from your position effective immediately. Please go home, and I will continue to send you your wages each week. By the way, why is it so difficult for you to understand why I perspire profusely? In the course of one hour, I had *yechidus* with 25 people. If I am to counsel a person properly, I must experience his adversity as he himself experiences it. In order to achieve this reality, I must divest myself of my garments and don his garments. (In our present-day vernacular, "I must step into his shoes.") When the time comes for me to render my advice and guidance, I must remove his clothes and put on my clothes. I can hardly give him my advice while I am still dressed in his clothes. Now, would you not also perspire if you did this 50 times? (25 times removing his clothes and putting on the petitioner's clothes and then doing it over again for the guidance portion of the *yechidus*)" What a powerful story. A Torah leader must empathize – he must sense the pain of each Jew. Veritably, it takes a very special person actually to feel someone else's pain. No two people are the same, thus making it impossible to feel someone else's pain – as he feels it. One can, however, take note, see the pain written all over his face; his eyes; his body language. One can see another in pain and what he sees motivates him to act. When we see someone else in pain, we feel bad, but that is not enough. Our friend will not get better simply because we feel bad for him. We must do something about it, and, if we cannot change his circumstances, then we should at least be supportive. A young couple had exhausted every avenue to achieve parenthood. Every specialist, every procedure – they had been there – they had tried that. Finally, the top specialist in the field of reproduction told them that it was all fruitless. He had no scientific remedy for their problem. The husband did not give up. He planned to petition the *posek hador*, pre-eminent *Halachic* arbiter, of the generation, *Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl*, for his blessing. He proceeded to the home of *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen, who listened and asked for some time to mull over the problem. A short while later, *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen came out and said, "I tried, but was unsuccessful. I am sorry, but I am unable to give you the news that you want to hear." The young man broke down in tears and left. As he was sitting in his apartment a few hours later, the young man heard a faint knocking at his door. He opened the door to greet *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen, who had walked over and climbed the many steps to this man's apartment. *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen looked at him and said, "I could not help you, but there is no reason that I cannot sit and cry together with you." This is the meaning of empathy. Even when one is unable to help solve the problem, he is able to ease some of the pain just by being present and showing that he cares. On the day of the wedding of *Horav* Chaim Shmuelevitz's youngest son, as everyone was preparing to leave for the wedding, the *Rosh Yeshivah* took time off to meet with a *bachur*, *yeshivah* student, who was having difficulty finding his designated match. *Rav* Chaim spent an entire hour speaking, encouraging, guiding this young man. He continued his conversation with him even as he walked to the *monit*, taxi, that was to drive him to the wedding hall. Did he have nothing else to do <u>today</u> – of all days? *Rav* Chaim told the *bachur*, "Today I am marrying off my youngest son. It is a day of unparalleled joy for me. With whom do I want to share the joy? With <u>you</u>! I am thinking of you today!" Need I say more?

Horav Mordechai Porgremonsky, zl, was wont to say: "To feel pain when one's friend confronts adversity is the sign of a *mentch*, decent human being. To feel joy when he experiences joy requires one to be a *malach*, angel!"

וזאת תורת זבח השלמים *And this is the teaching of the offering of the meal-of-peace. (7:11)* Previously (Ibid 3:1), the Torah referred to the *Korban Shelamim*, Peace-offering, as *Zevach Shelamim*, meal of peace. The *Korban Shelamim* is the only offering that carries with it the added appellation, *zevach*, meal/feast. In his commentary to *Sefer Bereishis* (46:1), *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, writes that Yaakov *Avinu* was the first Patriarch to offer a *Korban Shelamim*. This was only after he heard that Yosef *HaTzaddik* was physically and spiritually safe. When the Patriarch arrived in Be'er Sheva, he was in his happiest frame of mind, having reached a zenith in his life, enabling him to leave his troubles and struggles behind him. It was now that he felt qualified to offer a *Korban Shelamim*, a *korban* which is a *zevach*, a meal, to be shared with family. The *Korban Olah* expresses complete submission to

Hashem. Thus, it is completely burnt. The *Shelamim* is the only *korban* which the *baalim*, owner, eats. This offering consecrates the "family home," transforming it into a veritable sanctuary and rendering the family table an altar. A *zevach* denotes the concept that Hashem is a personal G-d. He comes to us. It is understood from that happy consciousness that in a place where the family unit lives in harmony and joy, with fidelity to Hashem, sensing Hashem always in the midst, His Presence suffuses the family circle. A major motif of the *Mishkan* and the *Bais HaMikdash* is that what transpires in the *Mishkan* does not stay in the *Mishkan*, but goes home with us. The hope is that the nucleus of the *Mishkan* will transfuse our home with its sanctity. One who has experienced *Kedushas HaMikdash* should come home spiritually humbled. His learning, *davening*, eating, and social relationships should be elevated. The goal of the *Mikdash* is to invigorate our mundane lives with sanctity, so that we bring *Mikdash* into our homes, *shuls* and offices. *Rav* Hirsch notes that in the *Mikdash*, the night belongs to the preceding day. A twenty-four-hour cycle begins with the morning and ends with the following morning. In the rest of Jewish life, the day belongs to the preceding night – the night being the beginning of the twenty-four-hour day, which concludes the following night. Furthermore, all *korbanos* are to be eaten in the *Azarah*, *Bais Hamikdash* proper, in contrast to the *Shelamim*, which is eaten anywhere in Yerushalayim. Last, the *z'man achilas Korban Shelamim*, time allotted for eating the *Korban Shelamim*, is not two days and two nights like other *korbanos*, but rather, two days and one intervening night. Actually, at nightfall of the second day, the *korban* becomes *nosar*, sacrificial leftovers, but may not be burnt until the next morning, since the burning of *Kodoshim* must always be done *ba'yom*, during the day. Thus, the *Mikdash* day - which begins in the morning and concludes at night - is followed by a morning which was preceded by night. The *Korban Shelamim*, which may be eaten outside of the *Mikdash* environs, fuses the *Mikdash* day with the mundane day outside the *Mikdash*. The night serves a two-fold purpose: it is the end of the *Mikdash* day; and also the beginning of the ordinary mundane day, which has now been infused with the sanctity of the preceding day, via the night that connects them. As *Rav* Hirsch expresses it so well, the *Korban Shelamim* is inherently, by its very nature, a "Jewish" sacrifice. It marks occasions of family life by expressing the awareness of Hashem's blessing in our circle of life. Veritably, the concept of being absorbed in G-d and devoted to Him is also found in non-Jewish dogma; it does not, however, penetrate <u>every</u> aspect of mundane life as it does in Jewish theology. The essence of Judaism is best characterized by the notion that our ordinary day-by-day lifestyle can be elevated and consecrated to the point that his table becomes an altar, his home a sanctuary, his children dedicated servants to Hashem, and <u>every</u> aspect of his daily routine a spiritual endeavor. We believe in *Kiddush ha'yeish*, consecrating the mundane, by transforming it into a spiritual activity. A Jew who puts on *Tefillin* in the morning has a different perspective on his day. One who davens in *shul* on *Shabbos* has a different *Shabbos* meal. An evening *shiur* or *chavrusa* alters one's outlook on his day. Obviously, when one "visits" *shul* and uses it as an opportunity for socializing, he does not develop that much sanctity to take along with him, although he is certainly better off than the one who does not attend. It is all in one's attitude. A typically mundane act can be transformed into a holy service to Hashem, with just the proper attitude. A cup of coffee can be a caffeine "fix," or it can be an opportunity to revive oneself, so that he can learn more or better. One day, *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, gave a *shiur klali*, general lecture, to the entire Yeshivas Mir. By chance, one of his old friends from pre-World War II Mir and Shanghai was visiting the Holy Land. He, too, attended the *shiur* of his good friend, *Rav* Chaim Stutchiner (as *Rav* Chaim was called in the Mir). Following the *shiur*, the *yeshivah davened minchah*, after which everyone went home for dinner/lunch. *Rav* Chaim invited his guest to join him. As soon as they came home, *Rav* Chaim called out to his *Rebbetzin* (who was the daughter of *Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl*, founder of *Yeshivas Mir Eretz Yisrael* and son of the *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka)*, "Chanah Miriam, *Boruch Hashem*, we have a special guest to join us for dinner." They sat down to eat, as the *Rebbetzin* brought a hot soup out to the table. *Rav* Chaim began to eat, and, as was his habit, he ate quickly. Indeed, he had finished his portion before his guest had even made a dent in his bowl of soup. *Rav* Chaim immediately called out, "*Rebbetzin*, could I please have another soup?" The *Rebbetzin* promptly brought out another bowl of soup. Meanwhile, the guest kept eating his first bowl. It did not take long before *Rav* Chaim's second bowl of soup was history. He immediately called the *Rebbetzin* and asked for a third bowl of soup. The guest was amazed at how quickly *Rav* Chaim devoured his soup, but, more so, at his <u>immediate</u> request for a refill. When *Rav* Chaim asked for his fourth bowl of soup, his guest finally spoke up, "*Rav* Chaim, our friendship goes back to our youth, so I am not afraid to bring to your attention that, for a Torah scholar of your distinction, a *gadol b'Yisrael*, *Rosh Yeshivah* of the Mir, it is below your exalted dignity to ask for one bowl of soup after another. It just does not *pas*, does not suit you." *Rav* Chaim replied, "My dear friend, let me explain to you how I view the *Rebbetzin's* soup. Her soup (to her) is no different than my *shiur klali*. (*Rav* Chaim spent much time preparing. Indeed, he submerged his entire being into a *shiur*. His *shiur* was a dynamic production of himself fused with the Torah.) After I say my *shiur*, and someone approaches me to compliment the *shiur*, I have incredible joy when someone asks me to repeat it again -- and again. My joy increases, regardless of how many times I repeat it. (*Rav* Chaim neither looked for, nor needed, a compliment. He enjoyed it if someone responded positively to his *chiddush*, innovative exposition of the topic, such as, 'Perhaps the *Rosh Yeshivah* can repeat the main point again.')

"The *Rebbetzin* prepares the soup with much devotion She understands that the nourishment I receive allows me to learn more and better. She goes out early in the morning to the *makolet* to purchase the necessary ingredients. She then prepares the ingredients, which is a labor of love requiring time and effort. Next, she must hope the gas stove will work. (Apparently, it did not always work.) Now, after all of her effort, do you not think she deserves and even enjoys a compliment? The greatest compliment that one can render is to ask for more soup. This is the reason for my behavior." *Rav* Chaim taught his friend how a *gadol b'Yisrael* should act – he must be a *mentch*. Would anyone ever posit that schlepping bags of garbage is a spiritual endeavor? If one would know the "hero" of the story as I did, however, its veracity would be unimpeachable. A young couple (whose parents did not raise them properly) met with *Rav Mordechai Gifter, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Telshe*, to discuss their marital issues. Apparently, the young couple was in serious need of guidance. They had the usual litany of complaints: "He does not listen;" "She is too bossy." The young man felt that his wife did not respect his stature as a *ben Torah*. (He was a *talmid chacham*, just lacking in common sense.) The wife felt that his refusal to lift a finger to help her bordered on unjustified arrogance. The *Rosh Yeshivah* spent one hour listening to their individual complaints, as they went back and forth, (immaturely) each blaming the other for their marital issues. Finally, came the clincher, the problem concerning which they came to the *Rosh Yeshivah*: the garbage. Apparently, the wife could not carry out the garbage for its weekly pickup, because it was too heavy. The husband patently refused to be seen in the street with a garbage bag: "Imagine, someone of my stature carrying out the garbage!" *Rav* Gifter asked what day and what time the garbage pickup was. He told them that he needed a few days to mull over their issues. Then, he would get back to them. Wednesday morning was "garbage pickup day" at 7:50 A.M. Promptly at 7:40 A.M. there was a knock at the door of the couple's apartment. Who would be knocking so early in the morning? The wife answered the door to see the *Rosh Yeshivah* standing there. "Where is your garbage?" he asked. She looked at him incredulously. "I have come to take out your garbage," he said. The wife called her husband, who was equally shocked to see the *Rosh Yeshivah*. "Quickly, we have only three more minutes before the garbage truck picks up the garbage," the *Rosh Yeshivah* told them. The young couple remained adamant. They were not letting the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Telshe, who was one of the

premier *gedolim* in the world, take out their garbage. *Rav* Gifter walked past them, grabbed the bags, and carried them outside to the street. They got the message. The *Rosh Yeshivah* had taken a purely mundane, menial task and transformed it into a Torah lesson, and he succeeded in saving a marriage!

Va'ani Tefillah **ברכנו אבינו כלנו כאחד באור פניך *Barcheinu Avinu kulanu k'echad b'or Panecha. Bless us, our Father, together as one, with the light of Your Face.*** This is the only prayer in the *Shemoneh Esrai* in which we ask Hashem for something that is contingent upon our being unified as one. When we ask for forgiveness, health, livelihood, we do not ask in the merit of our standing before Him as one. We ask for ourselves, individually, but not collectively as one unit. Now, however, we are asking Hashem to bless us "in the light of His face." *B'or Parenecha* demands a little more from us, since we now must appear before Him as He looks us over prior to granting us the blessing of peace. One does not ask for peace when the "other party" is not even present; rather, the two come together as one, attempting to live in harmony, to ask for the blessing that their efforts achieve success.

Disharmony is the result of focusing on oneself and not demonstrating any form of empathy for our fellow. When Hashem sees us looking out for our own interests and not showing any concern for our brothers, it is an indication that our petition for peace is spurious. What is there about our presentation that warrants the blessing of peace? If we ask for peace, we should at least show that it means something to us. When we show Hashem that unity has meaning and value to us, only then we can ask for lasting peace.

לזכר נשמת האשה החשובה, מרת פיגא רחל בת ר' משה צבי ע"ה ברינענער פעלדמאן **פ***יה פתחה בחכמה ובאצילות היו הליכותיה יראים ותלמידי חכמים נודעים היו אבותיה* **ג***דולים סבלותיה בעת המלחמה ועצומות תלאותיה* **א***שת חיל נוחה לבריות ושלום כל נתיבותיה* **ר***צויה לכל יודעיה, ומכיריה חיבבו מידותיה* **ח***סדים הרבה עשתה בין בגופה ובין במעותיה* **ל***מדו מדרכיה יוצאי חלציה וישרים דורותיה נפטרה בש"ט ערב פסח תשס"ב In loving memory of Mrs. Fanny (Brunner) Feldman by her family Hebrew Academy of Cleveland,* ©*All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה

In My Opinion PESACH 5781
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The holiday of Pesach represents many basic values in Jewish life. Foremost naturally is that of liberty and freedom from oppression, slavery, and domination by others. The holiday is described as being the holiday of our freedom. But, there is another basic idea and value that underlies the commemoration of our exodus from Egypt and the beginning of our freedom. That value is the human capacity to believe and keep faith with an ideal that has not yet been realized and that is yet to be exploited. In the retelling of the story of the Exodus, the Bible mentions several times in the narrative of the description of the redemption from Egyptian bondage, the fact that people believed that they would be freed, and that Moshe would be the one that would be able to lead them from bondage to freedom. It was this belief that fueled the entire narrative of freedom and brought about the eventual triumph over Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation. No matter how much lip service we pay to the idea of faith and belief, we always have a tendency to underplay its importance in shaping human events, both individual and communal. But faith, literally, does have the power to move and change the course of human history and personal existence. The Lord may have performed untold miracles in order to extract the Jewish people from under the yoke of Egyptian bondage, but none of this would've been successful had the people not believed it would be successful and that they would achieve their freedom. One of the great ideas in Judaism, especially emphasized in the teachings of the great Chasidic master Rabbi Zadok HaKohein of Lublin is that within events that appear to be negative and tragic, such as the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, there are the seeds of redemption and hope. Even though there are tragedies such as the destruction of millions of Jews in Egypt, at the time of Moses, the inner soul of the Jew had faith that better times would arrive and that the redemption from slavery would actually occur. That path is the definition of faith and belief in Jewish life throughout Jewish history. No matter how difficult and oppressive the situation appeared to be, already hidden within it were the solutions to the problem and the redemption from bondage. An expression of this is to be found in the song attributed to the Jewish partisans in World War II who hid in the forests of Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, from where they continued to harass the Nazi beast. They created a thousand pinpricks that collectively hampered the operations of the German army on the Eastern front. The words to their song in Yiddish, to the effect that, "Do not dare to say that this is our final road." It is this faith that overwrites all obstacles and situations of anguish and despair. The holiday of Pesach always represents a soaring sense of optimism and a deeply abiding faith in the Jewish future and in the redemptive powers of heaven that will be exhibited in the coming of the messianic era. The matzoh that we eat is called, in Jewish tradition, by its Aramaic phrase – the bread of faith. Matzoh is potential bread but it is not yet risen. It appears to be doomed to be flat and crunchy, without much taste or substance. However, we are aware of the potential contained within that matzoh. Jews believe in the power and potential of it to rise and become the fluffy and the most delicious breads and pastry. We celebrate while the matzoh is still in its flattened state. The commandment is to eat it in its raw state so that we can sense the power of its potential, when we will be allowed to eat it after being fully risen and tasty. Our entire fulfillment of the commandment of eating matzoh on Pesach is to reinforce our innate sense of belief and faith in the future and in our ability to realize our individual and national potential. Belief eventually leads to action and action leads to redemption. Chag Sameach Berel Wein

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Weekly Parsha TZAV 5781 Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah begins this week's reading with the verbal commandment – Tzav – ordering Moshe to command and demand from his brother Aaron certain fulfillments of ritual and service in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. The verb that is used is one of strength. Just as in a well-disciplined army, an officer's commands are fulfilled to be able to execute grand strategies, so, too, in Jewish life. The only way that the great strategy of connection with the Creator, living a holy life and being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation can be fulfilled is by obeying and observing commandments.

This is true even if the lowly private does not understand or is not even aware of the grand strategy of the general staff supervising the army. So, too, there are many times in Jewish life when we as individuals may question the validity and necessity of following an order, just as the soldier in the army. But just as simply by joining the Army and becoming a part of it forfeits that soldier's right to disobey orders. The Jewish people at Sinai agreed that they would fulfill God's orders, irrespective of their deeper understanding of those orders themselves. This may sound too authoritarian, even dictatorial, to modern ears and sensitivities. Nevertheless, it was and is the basis for Jewish life throughout the millennia of our existence. There are many things in life that we do simply because we are commanded to do so. If we have belief in the One that commands them despite human questions and doubts, we will always attempt to fulfill our duty and obey the commandment. The text of all blessings, before performing any of the Torah commandments, explicitly states that God has sanctified us by giving us these commandments, and that He commands that we fulfill them to the utmost extent that we can. Over the centuries, there have been many scholarly explanations and reasons given for certain Torah commandments. Times change though, as do societal mores, customs, and social viewpoints. What may have been a perfectly logical and satisfactory explanation for the necessity of a commandment a few centuries ago, may today have no relevance, and be viewed as only hollow words and ideas. But the Torah, which is eternal and given for all times and situations, chose to avoid giving easy explanations as to the reasons for its commandments and demands of the Jewish people. Instead, it relies upon the fact of the binding covenant that the Jewish people entered at Mount Sinai, that has obligated this special people to the Almighty for now and well over three millennia. We certainly wish to understand everything that we can about the competence, direction, and strategy of the Torah. However, we admit that after all is said and done, our ability to understand everything is limited and often fallacious. The bedrock of Jewish life is that we have been commanded and that we are willing to fulfill these decrees fully. Shabbat shalom Chag sameach Rabbi Berel Wein

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The Courage of Identity Crises (Tzav 5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt''l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

Good leaders know their own limits. They do not try to do it all themselves. They build teams. They create space for people who are strong where they are weak. They understand the importance of checks and balances and the separation of powers. They surround themselves with people who are different from them. They understand the danger of concentrating all power in a single individual. But learning your limits, knowing there are things you cannot do – even things you cannot be – can be a painful experience. Sometimes it involves an emotional crisis.

The Torah contains four fascinating accounts of such moments. What links them is not words but music. From quite early on in Jewish history, the Torah was sung, not just read. Moses at the end of his life calls the Torah a song.[1] Different traditions grew up in Israel and Babylon, and from around the tenth century onward the chant began to be systematised in the form of the musical notations known as ta'amei ha-mikra, cantillation signs, devised by the Tiberian Masoretes (guardians of Judaism's sacred texts). One very rare note, known as a shalshelet

(chain), appears in the Torah four times only. Each time it is a sign of existential crisis. Three instances are in the book of Genesis. The fourth is in our parsha. As we will see, the fourth is about leadership. In a broad sense, the other three are as well.

The first instance occurs in the story of Lot. After Lot separated from his uncle Abraham he settled in Sodom. There he assimilated into the local population. His daughters married local men. He himself sat in the city gate, a sign that he had been made a Judge. Then two visitors come to tell him to leave, for God is about to destroy the city. Yet Lot hesitates, and above the word for "hesitates" – vayitmamah – is a shalshelet. (Gen. 19:16). Lot is torn, conflicted. He senses that the visitors are right. The city is indeed about to be destroyed. But he has invested his whole future in the new identity he has been carving out for himself and his daughters. The angels then forcibly take him out of the city to safety – had they not done so, he would have delayed until it was too late.

The second shalshelet occurs when Abraham asks his servant – traditionally identified as Eliezer – to find a wife for Isaac his son. The commentators suggest that Eliezer felt a profound ambivalence about his mission. Were Isaac not to marry and have children, Abraham's estate would eventually pass to Eliezer or his descendants. Abraham had already said so before Isaac was born: "Sovereign Lord, what can You give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen. 15:2). If Eliezer succeeded in his mission, bringing back a wife for Isaac, and if the couple had children, then his chances of one day acquiring Abraham's wealth would disappear completely. Two instincts warred within him: loyalty to Abraham and personal ambition. The verse states: "And he said: Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me…good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham" (Gen. 24:12). Eliezer's loyalty to Abraham won, but not without a deep struggle. Hence the shalshelet (Gen. 24:12).

The third shalshalet brings us to Egypt and the life of Joseph. Sold by his brothers as a slave, he is now working in the house of an eminent Egyptian, Potiphar. Left alone in the house with his master's wife, he finds himself the object of her desire. He is handsome. She wants him to sleep with her. He refuses. To do such a thing, he says, would be to betray his master, her husband. It would be a sin against God. Yet over "he refused" is a shalshelet, (Genesis 39:8) indicating – as some rabbinic sources and mediaeval commentaries suggest – that he did so at the cost of considerable effort.[2] He nearly succumbed. This was more than the usual conflict between sin and temptation. It was a conflict of identity. Recall that Joseph was living in a new and strange land. His brothers had rejected him. They had made it clear that they did not want him as part of their family. Why then should he not, in Egypt, do as the Egyptians do? Why not yield to his master's wife if that is what she wanted? The question for Joseph was not just, "Is this right?" but also, "Am I an Egyptian or a Jew?"

All three episodes are about inner conflict, and all three are about identity. There are times when each of us has to decide, not just "What shall I do?" but "What kind of person shall I be?" That is particularly fateful in the case of a leader, which brings us to episode four, this time with Moses in the central role.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses had, at God's command instructed the Israelites to build a Sanctuary which would be, in effect, a permanent symbolic home for God in the midst of the people. By now the work is complete and all that remains is for Moses to induct his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons into office. He robes Aaron with the special garments of the High Priest, anoints him with oil, and performs the various sacrifices appropriate to the occasion. Over the word vayishchat, "and he slaughtered [the sacrificial ram]" (Lev. 8:23) there is a shalshelet. By now we know that this means there was an internal struggle in Moses' mind. But what was it? There is not the slightest sign in the text that suggests that he was undergoing a crisis.

Yet a moment's thought makes it clear what Moses' inner turmoil was about. Until now he had led the Jewish people. Aaron had assisted him, accompanying him on his missions to Pharaoh, acting as his spokesman, aide and second-in-command. Now, however, Aaron was about to undertake a new leadership role in his own right. No longer would he be one step behind Moses. He would do what Moses himself could not. He would preside over the daily offerings in the Tabernacle. He would mediate the avodah, the Israelites' sacred service to God. Once a year on Yom Kippur he would perform the service that would secure atonement for the people from its sins. No longer in Moses' shadow, Aaron was about to become the one kind of leader Moses was not destined to be: a High Priest.

The Talmud adds a further dimension to the poignancy of the moment. At the Burning Bush, Moses had repeatedly resisted God's call to lead the people. Eventually God told him that Aaron would go with him, helping him speak (Ex. 4:14-16). The Talmud says that at that moment Moses lost the chance to be a Priest: "Originally [said God] I had intended that you would be the Priest and Aaron your brother would be a Levite. Now he will be the Priest and you will be a Levite."[3]

That is Moses' inner struggle, conveyed by the shalshelet. He is about to induct his brother into an office he himself will never hold. Things might have been otherwise – but life is not lived in the world of "might have been." He surely feels joy for his brother, but he cannot altogether avoid a sense of loss. Perhaps he already senses what he will later discover, that though he was the Prophet and liberator, Aaron will have a privilege Moses will be denied, namely, seeing his children and their descendants inherit his role. The son of a Priest is a Priest. The son of a Prophet is rarely a Prophet.

What all four stories tell us is that there comes a time for each of us when we must make an ultimate decision as to who we are. It is a moment of existential truth. Lot is a Hebrew, not a citizen of Sodom. Eliezer is Abraham's servant, not his heir. Joseph is Jacob's son, not an Egyptian of loose morals. Moses is a Prophet, not a Priest. To say 'Yes' to who we are, we have to have the courage to say 'No' to who we are not. Pain and struggle is always involved in this type of conflict. That is the meaning of the shalshelet. But we emerge less conflicted than we were before.

This applies especially to leaders, which is why the case of Moses in our parsha is so important. There were things Moses was not destined to do. He would never become a Priest. That task fell to Aaron. He would never lead the people across the Jordan. That was Joshua's role. Moses had to accept both facts with good grace if he was to be honest with himself. And great leaders must be honest with themselves if they are to be honest with those they lead.

A leader should never try to be all things to all people. A leader should be content to be who they are. Leaders must have the strength to know what they cannot be if they are to have the courage to be truly their best selves.

Parshat Tzav-Shabbat Hagadol (Leviticus 6:1 – 8:36) Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "Behold, I send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And he [Elijah] will turn [back to God] the hearts of the parents through their children and the hearts of the children through their parents" (Malachi 3:23-2)

The Shabbat before Passover is called Shabbat Hagadol (the Great Sabbath), a phrase deriving from the last verse of the prophetic portion read on that day which declares that God will send Elijah the Prophet on the "great day" of the Lord right before the coming of the redemption.

Let us attempt to link Elijah to our Passover Seder in a way more profound than merely opening the door for him and offering him a sip of wine.

Our analysis begins with another Seder anomaly, the fact that we begin our night of freedom with the distribution of an hors d'oeuvre of karpas (Greek for vegetation or vegetable, often parsley, dipped in a condiment).

The usual explanation for this is that vegetation emerges in the springtime; Passover is biblically called the Spring Festival, and so we

dip a vegetable in salt water, reminiscent of spring renewal emerging from the tears of Egyptian enslavement. Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, in his late 19th-century Haggada, suggests another interpretation. The Hebrew word "karpas" appears in the opening verses of the Book of Esther, in the description of the "hangings" that were found in the gardens of King Ahasuerus's palace, where the great feast for all his kingdom was hosted; karpas white cotton joined with turquoise wool. Rashi connects the term "karpas" in the sense of material with the ketonet passim, the striped tunic that Jacob gave to his beloved son, Joseph.

The Jerusalem Talmud additionally suggests that we dip the karpas in haroset (a mixture of wine, nuts and dates), adding that haroset is reminiscent of the blood of the babies murdered in Egypt. In our case, the karpas would become symbolic of Joseph's tunic, which the brothers dipped into goat's blood and brought to their father as a sign that his son had been torn apart by wild beasts when in fact they had sold him into Egyptian slavery.

Why begin the Seder this way? The Talmud criticizes Jacob for favoring Joseph over the other brothers and giving him the striped tunic. This gift, a piece of material with little monetary value, engendered vicious jealousy resulting in the sale of Joseph and the eventual enslavement of the Israelites for 210 years.

The point of the Seder is the retelling ("haggada") of the seminal experience of servitude and freedom from generation to generation. Through this, all parents become teachers. They must inspire their children to continue the Jewish narrative of identification with the underdog and the outcast. They must imbue in their offspring insistence upon freedom for every individual created in God's image and faith in the ultimate triumph of a world dedicated to peace and security for all.

This places an awesome responsibility on the shoulders of every parent: to convey the ethical monotheism, rooted in our ritual celebrations and teachings, to their children and eventually to all of humanity. Hence, parents must be warned at the outset not to repeat the tragic mistake of Jacob, not to create divisions and jealousies among their children. Instead, we must unite the generations in the common goal of continuing our Jewish narrative.

What has this to do with Elijah the Prophet, who is slated to be the herald of the Messiah, the announcer of the "good tidings of salvation and comfort"? Our redemption is dependent on our repentance and the most necessary component of redemption is "loving our fellow as we love ourselves" – the great rule of the Torah taught by Rabbi Akiva.

Loving humanity must begin with loving our family; first and foremost our nuclear family. We read in the prophetic portion of this Shabbat that Elijah will bring everyone back to God by uniting parents with their children and children with parents. The biblical source of sibling hatred (the Joseph story), which has plagued Jewish history up to and including the present day, will be repaired by Elijah, who will unite the hearts of the children and the parents together in their commitment to God.

Toward the end of the Seder, we open the door for Elijah and welcome him to drink from the cup of redemption poured especially for him. But if Elijah can visit every Seder throughout the world, surely he can get through even the most forbidding kind of door.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, teaches that we open the door not so much to let Elijah in as to let ourselves out. The Seder speaks of four children; But what about the myriad "fifth children" who never came to a Seder? We must go out after them and bring them in – perhaps together with Elijah, whom we will need desperately to unite the entire family of Israel around the Seder table. Shabbat Shalom!

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights ***For the week ending 27 March 2021 / 14 Adar 5781*** ***Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com*** ***Parshat Tzav What's So Bad About Bread?*** *"It will be eaten unleavened" (6:9)* I doubt that anyone in the audience watching Grandma's Reading Glass in 1900 realized that they were witnessing the birth of a new language. Grandma's Reading Glass is under a minute long and the plot is thin, to say the least. A small child looks through his mother's magnifying glass, at various objects around the room. What makes the movie a landmark is its use of sustained point-of-view shots. Meaning that, instead of just showing the child looking through the looking glass, the audience is seeing what the child is seeing. Prior to this, watching a film was like watching a play. The camera was set up in front of the scene and stayed put. Grandma's Reading Glass was the beginning of the "language" of film. A language that is so familiar to us now, that we do not even recognize that it has syntax like any other language. But the syntax of film has a limitation. In a movie there is no past or future. Everything in a movie takes place in a continuous present. There is no "was" and no "will be" in a film. To change the tense of a movie, the director has to resort to the "flash-back," an inelegant device whereby the picture starts to blur and the sound becomes echo-y. It all seems like such a long time ago-o-o-o. And when we cut to that past scene, the language of film reverts to the present tense. We can use this anomaly in the language of film to understand one of Judaism's most basic concepts. Intuitively, time seems eternal. It seems that we are born into a world that has always been here, and we leave a world that will always be. This idea is the basis of all atheism. If time was always here, then there was no creation, and if there was no creation, then — G-d forbid — there's no Creator. The very first word in the Torah — Bereishet — contradicts that intuition. Bereishet, "In the beginning…" can be understood to mean "Beh" — standing for Barah Reishit, meaning, "G-d created the beginning." Time itself is a creation. It had a beginning. And anything that has a beginning must have an end. Not only did G-d create beginning, but He re-creates that beginning every single nanosecond. The monolith called time does not exist. The language of film, its constant present tense, gives us a way to understand this reality. And there's another even more interesting aspect of film that illustrates this constant creation of time. If you take an old movie film and unwind it, it's made up of thousands of individual pictures. The fact that we don't see a series of still images but a continuous flow of movement is due to something called "the persistence of vision," which says that the brain will form the impression of movement when slightly different images are presented to the eye faster than around 10 frames per second. The same idea holds true for digital movies. There is no such thing as the continuity of time. There are just individual moments, like a child's "flicker book." Which brings us to the question: "What's so wrong with bread?' The Exodus from Egypt saw the creation of a nation which would proclaim to the world the existence of a single Creator Who created everything — including time. It is time that turns matzah into bread. There's no other difference. On the festival of Pesach, where we once again proclaim to the world that there is a Creator, we renourish our souls with the food that rejects the independence of time — the unleavened bread called matzah.

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www.ou.org Parsha Tzav: Increasing Gratitude
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

There are certain phrases or expressions that many of us find hard to say. "I love you" is one of them. Another such phrase is "thank you". Although these words are difficult for us to pronounce, they each reflect powerful emotions and, when finally uttered, have an unbelievable impact upon the person to whom they are addressed. It is wonderful to hear that one is loved, and it is also wonderful to learn that another person is grateful and appreciative of what one has done for him or her. In our tradition, gratitude is a primary value. Bachya ibn Pakuda, in his renowned medieval book Duties of the Heart, stresses the centrality of gratitude in the religious experience. For him, the worship of God begins with a sense of gratitude for being alive, for being healthy, for having one's needs met. It is no wonder, then, that as the book of Leviticus enumerates the many types of sacrificial offerings which comprise the ancient Temple service, the korban todah, or thanksgiving offering, is prominently included. In this week's Torah portion, Tzav, in Leviticus

7:11-18, the sacrifice known as the korban shelamim, or peace offering, is described in detail. Generally speaking, when a person makes a vow to offer such a sacrifice, whether in a time of distress or when remembering God's tender mercies, he must bring an animal offering. He brings it to the Temple, the kohen (priest) performs various ritual procedures, and then most of the meat can be consumed by the individual who donated the offering, as long as he finishes it all during the day he brings it, and the following night and day, providing the individual with much more than 24 hours within which to consume the meat. But the passage which deals with this offering begins with a subtype of the shelamim – the todah. In this instance, besides bringing an animal sacrifice, the donor must also bring four types of bread, and ten breads of each type, totaling forty loaves. The meat and the accompanying loaves of bread must be consumed by daybreak after the night following the preparation of the sacrifice. The late 19th century commentator known as the Netziv suggests that the thanksgiving offering, or todah, must be accompanied by a public celebration with many guests invited. Therefore, unlike the ordinary shelamim, the numerous loaves of bread are prescribed so that all the guests can partake of the meal. The time within which the meat and breads can be consumed is limited to much less than 24 hours, necessitating the invitation of numerous guests to share in the thanksgiving celebration. The Netziv teaches us here that expressions of gratitude should ideally not be kept private. Thankfulness is an emotion to share with others in a public celebration. Not long ago, I came across an article in an academic journal of psychology. The article was entitled Can Prayer Increase Gratitude? The authors quote numerous research studies which correlate gratitude with mental health. They therefore seek ways to promote the feeling of gratitude to foster increased mental health. One way they tried to instill gratitude in their subjects was to encourage them to engage in prayer. How consistent their findings were to the teachings of Judaism! They found that when people engaged in prayer, they became more aware not of what they were lacking, but of the blessings they had to be thankful for. The very act of prayer inculcated an attitude of gratitude. The sacrifices offered in our ancient Temple were forcibly discontinued two millennia ago. Our sages teach us that our prayers, although they are mere words, substitute for the sacrifices of old. Whereas once upon a time a Jew would express his gratitude by bringing a thanksgiving offering, today he recites a prayer instead. The article in the psychology journal teaches us that the relationship between prayer and gratitude is a mutual one. Not only does gratitude lead to thankful prayer, but prayer leads to increased thankfulness. Thus, for those of us who come by our sense of gratitude naturally and with ease, these sacrificial offerings, or these days, the appropriate prayers, can help us express that gratitude. But for those of us whose sense of gratitude is numbed, prayer is one way to free feelings of thankfulness which are otherwise locked up within us. It allows those feelings to well up and to be effectively expressed. We often hear the admonition to "count our blessings". Many of us, either because of our inborn pessimism, or because of the difficulties of life which seem to overshadow our blessings, find it difficult to acknowledge the positives of our life. Without such acknowledgment, gratitude is impossible. In this week's Torah portion, we learn not only that gratitude deserves celebration in the holy Temple, but that temple worship can help us feel grateful for what we do have. And we also learn, following the Netziv, of how worthwhile it is to express gratitude in a circle of family and friends. That gratitude is the most pleasant of human emotions is so well expressed in these lines from the poet Thomas Gray's Ode for Music: Sweet is the breath of vernal shower, The bees collected treasures sweet, Sweet music's melting fall, but sweeter yet The still small voice of gratitude. The sage advice we can derive from this week's Torah portion is: Express gratitude, and not in a "still small voice," but in a resounding and booming voice for others to hear so that they can share in the emotions of the grateful person, and so that the grateful person can feel those emotions in every fiber of his being. to do so..

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rabbibuchwald.njop.org Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message - Tzav 5781-2021 "Understanding Shabbat Hagadol" (updated and revised from Tzav 5762-2002) Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week, we read the second parasha of the book of Leviticus, parashat Tzav. Because it immediately precedes Passover, this Shabbat is known as שַׁבַּת הַגָּדוֹל —Shabbat Hagadol, the great Shabbat. On this Shabbat, a special Haftarah from the prophet Malachi 3:4-24, is read. While there is no universally agreed upon reason for calling the Shabbat that immediately precedes Passover, Shabbat Hagadol, the great Sabbath, there are many traditions explaining this distinguished appellation. Rabbi Abraham Chill in his comprehensive and erudite book, The Minhagim, which explains the customs and ceremonies of Judaism, their origins and rationale, offers several reasons for the name, Shabbat Hagadol. One of the reasons for the name recorded by Rabbi Chill is that tradition maintains that the tenth of Nissan of the year of the Exodus was a Shabbat. It was on that day that, as recorded in Exodus 12, that the Al-mighty called upon the Jews to take a sheep to their homes and keep it there until the 14th of Nissan, at which time they were to slaughter it and prepare it for the Pascal sacrifice. This act of taking the sheep on the part of the enslaved Hebrews, was not at all a simple act. It was, in effect, a brazen act of defiance. After all, the Egyptians worshiped sheep as their G-d. The timorous Hebrew slaves, were thus bidden to take the sheep, in defiance of their masters, in defiance of the entire theology of Egypt, and slaughter it before the Egyptians' eyes. Hence, the Sabbath is called Shabbat Hagadol, the great Sabbath, because it was on this Shabbat that the Jews expressed their open defiance and declared their independence. A second reason recorded by Rabbi Chill, is that "Shabbat" day itself is a day of testimony. The Shabbat testifies that G-d created the heavens and the earth and rested on Shabbat, the seventh day. But, this great act of Divine creation, is often perceived as the act of a remote, transcendent and seemingly distant G-d who created the world. On the other hand, Passover represents an imminent and close G-d who cares about his people and who was actively involved in redeeming even the little Jewish children from the slavery of Egypt. On the Shabbat before Passover, both these ideas are emphasized, the power of G-d and the love of G-d, hence the name, Shabbat Hagadol, the great Sabbath. Another reason enumerated by Rabbi Chill is predicated on the prevailing custom (Talmud, Pesachim, 6a), that 30 days before a holiday Jews begin to study and learn about the customs and practices of the holiday. On the Sabbath before Passover, (except on those years like this one when Shabbat Hagadol falls the day before Passover and the Shabbat Hagadol Discourse is offered the Shabbat before), it was the custom, and still is the custom, for community rabbis to offer a major discourse explaining the often complex issues of the laws and rituals of the Passover holiday. Writes Rabbi Chill, "It is a long and tiring day for the congregants and for the rabbi." In effect, the name "The Great Shabbat, Shabbat Hagadol," reflects the long Sabbath. As previously noted, on this Shabbat, the special Haftarah from the prophet Malachi is read. Malachi 3:23 reads: הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֶת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא, לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם ה' הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא. Behold I send to you Elijah the Prophet, before the great and awesome day of G-d. There are those who say that the Sabbath is called Shabbat Hagadol because of the word גָּדוֹל –"gadol"–great in the aforementioned verse in Malachi, as if to represent a prayer that this great Sabbath should lead to the great day of redemption and the coming of the Messiah. Jewish traditions and customs are always replete with meaning, and the tradition of Shabbat Hagadol is no exception. The ancient theme of Shabbat Hagadol may teach contemporary Jews that, despite the redemption which took place over 3300 years ago, today's events require of us to be firm and courageous, just as our ancestors were in the days of yore–defiant of their masters, and affirming that, with G-d's help, they will master their fate and defy their own presumed destinies. For contemporary Jews as well, it is a time to affirm both the power and the love of G-d. We must be certain, that despite the challenges and the great turmoil that we witness in the land of Israel and in Jewish world today, G-d's power and love will be there for us, and will rescue and

redeem us as well. However, our salvation does not come without effort or agony. There is, of course, the long-suffering that is always necessary before the redemption. It is during this difficult period, similar to the "long Sabbath," that we must spend learning and mastering G-d's Torah, learning to appreciate the beauty of the festivals and the observances, sparing no effort to uncover new insights within the Passover ritual, that are there just for our picking. It is a long and tiring process, but a process that results in much reward, and a great sense of pleasure and fulfillment. Finally, Shabbat Hagadol marks our commitment to the belief in the imminent arrival of the Prophet Elijah, who will herald the coming of the Messiah. May we be worthy to merit that Shabbat Hagadol 5781 be a great day for us. May this great day signal that the full redemption is at hand, and that Jews the world over shall soon be reunited, reunited in our land, which will become a land of peace, reunited in love of G-d and marked with personal and collective happiness. חַג כָּשֵׁר וְשָׂמֵחַ. We wish all our friends a wonderfully joyous, meaningful and healthy Passover. *Please note: The first two days of the joyous festival of Passover will be observed this year on Saturday night, March 27th and all day Sunday and Monday, March 28th and 29th. The seventh and eighth days of Passover begin on Friday night, April 2nd, and continue through Saturday and Sunday, April 3rd and 4th. May you be blessed.*

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chiefrabbi.org Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis Dvar Torah Pesach: THIS is the guarantee for our survival!

How can we guarantee our Jewish survival? We will give an answer to this question at the seder table. We will raise our cups and declare: "Vehi she'amda la'avoteinu velanu." – "It is this which has stood by our ancestors and us." We recognise that it wasn't only Pharaoh in Egypt who sought to annihilate us but that sadly this has been a recurring theme of our history. "HaKadosh Baruch Hu matzileinu miyadam." – Almighty God has always saved us. But when we say the word 'vehi' – 'it is this' which has stood by us. What is the 'this' that 'vehi' refers to? Many of our commentators answer with reference to the song Echad Mi Yodea (Who Knows One?) at the end of the Haggadah.

So let's have a look at the four letters of 'vehi': והיא. ו – Vav is six and that stands for the Shisha Sidrei Mishnah, the Six Orders of the Mishnah which is the Talmud. ה – Hey is five, representing the Chamisha Chumshei Torah, the Five Books of the Torah. י – Yud is ten and that represents the Asarah Dibraya, the Ten Commandments, and finally, א – Alef of course is one, representing God.

And it's true. This is what has saved us! It's Hashem. It's our obedience to the ten commandments. It's our awareness of everything in the Torah, and it's our study of the Talmud which have guaranteed our Jewish survival. But notice the order of the four. You see, everybody knows that we believe in one true God. Fewer people than that can tell you what the Ten Commandments are. Fewer than that know that there are 613 commandments and are aware of everything in the Torah and even fewer than that have studied Talmudic texts. 'Vehi' teaches us that when it comes to guaranteeing our Jewish survival, Jewish education must be our top priority and we need to deepen our knowledge. We must have an awareness of Talmudic texts, followed by the Torah, an awareness of the Ten Commandments and of course we must believe in Hashem. The deeper and more comprehensive our knowledge, the greater will be our Jewish awareness and the stronger our Jewish identity. So therefore, a great lesson of the Pesach Seder is not just that we should have a lovely and inspirational evening in its own right, but also that it should inspire us to study more throughout the whole year. That's why the passage immediately after "Vehi she'amda" starts with the words, ""Tze ulemad" – "Go out and learn". That should be our motto for Pesach: Tze ulemad: let's appreciate that our commitment to Jewish study and to Jewish education must be a feature throughout the entire year, because the greater the quality of our education, the greater our chances of Jewish survival. I wish you all chag kasher v'sameach. *Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.*

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torahweb.org Rabbi Hershel Schachter Pesach: A Teachable Moment for Ikarei ha'Emunah

Rabbi Hirsch Melech Shapiro (known for his sefer B'nai Yissoschor) writes a very fascinating idea in his sefer Derech Pekudecha. The Chumash records that Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe Rabbeinu that He plans to bring about tremendous miracles in Mitzrayim in order that B'nai Yisroel should tell over these stories to their children and grandchildren so that they should know all about Hashem. It would appear in the Chumash that the main purpose of the mitzvah of sippur yetzi'as Mitzrayim on Pesach night is to convey to our children all of the principles of faith (i'karei ha'emunah) which were demonstrated through all of the eser makos. Although Hashem is invisible, after experiencing the eser makos first hand it became obvious and apparent that there is a G-d in the world. The Torah tells us also that Hashem caused all of the avodah zaras in Egypt to fall apart to demonstrate that there is only one G-d. There were always thinkers who philosophized and suggested that it is physically impossible for the Infinite G-d to communicate with finite man; they claim there cannot be such a thing as prophecy. However, the people realized that Moshe Rabbeinu was a navi.

Included in the ikar ha'emunah of nevuah is the concept of tefillah. Just as G-d can, has, and will communicate with man, so too can man communicate with G-d by davening. The Torah says that B'nai Yisroel prayed and Hashem answered their prayers and took them out of Egypt. There were always thinkers who philosophized that although there is a G-d who created the world, because there is no such thing as spontaneous generation so there must have been a G-d who brought life into existence, but clearly after He created the world, He no longer pays attention to petty things that go on in this world and does not really follow with anything that goes on in this earth. On the occasion of yetzi'as Mitzrayim it was clearly demonstrated that this is not so. The one and only G-d that created the world was fully aware of all that was happening. He punished the wicked and spared the righteous. The story of yetzi'as Mitzrayim demonstrated that there was clearly yedey'a (knowledge) of what was happening and also sechar v'onesh.

The entire Jewish nation heard both Moshe and Aharon deliver prophecies, but noticed that there was a stark difference between the two of them. Aharon's prophecies were all regarding horo'as sha'ah while those of Mosher Rabbeinu were sometimes dinim l'doros and sometimes horo'as sha'ah. The korban Pesach that was brought in Mitzrayim was a blend of dinim l'doros and horo'as sha'ah. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to deliver the prophecy about the upcoming geulah, Moshe Rabbeinu says that when the people will ask me "what is His name, what should I answer"? Hashem gives a very cryptic response and reveals to Moshe Rabbeinu another one of His seven names (zayin sheimos sh'einom nimchokim): Eh'k'ye Asher Eh'k'ye. Rashi, quoting from the Midrash, interprets the meaning of this name / statement to be that Hashem will be with the Jewish people until ge'ulas Mitzrayim will be completed, and Hashem promises that He will again be with the Jewish people in the future during the long galus to bring about the ge'ulah ha'asida. Thus the ikar of be'as ha'Moshiach was also revealed right before yetzi'as Mitzrayim. It is for that reason that on Pesach night, at the conclusion of the seder, we all recite Nishmas Kol Chai, asking for that day to come soon when all of mankind will recognize Hakadosh Baruch Hu as the one and only ruler of the world.

However, the Moshiach will only come when all of mankind is willing to accept the malchus of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. There are many hard core atheists and ovdei avodah zarah who refuse to accept His malchus and because of whom the coming of Moshiach is being postponed. It is for that reason that we pray to Hakadosh Baruch Hu right before the conclusion of the Hallel on the seder night, "Shfoch chamoscha...", i.e. it is not fair that this group should hold back the coming of Moshiach. Wipe these people out and the rest of the nations of the world will be ready to accept your malchus. All of these principles of faith of our religion could easily be explained even to young children on Pesach night. According to the simple reading of the pesukim, it would appear that that is the main purpose and should be the main theme of sippur yetzi'as Mitzrayim.

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blogs.timesofisrael.com Tzav: We don't wait on soup Ben-Tzion Spitz

Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use. - Emily Post

Once upon a time there was a concept called "etiquette" which one was expected to demonstrate, beyond the politeness of "please" and "thank you," particularly in dining situations. One learned how to sit and how not to sit, how to handle cutlery, how to eat, how to drink, how to excuse oneself, and much more. One of those rules of etiquette was the idea of waiting to eat, even if the food was on the plate in front of you, until the host started eating. An exception to that, however, was if the food being served was soup. By the time everyone would have been served their soup, the first person's soup would be at best lukewarm or cold. Therefore, etiquette dictates that you may have your soup as soon as it is served. The Bechor Shor on the Torah reading of Tzav comes to a similar conclusion regarding the etiquette of the Kohens who partook of the sacrificial meals at the Temple. The descendants of Aaron, the High Priest, were tasked with the eternal responsibility of serving as priests (Kohens) in the Tabernacle, and thereafter in the Temple. Part of that service included the sharing of sacrificial meals. During Temple times the Kohens served in rotations that were apportioned to a roster of Kohanic families. Each Kohanic family would serve together in the Temple, performing the various ritual duties required in the Temple. The Bechor Shor on Exodus 7:10 explains the different etiquette that accompanied different types of sacrificial meals or foods. In particular, he focuses on two types of grain "Mincha" offerings. One was a simple, uncooked, grain and oil mixture. For this offering, the Kohens needed to wait for the entire family to come together and eat it at the same time. However, the baked offerings were eaten primarily by the Kohens who were responsible and present for the preparation and baking of that particular offering, without having to wait for the entire family to assemble. They were allowed to eat it while it was still hot and not miss out on the pleasure of the hot food by waiting for everyone else to show up. May we always be considerate of others, and may we not demand consideration from others when it needlessly harms or detracts from their experiences. *Shabbat Shalom and Chag Kasher Ve'sameach, Dedication - To the Suez Canal. Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.*

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz Passover - Parashat Tzav: The liberation journey continues

Once a year, we do not suffice with mentioning the Exodus from Egypt, but retell the story of our nation's genesis in detail.

After Shabbat, we will sit down to celebrate Seder night – that festive night that starts off the seven days of Passover. On this night, we will all sit around the holiday table and fulfill the festival's unique commandments and traditions: eating matzah and bitter herbs, drinking four cups of wine, and telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus is an event that accompanies the Jewish nation and each individual Jew throughout life. Every day, in the text of the Shema recited in the morning and evening, we add a section remembering the Exodus from Egypt. In the kiddush on Friday evening and holidays, we say "a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt." Once a year, we do not suffice with mentioning the Exodus from Egypt, but retell the story of our nation's genesis in detail. This is a special commandment given in the Torah for this night: telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. What is the essential part of this story? Of course, the liberation from slavery to freedom. Our ancestors were slaves in Egypt working in hard labor, enslaved to Pharaoh, the Egyptian king. God sent Moses to generate a series of miracles and wonders that ultimately led to the Jewish nation's liberation. This is the structure of the story we tell. First, we describe in detail the difficult hardships suffered during the enslavement in Egypt; then we move on to describe the process of redemption and liberation. Finally, we thank God for the redemption and recite the chapters of the Hallel. We illustrate the story through the night's special commandments. We eat bitter herbs to remind us of our ancestors' bitter time in Egypt; we eat matzah as a reminder of the speed in which they left Egypt; and we drink four cups of wine and sit leaning comfortably as a symbol of the freedom we were privileged to attain. Seder night was set for the 15th of Nisan since that was when the Exodus from Egypt occurred thousands of years ago. Through the story and the illustrations, we relive that moment and awaken the internal movement from slavery to freedom. Though, thankfully, slavery hardly exists in the Western world, internal enslavement to the gratification of needs and the pursuit of pleasure exists in this imperfect world in which we live, perhaps even more than ever. Economic welfare and accessibility have created a situation in which a person can be busy chasing pleasure, without ever gaining a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment. This internal enslavement makes life devoid of significance and makes happiness further from reach. Netanyahu's savior: Meet the Arab Islamist who can sway the election The exodus from slavery to freedom means that a person is no longer confined by his desires or the lowly needs that attract him. A free person is one who can say to himself, "I have values and they overcome the attraction." A person who can control himself is one who is free. A person who can live in a dynamic of giving, rather than taking and drawing from others, is one who is free. A person who has the courage to leave his comfort zone and search for the meaning and purpose in life is one who is taking his first steps on the path to freedom. The Jewish people was liberated from slavery thousands of years ago. But the journey to freedom continues. If we ask ourselves how to go forward in this journey, our Sages answer: "The only free individual is one who engages in [the study of] Torah" (Avot 6:2). Engaging in Torah enlightens a person and helps him seek the truth. The study guides him in how to actualize the higher aspects of his character rather than being enslaved and addicted to attraction and gratification of needs. On this special night, Seder night, each and every member of the Jewish people is called upon to see himself "as though he himself left Egypt." This is an opportunity, a special time, when one gets Divine assistance to quit slavery and get a taste of true freedom, spiritual freedom, which leads one to a life of happiness and joy. *The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*

Shema Yisrael Torah Network Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Tzav פרשת צו תשפ"א

זאת תורת העלה היא העלה על מוקדה על המזבח *This is the law of the Olah/Elevation-offering (that stays) on the flame on the Altar. (6:2)*

The *Korban Chatas*, Sin-offering, is brought when one inadvertently commits a transgression for which the punishment is, when intentional, either *kares*, Heavenly excision, or the death penalty [any of the four forms of capital punishment/execution]. A person brings a *Korban Olah* for a sin which he committed with his mind, in which he had improper, sinful thoughts. Interestingly, when one performs a sin with his hand, his punishment is *chatas*, which is partially eaten by the owners and *Kohanim*. In contrast, when one commits a sin with his mind, he must bring a *korban* which is completely burnt. Why is this?

Simply, I would suggest that a sin which one commits with his mind permeates his entire body, tainting everything, because the mind determines what the body does. *Ramban* observes that the same hand that writes a *Sefer Torah* can commit murder. Is the hand to blame? No! It is the mind that determines and defines the actions of the hand. On the other hand, when hands/actions commit a sin, it is only the hands that have committed the sinful act. It does not affect the other organs of the body. Thus, a *Korban Olah* which atones for the sins of the mind is wholly burnt, and a *Korban Chatas* which atones for actions, is partially eaten by both owner and *Kohen*. The *Nesivos Chaim* (cited in *Nifle'osecha Asichah*) explains that the purpose of a *korban* is to teach its donor what it is that Hashem wants/expects of us and in what manner a Jew should carry out his daily endeavor. It is unrealistic to ask a person that all of his activities should be totally untainted of any physical/material prejudices and interests. We are human, and, as such,

we are prone to human tendencies. We cannot expect a person to execute a *mitzvah* and not derive any physical pleasure or purpose thereby. It is what it is. In the realm of thought, however, we may expect that one's mind be completely in sync with his actions. Upon *davening* (for example), one should maintain *kavanah*, proper intention, focus and devotion. One has no excuse for a "wandering" mind. Therefore, the Torah distinguishes between thought and action with regard to its various *korbanos*. In his inimitable manner, *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita* relates an inspiring story which underscores the importance of proper thought, *kavanah*, when one is engaged in a *davar she'b'kedushah*, holy endeavor. *Horav David Segal HaLevi, zl*, authored the *Turei Zahav* commentary to the *Shulchan Aruch*. The *Taz* (as he is reverently known) is one of *Klal Yisrael's* premier *poskim, halachic* arbiters. In the *Pincas*, notebook, of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, Jewish Sacred/Burial Society, of the city of Lvov, Poland, it is noted that the *Taz* was known to wear an old, torn *Tallis*. It was obvious from the color of the *Tallis* and the pattern of its tatters that he had worn it for quite some time. When it became known that the man who represented the city's spiritual centerpiece, a man known throughout the entire Torah world for his brilliance and erudition, was attired in an old *Tallis*, the women of the community assembled and donated a brand new white *Tallis* made of the finest wool, as befits a Torah scholar of the stature of the *Taz*. They brought the gift to him. He opened up the package and saw the impressive *Tallis* which they had commissioned for him. He remarked, "Thank you. My deepest gratitude to you for the thought. However, I refuse to wear a new *Tallis*. I require my old, torn *Tallis* to serve as a testament on my behalf in Heaven Above that I <u>never</u> had <u>any</u> extraneous thoughts during *Shemoneh Esrai*." His mind was always focused on the words, their meaning and implications. Can we make such a statement? Indeed, *Rav* Zilberstein supplements the story (*Chashukei Chemed Bechoros* 37a) with the following observation: The *Taz* was a saintly angel, an unparalleled *tzaddik*, about whom his *Tallis* could attest such positive testimony. Those of us who are unable to make such a statement, whose *Tallis* cannot (for obvious reasons) vouch to our positive, appropriate focus during *Shemoneh Esrai*, should repair and clean the *Tallis* that we wear, so that we should at least be attired in a clean *Tallis* when *davening* to Hashem. Perhaps this might be a time to mention that this applies to all *devarim she'b'kedushah,* sacred objects: *Tallis; Tefillin*; the clothing we wear to *shul*, which indicates the esteem in which we hold the *shul*, the congregation, the *Shabbos*. Certainly, to find the money to purchase an expensive wardrobe, but continuing to wear an old *Tallis* that could use a cleaning, reflects misplaced values and imperiousness that borders on disdain for a *mitzvah*.

ופשט את בגדיו ולבש בגדים אחרים ***And he shall take off his garments, and put on other garments. (6:4)*** In his *Sipurei Chassidim, Horav Shlomo Y. Zevin, zl* (cited by *Imrei Shammai*) relates that *Rav* David Tzvi Chein, a *Chabad chassid*, who was *Rav* in Chernigov, was scheduled for his *yechidus* (private interview with the *Rebbe*, during which the *chassid* seeks guidance and inspiration) with *Horav Shmuel, zl*, of Lubavitch. He arrived late, so he decided that he would wait outside the *Rebbe's* study. In that way, when the *Rebbe* would leave, he would quickly ask his question. He was late, and he had to return to Chernigov. As he was waiting, he was joined by the *Rebbe's gabbai*, aide/attendant, who had brought a change of clothes for the *Rebbe*. Apparently, after the *Rebbe* spent a session of *yechidus* with a number of *chassidim*, he perspired heavily and required a new set of clothing. The *gabbai* had a problem with this, "The entire *yechidus* session lasts an hour. Why should the *Rebbe* perspire so much?" *Rav* David Tzvi did not respond (probably because he knew the attendant would not understand). When he did not reply, the attendant asked again, this time even louder, "Why does the *Rebbe* perspire so much?" It was at this point that the *Rebbe's* door opened, and the *Rebbe* stuck out his head to respond to his attendant, "I am dismissing you from your position effective immediately. Please go home, and I will continue to send you your wages each week. By the way, why is it so difficult for you to understand why I perspire profusely? In the course of one hour, I had *yechidus* with 25 people. If I am to counsel a person properly, I must experience his adversity as he himself experiences it. In order to achieve this reality, I must divest myself of my garments and don his garments. (In our present-day vernacular, "I must step into his shoes.") When the time comes for me to render my advice and guidance, I must remove his clothes and put on my clothes. I can hardly give him my advice while I am still dressed in his clothes. Now, would you not also perspire if you did this 50 times? (25 times removing his clothes and putting on the petitioner's clothes and then doing it over again for the guidance portion of the *yechidus*)" What a powerful story. A Torah leader must empathize – he must sense the pain of each Jew. Veritably, it takes a very special person actually to feel someone else's pain. No two people are the same, thus making it impossible to feel someone else's pain – as he feels it. One can, however, take note, see the pain written all over his face; his eyes; his body language. One can see another in pain and what he sees motivates him to act. When we see someone else in pain, we feel bad, but that is not enough. Our friend will not get better simply because we feel bad for him. We must do something about it, and, if we cannot change his circumstances, then we should at least be supportive. A young couple had exhausted every avenue to achieve parenthood. Every specialist, every procedure – they had been there – they had tried that. Finally, the top specialist in the field of reproduction told them that it was all fruitless. He had no scientific remedy for their problem. The husband did not give up. He planned to petition the *posek hador*, pre-eminent *Halachic* arbiter, of the generation, *Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl*, for his blessing. He proceeded to the home of *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen, who listened and asked for some time to mull over the problem. A short while later, *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen came out and said, "I tried, but was unsuccessful. I am sorry, but I am unable to give you the news that you want to hear." The young man broke down in tears and left. As he was sitting in his apartment a few hours later, the young man heard a faint knocking at his door. He opened the door to greet *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen, who had walked over and climbed the many steps to this man's apartment. *Rav* Shlomo Zalmen looked at him and said, "I could not help you, but there is no reason that I cannot sit and cry together with you." This is the meaning of empathy. Even when one is unable to help solve the problem, he is able to ease some of the pain just by being present and showing that he cares. On the day of the wedding of *Horav* Chaim Shmuelevitz's youngest son, as everyone was preparing to leave for the wedding, the *Rosh Yeshivah* took time off to meet with a *bachur*, *yeshivah* student, who was having difficulty finding his designated match. *Rav* Chaim spent an entire hour speaking, encouraging, guiding this young man. He continued his conversation with him even as he walked to the *monit*, taxi, that was to drive him to the wedding hall. Did he have nothing else to do <u>today</u> – of all days? *Rav* Chaim told the *bachur*, "Today I am marrying off my youngest son. It is a day of unparalleled joy for me. With whom do I want to share the joy? With <u>you</u>! I am thinking of you today!" Need I say more? *Horav Mordechai Porgremonsky, zl*, was wont to say: "To feel pain when one's friend confronts adversity is the sign of a *mentch*, decent human being. To feel joy when he experiences joy requires one to be a *malach*, angel!"

וזאת תורת זבח השלמים ***And this is the teaching of the offering of the meal-of-peace. (7:11)*** Previously (Ibid 3:1), the Torah referred to the *Korban Shelamim*, Peace-offering, as *Zevach Shelamim*, meal of peace. The *Korban Shelamim* is the only offering that carries with it the added appellation, *zevach*, meal/feast. In his commentary to *Sefer Bereishis* (46:1), *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, writes that Yaakov *Avinu* was the first Patriarch to offer a *Korban Shelamim*. This was only after he heard that Yosef *HaTzaddik* was physically and spiritually safe. When the Patriarch arrived in Be'er Sheva, he was in his happiest frame of mind, having reached a zenith in his life, enabling him to leave his troubles and struggles behind him. It was now that he felt qualified to offer a *Korban Shelamim*, a *korban* which is a *zevach*, a meal, to be shared with family. The *Korban Olah* expresses complete submission to

Hashem. Thus, it is completely burnt. The *Shelamim* is the only *korban* which the *baalim*, owner, eats. This offering consecrates the "family home," transforming it into a veritable sanctuary and rendering the family table an altar. A *zevach* denotes the concept that Hashem is a personal G-d. He comes to us. It is understood from that happy consciousness that in a place where the family unit lives in harmony and joy, with fidelity to Hashem, sensing Hashem always in the midst, His Presence suffuses the family circle. A major motif of the *Mishkan* and the *Bais HaMikdash* is that what transpires in the *Mishkan* does not stay in the *Mishkan*, but goes home with us. The hope is that the nucleus of the *Mishkan* will transfuse our home with its sanctity. One who has experienced *Kedushas HaMikdash* should come home spiritually humbled. His learning, *davening*, eating, and social relationships should be elevated. The goal of the *Mikdash* is to invigorate our mundane lives with sanctity, so that we bring *Mikdash* into our homes, *shuls* and offices. *Rav* Hirsch notes that in the *Mikdash*, the night belongs to the preceding day. A twenty-four-hour cycle begins with the morning and ends with the following morning. In the rest of Jewish life, the day belongs to the preceding night – the night being the beginning of the twenty-four-hour day, which concludes the following night. Furthermore, all *korbanos* are to be eaten in the *Azarah, Bais Hamikdash* proper, in contrast to the *Shelamim,* which is eaten anywhere in Yerushalayim. Last, the *z'man achilas Korban Shelamim*, time allotted for eating the *Korban Shelamim*, is not two days and two nights like other *korbanos*, but rather, two days and one intervening night. Actually, at nightfall of the second day, the *korban* becomes *nosar*, sacrificial leftovers, but may not be burnt until the next morning, since the burning of *Kodoshim* must always be done *ba'yom*, during the day. Thus, the *Mikdash* day - which begins in the morning and concludes at night - is followed by a morning which was preceded by night. The *Korban Shelamim,* which may be eaten outside of the *Mikdash* environs, fuses the *Mikdash* day with the mundane day outside the *Mikdash*. The night serves a two-fold purpose: it is the end of the *Mikdash* day; and also the beginning of the ordinary mundane day, which has now been infused with the sanctity of the preceding day, via the night that connects them. As *Rav* Hirsch expresses it so well, the *Korban Shelamim* is inherently, by its very nature, a "Jewish" sacrifice. It marks occasions of family life by expressing the awareness of Hashem's blessing in our circle of life. Veritably, the concept of being absorbed in G-d and devoted to Him is also found in non-Jewish dogma; it does not, however, penetrate <u>every</u> aspect of mundane life as it does in Jewish theology. The essence of Judaism is best characterized by the notion that our ordinary day-by-day lifestyle can be elevated and consecrated to the point that his table becomes an altar, his home a sanctuary, his children dedicated servants to Hashem, and <u>every</u> aspect of his daily routine a spiritual endeavor. We believe in *Kiddush ha'yeish*, consecrating the mundane, by transforming it into a spiritual activity. A Jew who puts on *Tefillin* in the morning has a different perspective on his day. One who davens in *shul* on *Shabbos* has a different *Shabbos* meal. An evening *shiur* or *chavrusa* alters one's outlook on his day. Obviously, when one "visits" *shul* and uses it as an opportunity for socializing, he does not develop that much sanctity to take along with him, although he is certainly better off than the one who does not attend. It is all in one's attitude. A typically mundane act can be transformed into a holy service to Hashem, with just the proper attitude. A cup of coffee can be a caffeine "fix," or it can be an opportunity to revive oneself, so that he can learn more or better. One day, *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, gave a *shiur klali*, general lecture, to the entire Yeshivas Mir. By chance, one of his old friends from pre-World War II Mir and Shanghai was visiting the Holy Land. He, too, attended the *shiur* of his good friend, *Rav* Chaim Stutchiner (as *Rav* Chaim was called in the Mir). Following the *shiur*, the *yeshivah davened minchah,* after which everyone went home for dinner/lunch. *Rav* Chaim invited his guest to join him. As soon as they came home, *Rav* Chaim called out to his *Rebbetzin* (who was the daughter of *Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl*, founder of *Yeshivas Mir Eretz Yisrael* and son of the *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka)*, "Chanah Miriam, *Boruch Hashem*, we have a special guest to join us for dinner." They sat down to eat, as the *Rebbetzin* brought a hot soup out to the table. *Rav* Chaim began to eat, and, as was his habit, he ate quickly. Indeed, he had finished his portion before his guest had even made a dent in his bowl of soup. *Rav* Chaim immediately called out, "*Rebbetzin,* could I please have another soup?" The *Rebbetzin* promptly brought out another bowl of soup. Meanwhile, the guest kept eating his first bowl. It did not take long before *Rav* Chaim's second bowl of soup was history. He immediately called the *Rebbetzin* and asked for a third bowl of soup. The guest was amazed at how quickly *Rav* Chaim devoured his soup, but, more so, at his <u>immediate</u> request for a refill. When *Rav* Chaim asked for his fourth bowl of soup, his guest finally spoke up, "*Rav* Chaim, our friendship goes back to our youth, so I am not afraid to bring to your attention that, for a Torah scholar of your distinction, a *gadol b'Yisrael*, *Rosh Yeshivah* of the Mir, it is below your exalted dignity to ask for one bowl of soup after another. It just does not *pas*, does not suit you." *Rav* Chaim replied, "My dear friend, let me explain to you how I view the *Rebbetzin's* soup. Her soup (to her) is no different than my *shiur klali*. (*Rav* Chaim spent much time preparing. Indeed, he submerged his entire being into a *shiur*. His *shiur* was a dynamic production of himself fused with the Torah.) After I say my *shiur*, and someone approaches me to compliment the *shiur*, I have incredible joy when someone asks me to repeat it again -- and again. My joy increases, regardless of how many times I repeat it. (*Rav* Chaim neither looked for, nor needed, a compliment. He enjoyed it if someone responded positively to his *chiddush*, innovative exposition of the topic, such as, 'Perhaps the *Rosh Yeshivah* can repeat the main point again.')

"The *Rebbetzin* prepares the soup with much devotion She understands that the nourishment I receive allows me to learn more and better. She goes out early in the morning to the *makolet* to purchase the necessary ingredients. She then prepares the ingredients, which is a labor of love requiring time and effort. Next, she must hope the gas stove will work. (Apparently, it did not always work.) Now, after all of her effort, do you not think she deserves and even enjoys a compliment? The greatest compliment that one can render is to ask for more soup. This is the reason for my behavior." *Rav* Chaim taught his friend how a *gadol b'Yisrael* should act – he must be a *mentch*. Would anyone ever posit that schlepping bags of garbage is a spiritual endeavor? If one would know the "hero" of the story as I did, however, its veracity would be unimpeachable. A young couple (whose parents did not raise them properly) met with *Rav Mordechai Gifter, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Telshe*, to discuss their marital issues. Apparently, the young couple was in serious need of guidance. They had the usual litany of complaints: "He does not listen;" "She is too bossy." The young man felt that his wife did not respect his stature as a *ben Torah*. (He was a *talmid chacham*, just lacking in common sense.) The wife felt that his refusal to lift a finger to help her bordered on unjustified arrogance. The *Rosh Yeshivah* spent one hour listening to their individual complaints, as they went back and forth, (immaturely) each blaming the other for their marital issues. Finally, came the clincher, the problem concerning which they came to the *Rosh Yeshivah*: the garbage. Apparently, the wife could not carry out the garbage for its weekly pickup, because it was too heavy. The husband patently refused to be seen in the street with a garbage bag: "Imagine, someone of my stature carrying out the garbage!" *Rav* Gifter asked what day and what time the garbage pickup was. He told them that he needed a few days to mull over their issues. Then, he would get back to them. Wednesday morning was "garbage pickup day" at 7:50 A.M. Promptly at 7:40 A.M. there was a knock at the door of the couple's apartment. Who would be knocking so early in the morning? The wife answered the door to see the *Rosh Yeshivah* standing there. "Where is your garbage?" he asked. She looked at him incredulously. "I have come to take out your garbage," he said. The wife called her husband, who was equally shocked to see the *Rosh Yeshivah*. "Quickly, we have only three more minutes before the garbage truck picks up the garbage," the *Rosh Yeshivah* told them. The young couple remained adamant. They were not letting the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Telshe, who was one of the

premier *gedolim* in the world, take out their garbage. *Rav* Gifter walked past them, grabbed the bags, and carried them outside to the street. They got the message. The *Rosh Yeshivah* had taken a purely mundane, menial task and transformed it into a Torah lesson, and he succeeded in saving a marriage!

Va'ani Tefillah **ברכנו אבינו כלנו כאחד באור פניך** ***Barcheinu Avinu kulanu k'echad b'or Panecha. Bless us, our Father, together as one, with the light of Your Face.*** This is the only prayer in the *Shemoneh Esrai* in which we ask Hashem for something that is contingent upon our being unified as one. When we ask for forgiveness, health, livelihood, we do not ask in the merit of our standing before Him as one. We ask for ourselves, individually, but not collectively as one unit. Now, however, we are asking Hashem to bless us "in the light of His face." *B'or Parenecha* demands a little more from us, since we now must appear before Him as He looks us over prior to granting us the blessing of peace. One does not ask for peace when the "other party" is not even present; rather, the two come together as one, attempting to live in harmony, to ask for the blessing that their efforts achieve success.

Disharmony is the result of focusing on oneself and not demonstrating any form of empathy for our fellow. When Hashem sees us looking out for our own interests and not showing any concern for our brothers, it is an indication that our petition for peace is spurious. What is there about our presentation that warrants the blessing of peace? If we ask for peace, we should at least show that it means something to us. When we show Hashem that unity has meaning and value to us, only then we can ask for lasting peace.

לזכר נשמת האשה החשובה, מרת פיגא רחל בת ר' משה צבי ע"ה ברינענר פעלדמאן ***פ****יה פתחה בחכמה ובאצילות היו הליכותיה יראים ותלמידי חכמים נודעים היו אבותיה* ***ג****דולים סבלותיה בעת המלחמה ועצומות תלאותיה* ***א****שת חיל נוחה לבריות ושלום כל נתיבותיה* ***ר****צויה לכל יודעיה, ומכיריה חיבבו מידותיה* ***ח****סדים הרבה עשתה בין בגופה ובין במעותיה* ***ל****מדו מדרכיה יוצאי חלציה וישרים דורותיה נפטרה בש"ט ערב פסח תשס"ב In loving memory of Mrs. Fanny (Brunner) Feldman by her family Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה

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Why Is No One Ensuring That Hasidic Kids Get A Real Education?

Byline:
Naftuli Moster

Why Is No One Ensuring That Hasidic Kids Get A Real Education?

Hasidic Jewish teenage boys spend about 12 hours each day learning at religious high schools (known as yeshivas.) And yet, many young men leave Yeshiva with barely any math or science skills, or even the ability to read English beyond an elementary school level. This lack of basic education makes them especially vulnerable to poverty. In fact, about 43% of Hasidic families in New York are poor and another 16% are near poor.

And the situation keeps getting worse. The last decade has seen rapid population growth in ultra-Orthodox communities without any improvements in education, drastically increasing the number of Hasidic Jews who need to rely on public assistance.

These numbers are especially significant because, by 2030 between 23-37% of Brooklyn school age children will be Hasidic. If the issue isn't resolved soon, these children will enter into adulthood with no English, math, science, or social studies knowledge, resulting in catastrophic consequences for the economic and social well being of this city.

Why is no one addressing this problem?

The reluctance for the public to get involved in issues involving Orthodox children's education is largely based on misconceptions such as the following:

The misconception: Religious schools are exempt from government regulations

The truth: Private schools, including religious institutions, are required by law to meet specific educational standards

The misconception: Private schools don't receive public funding.

The truth: Hasidic yeshivas receive tens of millions in both federal and state dollars every year.

The misconception: Ultra-Orthodox Jews are financially successful.

The truth: In the largely Hasidic area of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, the median household income in 2011 was $21,502, compared to the overall Brooklyn median of $46,958 and the New York city median of $52,737. The average number of children in a Hasidic family is 8… meaning… the

majority of Hasidic families are poor.

The misconception: It's not our community, not our problem:

The truth: Just as it would be our responsibility to report if a neighbor's child were being neglected, it is all of our responsibility to make sure that Hasidic children are receiving a quality education. Not only is allowing these young people to go into the world with no marketable skills neglectful, but the repercussions also ripple out into the rest of society. For instance, without basic science knowledge, ultra- Orthodox communities are more likely to ignore Covid safety regulations, increasing everyone's risk of transmission.

Why doesn't the government step in?

Unfortunately, the government is often the biggest obstacle to regulating education in ultra-Orthodox schools. While New York State laws require that non-public schools provide an education that is "substantially equivalent" to that provided in the public schools, it's been an "open secret" that yeshivas are largely ignoring the secular requirements.

As far back as the 1990's, officials were aware that education in religious schools was not being adequately regulated. In 2000, New York Education Commissioner Richard Mills recommended adopting a proposal for increased accountability for student success in private schools. Yet, over 20 years later, little has been done to regulate religious schools.

Instead, elected officials continue to pander to communities who are blatantly ignoring the law. For instance, New York's Mayor de Blasio openly praised Oholei Torah, a yeshiva that provides no secular instruction even to its elementary school students, for its "excellence" and its contribution to "well-rounded education."

Why would the government knowingly allow yeshivas to use public money without following education guidelines?

The most likely answer is that the state officials are playing politics with children's education. The Hasidic community openly encourages community members to vote in large numbers as a "bloc." In order to get this substantial "bloc vote" politicians often turn a blind eye when communities break the rules, especially in education.

Unfortunately, the government's refusal to address the situation combined with the public's reluctance to get involved has meant that no one has been looking out for these kids.

That's where Yaffed comes in…

In 2012, frustrated with his own Yeshiva experience, Naftuli Moster reached out to Civil Rights attorney, Michael Sussman. Sussman suggested that Naftuli organize a meeting of 20 yeshiva graduates from different schools to compare notes on their education.

While the schools were different, their experiences were the same. Hours and hours of religious study with little to no time spent on math, English, science, or social studies. None of the young men had the skills or education for anything more than a low paying factory job. Their yeshiva education was not even equivalent to a GED, so, for most, college was out of the question.

From that initial meeting, Young Advocates for Fair Education (YAFFED) was born. For almost a decade, Naftuli and his colleagues have been fighting tirelessly to make sure Hasidic kids get the education that they are entitled to under state and federal law.

Through community grass roots activism, Yaffed has been pressuring government officials to regulate yeshivas and enforce the laws in place. Their efforts have been met with great opposition, both from the government and within the ultra-Orthodox community.

But, beneath the wall of resistance, tendrils of hope are beginning to emerge. Hasidic parents are quietly reaching out for support, former Yeshiva students are volunteering time and resources, and, most importantly, there's been a growing awareness of the far-reaching repercussions of denying Hasidic kids an access to basic education.

We know that organized public pressure is the best catalyst for legislative change. In 2017, The New York State Education Department pledged to revise their guidelines to enforce "substantial equivalency" laws in private schools. With enough public support, Yaffed can hold the Education Department to their promise, ensuring that the next generation of Hasidic kids gets the education they deserve.

Byline:
Naftuli Moster is Executive Director of Yaffed. For more about the work of Yaffed, please visit yaffed.org

The Structure Of The Seder: V'Nomar L'Fanav Shirah Hadashah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I

GOALS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE LEIL HASEDER

A: "SEDER"

"Seder", as everyone knows, means "order" – what a strange name for a feast! Why is this meal different from all other meals, in that it is called an "order"?;

Rambam's wording may prove enlightening. In Hilkhot Hametz uMatza, 8:1, (after having detailed all of the laws of Hametz, Matza, telling the story, drinking the four cups etc.), Rambam introduces the meal as follows: Seder Asiyyat Mitzvot Eilu b'Leil Hamisha 'Asar Kakh Hu: – "The order of performing these [above-mentioned] Mitzvot on the night of the 15th (of Nissan) is as follows:"

In other words, "Seder" refers to a particular order in which we perform a series of (otherwise) independent Mitzvot. Why, indeed, are these Mitzvot placed in any order – and why in the order which we identify with Leil haSeder(Seder evening)?

Before looking into the Seder itself, we find many analogous situations in the mundane world. Some of you may remember the show "This Is Your Life". The components include a (surprised) "target" – whose life will be highlighted on the show – and significant memories and people from his or her past. A neophyte, reading this description, might think that the order in which these memories are presented is irrelevant – indeed, he may think that we could present a jumbled assortment of guests from different times in the "target's" past – and then identify the "target". He might be surprised to find that the show isn't "working" – even though all of the components are there!

We all understand why this show would not succeed – its success is dependent as much on sequence as content.. First the "target" is identified, so that he or she realizes that it is his or her life which will be highlighted – this allows the target to mentally and emotionally prepare for the evening – and allows everyone else in the hall (potential targets each and every one) to "defocus" from their own lives and hone in on the "star's" life. Each memory or personality subsequently brought up heightens the excitement – until the final guest brought out, usually a long-lost friend or relative, brings the excitement of the evening to a climax. It would be hard to envision an episode of "This Is Your Life" without tremendous attention paid to the details of sequence.

Actually, we experience the same thing every morning. Upon waking, we are obligated to wear Tefillin, make sure that all of our four-cornered clothes have fringes, say K'riat Sh'ma, say Tefillah. Theoretically, these acts could be performed independently: say Tefillah, put on a Tallit (and then take it off), say K'riat Sh'ma, then put on Tefillin. However, the Rabbis created a system – or "order" – of performing these Mitzvot. First we put on a Tallit (even if we are not technically obligated – that discussion belongs in Hilkhot Tzitzit); wrapped in that, we put on Tefillin; we then sing praises of God, raising the tone of that praise until the community "comes together" for Bar'khu; this takes us to a communal recreation of angelic praise, which leads directly to K'riat Sh'ma; at that point, if we have properly focused and not been interrupted, the experience of Tefillah will be very ennobling and elevating. This experiential matrix utilizes the various Mitzvot which we must do every day to build an experience which is greater than the sum of its parts.

B: TELLING -> IDENTIFYING -> SINGING PRAISE

Before going into the details of the Mitzvot which we are obligated to perform on the night of the 15th of Nissan (Leil haSeder), we should first look at the overarching goal – or goals – of the evening.

It would seem – both from the prominence of "Maggid" (Telling the Story) in the feast and from the six(!) times (see below) that the Mitzvah of "Haggadah/Sippur" (Telling/Sharing the Story) appears in the Torah – that the goal of the evening is to tell the story. However, a closer look at the text of the Haggadah will demonstrate that telling the story is an objective, the purpose of which is to take us further, to achieve another goal.

Arguably, the central paragraph in the Haggadah comes on the heels of Rabban Gamliel's explanation of the meaning of the three central foods – Pesach, Matzah and Maror. Immediately after that, we declare that

in every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he came out of Mitzrayim (Egypt)…

– "telling the story" is a means towards "identifying with the story".

The next "turning point" comes immediately after this declaration of "identifying with the story":

Therefore, we are obligated to give thanks…to the One who performed all of these miracles for our ancestors and for us….

We have now moved up one more level – from "identification with -" to "singing praises to God for -" the Exodus. The Halakhic term for this type of singing is "Shirah". At this point, we could argue that Shirah is the goal of the evening -but, as always, there's much, much more.

C: RELIVING JEWISH HISTORY IN ONE EVENING

When we examine the various Halakhot and Minhagim (customs) performed on Leil haSeder, we find associations with different times in our history – vastly different circumstances. The Seder evening is indeed, a fantasy evening with a very real "time-warp" component to it. We imagine ourselves as slaves in Mitzrayim, as refugees in the desert, as noble freemen enjoying the feast in Yerushalayim with the Beit HaMikdash standing, as nobles reclining at a feast in the manner of our Roman oppressors – and there are even pieces of the Jewish-history-which-has-not-yet-been-realized which sneak into the Seder celebration.

On Pesach, we identify with – and try to reexperience – the Exodus from Egypt. Beyond that, we walk a mile in the shoes of every

Jew who ever lived; every Kohen Gadol who entered the Kodesh Kodoshim on Yom haKippurim, every victim of persecution who died with "Sh'ma Yisra'el" on her faithful lips, every hearty pioneer who risked life and limb to drain swamps in order to reclaim more of the Land of Israel for her sons and daughters.

This idea is introduced rather early on in the evening – before beginning the actual "story-telling", we cover the Matzot (the object around which story-telling happens) and raise our wine glasses (glass #2) (the object used for Shirah) and sing:

v'Hi She'amdah… …Not only one has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us – and the Holy One, who is Blessed, rescues us from their hand.

The Seder is a celebration of Jewish history and of God's constant role in our survival and success.

D: REASSESSING THE GOAL

We have identified several goals of the evening – identifying with the Exodus, identifying with the rest of Jewish history and Shirah. Is there one, ultimate goal of the evening?

This question is far from moot. Once we grasp the purpose behind what we are doing, it infuses each step towards that goal with meaning and clarifies each piece as it fits into the larger picture.

The answer is likely a combination – which is only reasonable once we understand the relationship between the Exodus and the rest of Jewish history.

Besides the obligation to remember/relive it, the Exodus is presented in T'nakh in several contexts:

As a basis for the relationship between God and the B'nai Yisra'el – "I am YHVH, your God who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim, out of the house of slavery." (Shemot 20:2) (see Ibn Ezra there);

As a motivation for keeping many of the Mitzvot – e.g. just scales (Vayyikra 19:35-36);

As an internalization of developing proper characteristics: "Do not oppress the stranger – for you know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Mitzrayim" (Shemot 23:9);

As a defining factor governing relationships with neighboring nations – "…do not reject the Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land." (Devarim 23:8);

As a demonstration of the rebellious nature of the B'nai Yisra'el – "Remember how you angered YHVH your God in the desert…(Devarim 9:7);

As a remembrance of the faith we had in God – "I have remembered the kindness of your youth…following Me in the desert…" (Yirmiyahu 2:2);

As a demonstration of God's love for us – "Not due to your being the greatest among the nations…rather, out of His love for you…did YHVH take you out of Mitzrayim…" (Devarim 7:8-9);

There are many more facets of the Exodus experience – but it becomes clear that the entire story is something of a historic metaphor for Jewish existence – our relationship(s) with God, with each other, with other nations – our development of national and personal character and so on, are all rooted in this event which took place 3300 years ago – but which continues to take place in every generation.

The goal of the evening, then, is to not only identify with those slaves who marched out of Mitzrayim years ago under the protection of God and under the leadership of His messenger, Moshe – but to identify with all other aspects of Jewish history which are encapsulated in this story. That is, however, only a piece of the goal. Since a central part of the Exodus experience (and later "repeats") was Shirah, brought about by a deep sense of utter gratitude to God (we read about it explicitly at the Sea – but there were doubtless other occasions when the B'nai Yisra'el sang praises to God during the process of the Exodus). The goal of the evening is, therefore, to totally live through Jewish history – with the perception of it all bringing us to sincere and heartfelt Shira.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER

A: THE MITZVOT

In the beginning of the shiur, I pointed out that the "Seder" is really an ordering – or sequencing – of the various Mitzvot which we are obligated to perform on this evening. Before understanding the nature of that order and its structure, let's take a look at those Mitzvot:

I. Mitzvot unique to the night

A. From the Torah mid'Orayta

1. Eating Matzah 2. Telling the Story : Haggadah

B. From the Rabbis – mid'Rabanan

1. Eating Maror (although the Torah commands us to eat Maror, that is only within the context of eating the Korban Pesach (Pesach offering) – without the Korban, the Mitzvah is "only" Rabbinic in source.
2. Drinking four cups of wine

3. Displaying Haroset

4. Hallel (Shirah)

5. Reclining

II. Mitzvot not unique to the night

A.mid'Orayta

1. Kiddush (if Shabbat) 2. Birkat haMazon (blessings after a meal)

B.mid'Rabanan

1. Kiddush (if not Shabbat – according to most Rishonim, Kiddush on Yom Tov is Rabbinic in source) 2. Blessings before food and before doing Mitzvot

As mentioned above, these Mitzvot (at least in most cases) could have been performed independently; but they are interwoven in such a way as to generate the experiential matrix which lies at the heart of the Leil haSeder.

B: THE FOUR CUPS – FOUR PARTS OF THE SEDER

Although the Yerushalmi (Pesahim 10:1) provides a series of "fours" in the T'nakh (most famously the "four terms of salvation" from Shemot 6) to explain the reason for four cups; it seems from the internal Halakhot of the Seder that the reason that there are four cups is because there are four "occasions" for "Shirah" in one form or another at the Seder. The Talmud (Arakhin 11a) rules that Ein Omrin Shirah Ela 'Al haYayim – "Shirah" is only sung over wine. The four points in the seder where we drink are four "poles" of Shirah.

1. KIDDUSH

Kiddush is the conventional first part of any Shabbat or Yom Tov meal – although the words change here, Kiddush is still Kiddush. However, the two major differences here are telling. Unlike any other Kiddush, at Leil haSeder, people recline, in a manner of royalty, while drinking. In addition, unlike any other Kiddush, everyone must have his or her own cup and drink the proper amount. Clearly, then, this Kiddush is somewhat unique. Both of these differences point to the essential difference – tonight we are "B'nai Horin" – nobility and royalty. Each of us has his or her own glass and we all recline like royalty. This is, however, still Kiddush.

2. MAGGID

The second cup, which sits (filled) in front of us throughout the entire Maggid (telling the story) – is drunk at the end of that section. That section, as above, moves us from telling and "old" story, to putting ourselves into the story – to praising God for OUR salvation (more about that later). That praise is certainly Shirah and must be said over wine – cup #2.

3. BIRKAT HAMAZON

As to whether Birkat haMazon T'una Kos – Birkat HaMazon must always be said over a cup of wine (held by the leader of the blessings – the mezamen) see Shulhan Arukh and commentaries at OC 182; however, it seems that we are again doing what we did at Kiddush – turning a "one person drinks" situation into an "everybody drinks" – hence, Shirah.

4. HALLEL

The Hallel at the Seder is broken into two parts – the first part (Psalms 113-114) which focus on the Exodus, is said as the culmination of telling the story. However, there is another part of Hallel to be said – the Shirah for the rest of Jewish history – including the awaited-future which we imagine has already happened immediately after the meal. This Shirah is an anticipatory one, thanking God for the redemption for which we wait. (My high school Rebbi, Rabbi Yoel Sperka, pointed out that the verse in Psalms Kol Rina vi'Y'shua' b'Ohalei Tzaddikim – "the voice of gladness and salvation is heard in the tents of the righteous" – (Tehillim 118:15) is presented in a seemingly backwards fashion – first, there should be the salvation, then the gladness. However, he explained, that is the way of the righteous – to thank God for a salvation even before it has been realized.) The final cup, then, is the Shirah for the anticipated redemption.

These four cups mark off the four basic parts of the Seder – Kiddush, telling the story/identifying with the story/praising God, the meal (including all of those Mitzvot associated with eating) and the praise for the anticipated redemption.

C: MATZAH AND WINE

As mentioned above, the wine is central to the Seder as it is the vehicle for Shirah. Clearly (as indicated in the italicized directions throughout the Haggadah) the Matzah is the central symbol at the table. Whenever engaged in story-telling, we keep the Matzah uncovered – and at least once during Maggid (R. Gamliel says:…) we lift it up.

Matzah is called Lehem 'Oni – (Devarim 16:3) – which literally means "bread of poverty" – or "poor man's bread". For that reason, it is flat and tasteless. And for that reason, we have a broken piece among the three (or two – Rambam) Matzot over which we say "Hamotzi".

In addition, the word "'Oni" could be associated with the word for "response" – (La'anot) – and Sh'muel (Pesahim 115b) makes this connection. Matzah is the bread over which we respond to questions. In other words, it is the focal point for the story-telling.

The pendulum-swinging between wine (Kiddush) and Matzah (Ha Lachma 'Anya) and wine (v'Hi She'amdah) and Matza (Tzei ul'Mad)

and wine (L'fikhakh) reflects the way that information (story-telling – with the Matzah as the "show-and-tell" piece) and reaction (Shirah -with the wine) build upon each other to the beautiful crescendo of "Ga'al Yisr'ael". We will examine the particulars of this "buildup" later on.

D: THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE SEDER

Common convention holds that the Leil haSeder is a "children's night" – nothing could be more misleading. While the Torah commands us in four different places (and in four different ways) to teach our children about the Exodus on this night, the Torah also commands us in two other places to "remember" the Exodus. As we shall see when examining the "introductory" part of the Maggid, there are two distinct obligations, directed at two different audiences.

The obligation towards the children (which may devolve solely or chiefly upon the direct parents of each child) involves several components:

(1) Imparting to them specific information about the Exodus;

(2) Gearing that information to each child based on his attitude, background and sophistication;

(3) Using specific objects to teach the child and

(4) Using the "question-answer" method to teach – and, if the child doesn't ask, provoking questions through odd behavior (e.g. hiding the Matzah, dipping vegetables in a liquid, etc.)

In this obligation, there is clearly a teacher (father) and a student (child).

On the other hand, everyone is obligated to participate in story-telling with each other, expanding upon the story as much as possible and analyzing in detail the components of the story. This "adult" (or, better yet, "peer") component is different as follows:

(1) It does not demand specific information be imparted, just involvement with the story all night;

(2) Although any conversation, in order to be successful, must be on a level appropriate for the participants, there is no "leveling" involved here;

(3) There are no objects associated with this teaching (as adults are able to think in abstract terms and generally do not use "show-and-tell" for learning) and

(4) The method is discussive, not necessarily question-answer. There are no "provocations" brought on by strange behavior as part of this obligation.

In contradistinction to the "child" obligation, there are no teachers or students here.

By the way, there is no age limit for either category. There are young children who are already well-versed and enthusiastic who could easily join in with the "adults" (although their father may yet have a particular obligation to engage them in question-and-answer parrying); and there are certainly many adults who lack the background and are just starting out. "Children" and "adults" should be understood as archetypes, not as definite divisions. (See also Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatza 7:1 and 7:2 – the two obligations are clearly presented as independent pieces).

The experience of the Leil haSeder is targeted at everyone present at the table. The scholars, the children, the (temporarily) disaffected, the sophisticated, the eager and the simple. When we left Egypt, Mosheh declared to Pharaoh: "We will go out with our youths and with our aged ones, with our sons and with our daughters…" (Shemot 10:9). That is the goal of the Seder – to recreate the communal experience of everyone going out – but that is a great challenge which demands multiple modes of education.

E: BASIC BREAKDOWN OF MAGGID

1. PROVOKING QUESTIONS

After Kiddush, we immediately begin the story-telling (one could even argue that the reclining during Kiddush is also a provocation for the children to ask – evidenced by "reclining" as one of the "four questions"). By washing (no room here to get into that!) and dipping, we arouse the curiosity of the children (of all ages) who are unfamiliar with the practice. Then, we break a Matzah and hide it – keeping the children ever more interested – if not in the goings on, at least in the outcome of the "hunt'.

A note about the broken Matzah: as I pointed out above, we have a broken Matzah because of the "poverty" angle of Matzah – but, for that purpose, we could just bring 2 (or 1) and a half Matzot to the table to start with! We break it as part of the Seder to arouse the questions.

We then engage the child(ren) with their questions (the four questions is an entire piece which deserves its own shiur) – and we offer a very quick response (which, if you look carefully, isn't really an answer to any of the questions.)

2. INTRODUCING THE MITZVAH

We then have several introductory paragraphs, which belong to a different shiur (perhaps next year?). However – one note; you will see that the two obligations of "informing" (children) and "discussing" (adults) are outlined quite clearly in these introductory paragraphs. On the one hand, we have the five sages, expansively staying up all night in B'nei B'rak, discussing the Exodus; on the other hand, we have the paragraph "Yakhol meRosh Chodesh" – which clearly limits the Mitzvah of "informing" to a particular time-frame. Note that according to the latter paragraph, the Mitzvah of Haggadah only applies when the Pesach, Matzah and Maror are in front of us. According to R. Elazar b. Azariah, the Pesach may not be eaten after midnight (Pesahim 120b). Why then did he stay up

all night discussing the Exodus? He should have left at midnight! Rather, the Mitvah of "informing the children", which is tied to the particular objects at the Seder, begins and ends when those objects are brought and removed. The Mitzvah of "discussing" goes on all night.

3. MIT'HILAH 'OVDEI 'AVODAH ZARAH…

We then begin the pre-history – with a piece about Avraham being chosen by God. The reason for this inclusion is based upon the ruling of the Mishnah in Pesahim that we must begin the story with "disgrace" and end with "praise". Rav and Sh'muel disagree about the "disgrace" meant by the Mishnah – Rav says it refers to the disgrace of our originally being idol-worshippers and Sh'muel maintains that it connects with the disgrace of being enslaved. We follow both leads – although the clear emphasis is on the disgrace of slavery.

There is something else lurking in this paragraph; if we look carefully at the verses chosen (from Yehoshua's farewell speech), we see the theme of wandering already introduced into our history. This sets the tone that the Exodus experience was part – and the archetypal example of – Jewish history. In addition, the two "extra" verses (after the "idolatry" verse) seem unnecessary and somewhat disconnected from the "disgrace" of idolatry -putatively the point of this paragraph. Rather, these two verses help connect the Abrahamic movement with the Mitzrayim experience – by linking Avraham – Yitzchak – Ya'akov – his children – Mitzrayim.

4. V'HI SHE'AMDAH

As I pointed out above, this paragraph is a mini-Shirah, inserted at this juncture to widen the scope of our story (as has just been done with the Yehoshua' paragraph) to encompass the entire historical experience of the Jewish people. What we are about to tell is not just a story about Egypt, Pharaoh and our ancestors – it is about Shushan, Haman and our (more recent) ancestors; it is about Berlin, Hitler and our grandparents – it is about being Jewish.

5. TZEI UL'MAD

This next section is one of the two central pieces of the story-telling (see Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatzah 7:5). The rabbis selected this piece of Midrash (mostly from the Sifri) as it analyzes and interprets four of the verses from the Mikra Bikkurim (recited when bringing your first fruits to the Beit HaMikdash – Devarim 26:5-8); there are many explanations as to why they selected this one. I would like to suggest that since the goal of the evening is Shirah, and this is the only section in the Torah where the Exodus narrative is presented in the context of (commanded) Shirah – it is the most appropriate piece to use for describing the Exodus experience.

The "Tzei ul'Mad" section takes us through the ten plagues (and R. Yehudah's acrostic).

6. R. YOSSI HAG'LILI, R. ELAZAR AND R. AKIVA

The three paragraphs which follow are surely the strangest in the Haggadah (besides "Had Gadya"). Not only are the Midrashim a bit hard to "buy into", they also seem to have no place here. Explanation below…

7. DAYYENU

This selection is really made up of two paragraphs – the 14 Dayyenus (which list 15 great "Ma'alot" which God did for us) and the "Al Achat…" which lists them again, without the "if God had done X but not Y…" formula. Again – explanation to follow…

8. RABBAN GAMLIEL

This section is the second of the two core pieces of the Haggadah. Here we explain the symbolism of each of the three central foods at the table (theoretically – these days we have to make do with only two). It is interesting that each of these foods, along with their attendant explanations, represents one of the three types of experiences we go through as a people –

(a) Pesach – chosenness, royalty, protection – i.e. the good times

(c) Maror – persecution, slavery, vulnerability – i.e. the bad times

(b) Matzah – poverty (but freedom), refugees (but alive and unharmed) – i.e. the slow process of building up from Maror back to Pesach.

The two cores of the Haggadah – "Tzei ul'Mad" and "Rabban Gamliel" also seem to be connected with the two obligations that evening – "Tzei ul'Mad" is a direct invitation to study together, to examine, to discuss – i.e. the "adult" mode. "Rabban Gamliel", on the other hand, directs the attention to physical symbols, is only related to verses (no interpretation) and demands only that specific information be transmitted.

One more comment on "Pesach/Matza/Maror" – as we know from later on in the Seder ("Korekh"), Hillel's opinion is that all three must be eaten as one. Perhaps the lesson is that identifying as a Jew cannot be done selectively – our reconfirmation of our membership in Am Yisrael must include a readiness to celebrate when things are good for our people (Pesach), to share in our sorrows (Maror – see Rambam, Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:11) – and to do the hard work to recover from the difficulties we encounter (Matzah).

9. B'KHOL DOR VADOR

This is the turning point, where we step into the story and make it our own. Rambam has an interesting read here – instead of lir'ot et 'atzmo (to view himself), he reads l'har'ot et 'atzmo – to show himself (as if he left Mitzrayim). This is the source for those customs of walking around the table with the Matzah (in a cover) on the person's back (as if leaving) and other "acting out" Minhagim.

10. LEFIKHAKH – GA'AL YISRA'EL

Story turns to Shirah. With the one word – "Lefikhakh", we acknowledge that, since all of these wonderful things have happened to us,

we are duty-bound to thank God for all of it. Note that in the first paragraph, we thank God who did miracles for "our ancestors and us" – whereas in the final paragraph – for "us and our ancestors" – note how the first two paragraphs of the Hallel transform us to center stage.

F: BACK TO THE MIDRASHIM AND DAYYENU

Above, I left two sections unexplained – the three Midrashim of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva – and the Dayyenu. Since they seem to form a bridge between the two core pieces of the Haggadah – and they seem a bit strange on their own – an explanation is in order.

1. KOL HAMARBEH HAREI ZEH MESHUBACH

In the introductory paragraph of the Haggadah (containing the "short response" to the children) we end off by saying "anyone who adds/increases/does more to tell the story of the Exodus, this is praiseworthy." The question could be raised (I have heard this question in the name of the Netziv) – since we are obligated to be involved with the story all night, how can we "increase" beyond the obligation?

Besides quantity/time, there are two other ways to "increase the story". First of all, a person could increase the praise for God by finding more praiseworthy elements in the story which are "hiding" in the verses. Second, a person could increase the scope of the story by adding his own novel explanations. In these three paragraphs, we find each of these great sages adding their own pieces to the story – increasing the story, if you will. They are also adding to the praise for God – since they are multiplying (through valid Midrashic means) the numbers of miracles God performed for us during the Exodus. These three paragraphs, coming on the heels of the obligatory "Tzei ul'Mad" piece, demonstrate for us how we should take our own place at the Seder – by adding our own novel ideas and by increasing God's praise within the story. Note that, in the tradition of our sages, each of them builds on the previous ones' ideas. Instead of negating and ignoring, we validate our fellows' Torah by adding on to it and including it in our own.

2. SHIREI HAMA'ALAH AND DAYYENU

Now, let's reorient ourselves. Before reciting/singing Dayyenu, we have told the story and discussed it – and, hopefully, followed the lead of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva by sharing our own input into the story. Now, we look back on all that we have retold – each of these miracles alone is enough to obligate us to thank God and have this thanksgiving feast.

We could just list all of the things which God did for us; however, in order to bring home the point and not to lose sight of all the "little" things which led to the Exodus – and all of the later miracles which led us to the goal of that Exodus (Sinai, Israel, Beit haMikdash) – we detail them out, one by one.

Earlier, I mentioned that the evening allows us to imagine our way through Jewish history. At this point, as we are about to move into Shirah, we imagine ourselves in Yerushalayim, celebrating at the Beit HaMikdash. The Beit HaMikdash had fifteen steps (Ma'alot), ascending from one section to another. On Sukkot, the Levi'im would climb these stairs, singing one of the fifteen "Shirei haMa'alah" on each – until they reached the top (Sukkah 51b). By detailing 15 things for which we give thanks (note that they are easily divisible into three even groups of five – line them up with Pesach, Matzah and Maror!) and referring to these kindnesses as "Ma'alot", we bring ourselves back to the Beit HaMikdash. This prepares us to recite Rabban Gamliel's dictum -which includes the (temporarily) missing Pesach – and to fully identify with those who are redeemed.

III. POSTSCRIPT

There is, of course, so much more to explain about the Seder. I hope that this shiur has proven to be a helpful guide in understanding the basic goals of the evening, the methods through which these goals are achieved and the way in which the individual components of the Seder help to create the experiential matrix of Jewish history, jammed into one evening, leaving us singing thanks to God for every piece of it.

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Haggadah shel Pesach: An Overview and Explanation of Three Sections from the Haggadah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. HA LACHMA 'ANYA

A. The Text

Just before beginning the "question-answer" format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and make a three-tiered statement:

1) This is the bread of poverty/oppression that our ancestors ate in Egypt.
2) Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who needs to, come and partake in our Pesach (offering?) (celebration?)

3) This year we are here, next year – in Eretz Yisra'el. This year, we are slaves, next year – noblemen.

As can be seen, the first "tier" is a declaration regarding the Matzah – it is the lehem 'oni (see D'varim 16:3) which our ancestors ate in Egypt. The second "tier" is an invitation; and the final piece is a prayer, that next year we should be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

B. Approach #1 – an Explanation of "Yahatz"

Just before beginning the "question-answer" format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and According to the Rashbam, this declaration is an explanation of the previous action – breaking the Matzah in half. Although we need to have a broken piece of Matzah as part of our three (or two – according to Rambam, Rif and many other Rishonim) Matzot, we could set the table that way before the meal. Instead, we bring three (or two) complete Matzot to the table and break one of them in front of the assemblage (the most likely reason is to further provoke the children's interest). Rashbam explains that we then explain – in the vernacular (Aramaic at that time) – why we broke this Matzah – because it represents the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate. (See further down, in our explanation on Mah Nishtanah, for a further development of this idea.)

One of the difficulties with this approach (besides it being marked as part of "Maggid" in all standard Haggadot) is that this doesn't explain the rest of the paragraph. The declaration regarding the Matzot explains "Yahatz" – but what does that have to do with the rest of the paragraph?

C. Approach #2 – Re-Creation of Mitzrayim

The Rashbam explains that the rest of the paragraph – the invitation and the prayer – are not part of the explanation to the children – rather, this is what the B'nei Yisra'el would say to each other in Egypt – (it is unclear whether he means that they said this that night – see below for a problem with that understanding – or that they would speak to each other that way in general) inviting each other to share their meager meal. The prayer at the end is also a re-creation of the Egypt experience; the B'nei Yisra'el prayed to God that the next year they would be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

The difficulty with this explanation is one of language – unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this paragraph is in Aramaic. If we insist that it be said in Aramaic, it can only be a "re-creation" of our Babylonian exile, with which we have associations with that language (even in the Tanakh). If it is truly to be part of the "fantasy" of the evening (see our shiur on "The Structure of the Seder"), it should be in Hebrew, like the rest of the Haggadah.

D. Approach #3 – The "Apologia" for the Seder.

Before presenting a new approach, I'd like to summarize and expand on the questions we have asked regarding "Ha Lachma'Anya":

Why is the paragraph in Aramaic?
How could we reasonably be inviting someone into our house for a Seder – at that late hour? This question becomes more impactful once we remind ourselves that no one may partake of a Pesach offering without having joined the Havurah of that particular offering in advance; what, then, is the import of yeytei v'yiph'sach – "let him come and partake of the Pesach"?

Why is the prayer at the end presented in a doubled form – here/Eretz Yisra'el, slaves/noblemen? Why not combine the two?

What is the purpose of this paragraph?

As we defined in an earlier shiur, the ultimate goal of the evening is "Shirah" – giving thanks to God for the Exodus which, from the perspective of that evening's fantasy, has just happened. The vehicle for that Shirah is "Hallel", beginning (but not limited to) T'hillim (Psalms) Ch. 113-118. Since this is an evening of Hallel, it is prudent for us to examine some of the factors which "make or break" a successful Hallel experience.

The Gemara in Megillah (14b) discusses the problem of Hallel on Purim – and why it is not said. The Gemara gives three answers:

a) The Megillah is the Hallel (proper treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this shiur; perhaps next Purim?)

b) Hallel is not recited for a miracle which took place outside of the Land. (The Gemara challenges this by pointing out that the Exodus itself took place outside of the Land – and responds that before we entered the Land with Yehoshua, the entire world was "Hallel-accessible"; it was only after we entered and sanctified the Land that the rest of the world became excluded from that possibility.)

c) Hallel is guided by the opening line: "Give thanks, you servants of God" – the implication being that we are only servants of God, and not (anymore) servants of Pharaoh. In spite of the great salvation of Purim, we were still enslaved to Ahashverosh.

When we think about the ultimate goal of the Exodus – to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and realize the dream of being a free people, governed only by God's laws, serving as a moral beacon for the rest of the world (see Yeshayah 2) – we must sadly admit that much of that goal has not yet been realized. Even those components which were "real" for a time are not now part of our reality. There is no Beit haMikdash, we continue to be scattered throughout the world and our position as instructors and guides for the world is sorely tarnished by our own ethical and religious weaknesses.

We come to a Seder with only one side of the Exodus experience – the poverty and oppression; the nobility and freedom are still part of an unrealized future and a nostalgic past. There are two roles for the Matzah – as an independent Mitzvah commemorating the refugee experience and as an auxiliary to the regal Pesach offering. The only one which we can honestly point to tonight is the "bread of oppression" – we are very similar to our ancestors in Egypt – before the salvation.

Now we can understand the paragraph. Before beginning our fantasy trip through Jewish history (one symptom of which is conversation around the table in Hebrew), we declare that we are celebrating a "poor" Seder – and we pray that next year, we should be able to do it "the right way".

We make this declaration in the vernacular, as it is the last point of "reality" during the evening.

We ironically invite people in to share our "Pesach" – at once reminding ourselves that the Pesach is missing from the table as the Temple lies in ruins and we are far away from that glory while pointing to the sad situation that we could reasonably have fellow Jews who are hungry and need a place to have their Seder. (This is not close to the dreams we had for our future as we left Egypt). This invitation underscores the pain we feel that our Seder is so incomplete and must be a "fantasy" and removed from our reality if it is to be a celebration at all.

We then point to the two factors making our Hallel (the goal of the evening) incomplete – we are "here" (even those in Eretz Yisra'el say this because the rest of us are not yet home) and we are "slaves" (under foreign rule). As we saw above, these two features get in the way of a complete and proper Hallel.

At this point, we pour the second cup, signifying the redemption which we will reenact – and, God willing, live to experience in "real time".

II. MAH NISHTANAH

The "Four Questions", as they are conventionally known, present us with several difficulties – best expressed with one question: Who is reasonably asking these questions?
If the asker is honestly "clueless" as to the special nature of the evening (as seems to be the case from the nature of the opening question), how does he know that we will later eat bitter herbs and will dip another time?

If, on the other hand, he is familiar with the rituals of the Seder and knows what to expect – then he already knows how this night is different?

Note: We never really answer these questions. Although we do explain why we eat Matzah (much later on – not very effective for a very young questioner), we never explicitly explain why we avoid Hametz (which seems to be the gist of the first "question".) We certainly do explain the meaning of Maror – but, again that is much later. The final two questions (dipping and reclining) are never (explicitly) answered.

I would like to suggest an approach which is grounded in a basic understanding about the evening:

Although the ultimate goal of the evening is "Shirah", achieved by reexperiencing the Exodus (and, through that experience, all of Jewish history) – this can only be accomplished by successfully informing all assembled about those events which we are endeavoring to reenact. After all, it is impossible to imagine life in Egypt without first learning about it: Haggadah (telling the story) is a necessary prerequisite to reexperiencing and thanking God.
As the Mekhilta (quoted in the Haggadah: "The Four Sons") teaches us, the Torah commands us to teach every one of our children – in a way which is appropriate for each. Not only must each child be informed in a way that he can comprehend – but he must also be drawn into the Seder in a way which is effective – as well as getting a response in an appropriate and timely manner for his level of comprehension and attention span.

I would like to suggest that the opening paragraph – Ha Lachma 'Anya – is directed chiefly at the "child who cannot ask". Note that unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this section is not presented in a question-answer format (and, indeed, directly precedes the opening of that format). Note that the entire message of the Seder is summarized in those three lines:

a) This is what we experienced;
b) We welcome everyone to join us;

c) We pray for a completion of the process.

Ha Lachma 'Anya, following this line of thinking, is said in the vernacular because the "child who cannot ask" will not be attracted to something in a foreign tongue.

Now, let's take a look at the Seder from the perspective of the "third son" ("Tam" or "Tipesh"). I will assume that this child, who, in the wording of the Torah, can only say Mah Zot ("What is this"), is so young that he doesn't yet have a sense of memory from previous years (somewhere between 4 and 6 years old). He does, however, have a sense of "conventional behavior" from regular and Shabbat meals.

What does he see? Kiddush (so far, so good); washing (okay – but why no B'rakhah?) – then, instead of the usual bread, father takes out a small vegetable, dips it in something and says the B'rakhah over it. This is a clear departure from the norm. Then, father takes the Matzot, breaks one and announces that it will be hidden until the end of the meal etc. This is decidedly strange and should evoke the question: "What is going on here?" from this child.

[That the child would ask here is premised on a household which encourages questions and which does not smother a child's natural curiosity – food for thought].
Now – a child who asks this type of question would reasonably be afraid of ridicule (from older siblings, perhaps) over such a "dumb" question. Father does the most effective thing here to continue to promote questions – he not only validates the question by attending to it, he also strengthens the question by adding his own information to it. "Not only have we done strange things until now, we will also avoid Hametz, eat bitter herbs etc.".

There aren't four questions – there is one – "Why is this night so different"? The father supports this question (which is answered in the next paragraph) with added information, thus strengthening the child's interest in participating in the education happening around the table.

III. DAYYENU

The section known as Dayyenu is comprised of two parts: The "If…but not" section, in which each stanza ends with Dayyenu and the Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah paragraph which follows it. I would like to pose several questions regarding these two paragraphs: [I strongly suggest following this section with Haggadah in hand].
1) It seems that the Ba'al haHaggadah (author) "stretches" the narrative a bit, including both "bringing us close to Har Sinai" and "giving us the Torah", both "taking care of our needs for forty years in the desert" and "feeding us the Mahn". Why the stretch?
2) Why does this paragraph come immediately before "Rabban Gamliel says…"?

3) What is the meaning of the rarely-used word Ma'alot (kindnesses) in the opening line?

4) An ancillary question: Why do we use the Arami Oved Avi paragraph as the focal text of the Haggadah – and not the narratives in Sh'mot?

5) If this is part of the Exodus narrative, why does it end up at the Beit haMikdash – instead of at Sinai or at the Reed Sea?

6) Why are there two paragraphs of "Dayyenu"?

7) What is the meaning of Dayyenu? Is it even thinkable that we could exist without every one of these events?

In order to understand this, we have to review the point made in the "The Structure of the Seder"shiur – the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history (using the Exodus as the archetype) and to give thanks to God in the form of Shirah.

The central locus of Shirah in our lives is the Beit haMikdash. Not only is our Shirah limited as a result of – and in response to – the destruction of the Temple, but one of the Avodot (worship actions) of the Levi'im performed there is Shirah.

Dayyenu is a form of Shirah – in two parts. The two paragraphs, in the style of "Talmudic" reasoning, establish the motivation for giving such thanks. Each one of these great things which God did for us is enough, on its own, to obligate us to sing praises and thanks to God. In other words, the "Dayyenu" does not mean "it would have been enough for us to exist", it means "it would have been enough reason to give thanks" (Question #7). This is the premise established in the first paragraph. The second paragraph takes this argument to its logical conclusion: How much more so (Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah) that He did all of these things for us – are we obligated to give thanks (Question #6).

As mentioned, the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history – through the prism of the Exodus. Keeping in mind that the goal of the Exodus was to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and for us to build a House for God in the place where He chooses to make His Name dwell (i.e. Yerushalayim) – it is reasonable that we would want to include all steps leading up to that event in our Shirah of the evening (Question #5).

This explains why we use the Mikra Bikkurim paragraph (Devarim 26) as the springboard for the Haggadah – it is the Torah's example of a later generation of Jews, standing in the Beit Hamikdash and giving thanks to God (the ideal Seder – see above at Ha Lachma 'Anya) and describing the process of the Exodus (Question #4).

The Ba'al haHaggadah wants to evoke the image of the Beit haMikdash (and enhance the "fantasy" of our Seder taking place there) by utilizing Mikdash-associations. The word Ma'alot (lit. "steps") immediately brings the 15 Shirei haMa'alah – the fifteen chapters of T'hillim (120-134) which begin with the title Shir haMa'alot (except #121 – Shir laMa'alot).

According to the Gemara in Sukkah (51b), these fifteen songs of "steps" were sung by the Levi'im as they ascended the fifteen steps from the Women's Courtyard to the Israelite Courtyard in the Beit HaMikdash – during the celebration of Sukkot (which begins on the fifteenth of Tishri). The use of Ma'alot in this context cannot help but evoke the Beit HaMikdash and the beautiful Shirah sung there (Question #3).

As we explained in the "Structure" shiur, the three symbolic foods (Pesach, Matzah and Maror) which Rabban Gamliel maintains must be explained – and which Hillel held must be eaten as one – are representative of the three stages in Jewish history – slavery/oppression (Maror), royalty and chosenness (Pesach) and refugee/transition (Matzah). If you look carefully at the Dayyenu, you will see that there are fifteen events/miracles recalled in that list – which break down very neatly into three groups of five each:

A) Maror (in Egypt): Exodus, plagues, warring with their gods, slaying the firstborn and giving us their money;
B) Matzah (transition): splitting the sea, walking us through, drowning them, giving us our needs, the Mahn;

C) Pesach (special relationship with God): Shabbat, Sinai, Torah, the Land, the Beit haMikdash.

This explains why this section is immediately followed by Rabban Gamliel's statement. Once we have sung all of God's praises for each of these three steps, we explain the association with the foods in front of us (Question #2).

This also explains why some of the items seem to be a bit "stretched"; the Ba'al haHaggadah created a symmetry of these three "groups" in order to highlight (via foreshadowing) the implication of Rabban Gamliel's triumvirate of Jewish historical stages (Question #1).

By doing so, he also created fifteen "steps" from Egypt to the Beit HaMikdash – corresponding to the fifteen steps inside the Beit haMikdash itself. Just as these songs were sung on the holiday of the fifteenth (Sukkot), so we give thanks on the night of the fifteenth (Pesach).

One final note: Since the Korban Pesach is symbolic of our "chosenness", we now understand why the Beit haMikdash is referred to as "Beit haB'hirah" ("the chosen house") – it is reflective of our being chosen by God as He passed over our houses in Egypt.

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UNDERSTANDING MAGGID - A biblical Perspective

[revised 5768]

Expression of Gratitude
or
Recogniton of Destiny

Should Passover be understood as our 'holiday of freedom' - a special time set aside to thank God for taking us out of slavery?

Certainly, the popular song of "avadim hayinu... ata benei chorin" ['We were once slaves, but now we are free'] - seems to state exactly that point.

However, if you *read* your Haggada carefully, you'll notice that those words never appear (in that combination). And if you *study* the Haggada, you'll notice that it states quite the opposite, i.e. that we remain 'servants', but we simply have a new 'boss'!

In the following 'Guide for Maggid', we attempt to arrive at a better understanding of how and why we tell the story of the Exodus - and how that story explains why Passover is such an important holiday. Hopefully, it will ask help make your Seder evening a little more interesting (and life - a bit more meaningful).

THE SOURCE FOR MAGGID in Parshat Bo

Even though we are all familiar with the pasuk "ve-higadta le-bincha..." (Shmot13:8) - the Biblical source for our obligation to recite MAGID - when one reads that pasuk in Chumash, it's not very easy to translate.

[Try it yourself, and you'll immediately notice the difficulty.]

So let's begin our study by taking a careful look at this 'source pasuk' within its context - as it will be very insightful towards understanding what MAGID is all about.

Towards the end of Parshat Bo, Bnei Yisrael have already left Egypt and set up camp in Succot. For food, they have just baked "matzot" from the dough that they had taken with them (in their rush to leave Egypt - see Shmot 12:37-39). After the Torah concludes this narrative, Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to remember these events in the following manner:

> "And Moshe told the people - Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the House of Slavery, for God has taken you out with a strong hand...
>
> [Then, when you come to the land of Israel...]
>
> Eat matza for seven days... and don't see any chametz..."
>
> (see Shmot 13:3-7)

With this context in mind, note how Moshe concludes these instructions with the following commandment:

> "ve-HIGGADETA le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor" -
>
> And you must TELL your son on that day, saying:
>
> BA'AVUR ZEH -
>
> for the sake of this -
>
> ASA Hashem li BE-TZEITI mi-MITZRAYIM -
>
> God did for me [?] when he took me out of Egypt"
>
> (see Shmot 13:8).

Even though we all know this last pasuk by heart, it is not so easy to translate. In our above transliteration, we have highlighted the difficult words - which we will now discuss:

Let's begin with the meaning of the word 'zeh' [this]. Based on its context (see 13:6-7), 'zeh' most probably refers to the matzot that we eat, for the previous psukim describe the mitzva to eat matza for seven days. Hence, this pasuk implies that we must tell our children: 'for the sake of this matza - God did for me [these miracles ?] - when I left Egypt'.

Indeed, this commandment instructs us to 'remember' this day by telling something to our children; however, it is not very clear what the Torah wants us to explain.

There are two possible directions of interpretation. Either we must explain to our children:

- **Why God took us out of Egypt** - i.e. to eat matza! - Or,
- **Why we eat matza** - because God took us out of Egypt!

Even though we are most familiar with the latter reason, the first interpretation seems to be the simple meaning of the pasuk. As you'd expect, the classical commentators argue in this regard.

Ramban (on 13:8) explains (as most of us understand this pasuk), that we eat matza to remember HOW God took us out of Egypt. However Rashi (and Ibn Ezra) disagree!

In his commentary, Ibn Ezra explains (as 'simple pshat' implies) - that we are commanded to explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt IN ORDER that we can eat matza; implying that God intentionally placed Bnei Yisrael in slavery in order to redeem them - so that we would keep His mitzvot!

Rashi provides a very similar explanation, but widens its scope by stating that God took us out of Egypt in order that we would keep ALL of His mitzvot, such as pesach matza & maror.

> [Chizkuni offers a similar explanation, with a slightly different twist - i.e. in the ZCHUT (in merit) for our readiness to perform the mitzvot of pesach matza & maror for all generations - God redeemed us from Egypt.]

According to Rashi and Ibn Ezra's understanding of this pasuk, the primary mitzvah at the Seder should be not only to explain to our children **what** happened, but also **why** it happened.

In our study of Maggid, we will show how this specific point emerges as a primary theme - but first must consider where that story - that we are commanded to tell over - should begin.

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

Let's contemplate for a moment where would be the best (or most logical) point to start the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim from. One could entertain several possibilities.

The simplest and most obvious approach would be to begin with Bnei Yisrael's enslavement in Egypt. In fact, this is precisely where Sefer Shmot begins!

On the other hand, one could start a bit earlier with the story of Yosef and his brothers, for that would explain how Bnei Yisrael first came to settle down in Egypt. However, if we continue with that logic, we could go back another generation to the story of Yaakov, or even back to story of Avraham Avinu. [Or maybe even back to the story of Creation!]

This dilemma appears to be the underlying reason behind the Talmudic dispute between Rav and Shmuel. Let's explain:

THE MISHNA in Mesechet PESACHIM

The Mishna in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim sets some guidelines concerning how to fulfill this obligation 'to tell the story', including one that deals with its format:

> "matchilim bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" -
>
> - We begin our story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise.

In the Gemara's subsequent discussion (see Pesachim 116a), we find two opinions concerning what this opening comment should be:

- **Rav** - "Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." - At first. our ancestors were idol worshipers..."
- **Shmuel** - "Avadim hayinu..." - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt..."

At the simplest level, it seems that Rav & Shmuel argue concerning what is considered a more derogatory statement- i.e. the fact that we were once slaves, or the fact that we once idol worshipers. However, this dispute may also relate to a more fundamental question - concerning **where** the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim actually begins - from our slavery in Egypt (Shmuel), or from the time of our forefathers (Rav).

In our study of Maggid, we will show how we actually quote both of these opinions, but not as the starting point of the story, but rather as important statements of purpose.

So where does the story begin?

We will now begin our detailed study MAGGID not only to answer that question, but also in an attempt to better understand HOW we fulfill this mitzva of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" when we read the Haggada.

HOW WE [DON'T] TELL THE STORY IN MAGGID

Even though the primary obligation of the Seder evening is to 'tell the story' of Yetziat Mitzrayim, when we read Maggid at the Seder, it is not very clear where that story actually begins (or ends). To determine when, where, and how we actually fulfill this mitzva, we will examine Maggid - one paragraph at a time.

As we study each paragraph, we will ask ourselves: is this part of the story?

If it is, then we can determine how we tell the story.

If it's not, then we must explain why this paragraph is included in Maggid nonetheless.

'HA LACHMA ANYA'

The opening paragraph of MAGGID - 'ha lachma anya..' is definitely not the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, but rather a quick explanation to the guests about the MATZA on the table. Let's explain why:

In the opening sentence, the leader of the Seder explains how this 'special bread' on the table is what our forefathers ate in Egypt; then he quotes what our forefathers said to one another in Egypt as they prepared to partake in the first Korban Pesach.

"kol dichfin…" - reflects how they invited one another to join a common group to eat the korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:3-6);

"hashta hacha…" reflects their expression of hope that by next year they would no longer be slaves in Egypt, but rather a free people living in the land of Israel.

As we will explain later on, this quote of what our forefathers said to one another in preparation for the very first 'seder' in Jewish History is thematically very important, for at the end of Maggid, we will express our need to feel as though 'we were there' ("bchor dor v'dor…")!

Nonetheless, this section is not the story itself – however, it forms a very meaningful introduction.

[See Further Iyun Section for a discussion of the meaning of "lechem oni". Re: how the matza eaten with the 'korban Pesach' had nothing to do with being in a rush, but rather reflected a '*poor man's bread' ["lechem oni"],* see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo regarding 'two reasons for matza'.]

MAH NISHTANA

Similarly, the 'ma nishtana' is not part of the story. Rather, we want the children to ask questions to ensure that they will take interest in the story that we are about to tell.

As our obligation to tell this story is based on the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-BINCHA" - and you must tell your children... (see Shmot 13:8), it makes sense that we try to capture their attention before we tell the story. However, as you have surely noticed, this section contains only questions, but no answers.

It should also be noted that these 'four questions' are really one question; i.e. – the **one** question is: 'Why is this night different'? Afterward, the child brings four examples/questions to support his claim that tonight is indeed different.

It is for this reason that we never answer these 'four questions'; Rather, Maggid continues with the answer to the 'one question' – of why this night is special.

'AVADIM HAYINU'

At first glance, the next paragraph: 'avadim hayinu...' seems to begin the story. [In fact, it appears that we have followed Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a) that we should begin the story with 'avadim hayinu'.]

However, if you take a minute to carefully read this entire paragraph, you'll immediately notice that this paragraph does NOT begin the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Instead, the 'avadim hayinu' section makes two very important statements, which provide the answer the 'one question' of WHY this night is so special. Hence we explain:

- **WHY** we are obligated to tell this story – for had it not been for this story of how God saved us from Egypt, we would still be slaves till this day;

And, then we explain:

- **WHO** is obligated to tell this story - i.e. 've-afilu kulanu chachamim..' - and even if we [who gather] are all very wise and learned and know the entire Torah, it remains incumbent upon us to tell that story; and the more we elaborate upon it, the better!

From this paragraph, it appears that before we actually tell the story, the Haggada prefers to first discuss some fundamentals relating to the nature of our obligation!

The first statement deals with a fundamental question regarding **why** this story is meaningful to all future generations, even though we will be discussing an event that took place thousands of years earlier.

The second statement comes to counter a possible misunderstanding, based on the source-text of "ve-higgadeta **le-bincha**..." - that this mitzva applies **only** to teaching **children** [i.e. those who never heard this story]. Therefore, before we tell the story, the Haggada must remind us that **everyone** is obligated to discuss the story - even 'know it alls'.

[See Further Iyun section for a more detailed discussion of how to understand this section in light of Devarim 6:20-25.]

MA'ASEH BE-R. ELIEZER...

To prove this second point of the 'avadim hayinu' paragraph (that even ' know it alls' are obligated to tell the story), the next paragraph in MAGGID quotes a story of five great Torah scholars (in fact Tannaim) who gathered for the Seder in Bnei Brak. Even though they certainly knew the story; nonetheless they spent the entire evening (until dawn the next morning) discussing it.

[This reflects a classic format for a Rabbinic statement. First the Rabbis state the obligation [in our case, that everyone is obligated to tell the story - even 'know it alls'] - afterward they support that ruling by quoting a story [in our case, the story of the five scholars who spent the entire evening discussing the story of the Exodus, even though they surely knew it.]

Even though the Haggada does not quote their entire conversation of that evening, the next paragraph does quote one specific discussion. Let's explain why:

AMAR RABBI ELIEZER BEN AZARYA...

The specific discussion that we quote concerns the Biblical source for our **daily** obligation to '**mention'** the story of the Exodus (see Devarim 16:3). In Hebrew, this obligation is commonly referred to as "**zechira**" [to passively remember], in contrast to our 'once a year' obligation at the Seder of **"sippur" -** to actively **tell** the story of the Exodus.

Most likely, the Haggada chose to quote this specific discussion as it relates to the obvious connection between these two mitzvot ("zechira" & "sippur").

One could suggest that the story we tell at the Seder ("sippur") serves as the reference point for our daily mention ("zechira") of the Exodus - when we recite the third 'parshia' of keriyat shema (see Bamidbar 15:41), every morning and evening. To mention this story on a daily basis only becomes meaningful if we first 'tell the story' in full (at least once a year).

We should note as well that the very pasuk: "I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt **to be for you a God**" (Bamidbar 15:41) supports the opinion of Rashi & Ibn Ezra (quoted above) that God took us out of Egypt **in order** that we keep His commandments.

Notice however, that we are still discussing the nature of our obligation - but the story itself has not yet begun!

THE FOUR SONS

The next section of MAGGID - beginning with 'baruch ha-Makom', discusses the Four Sons. Here again, we do not find the actual story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, rather another aspect of 'defining our obligation', as this section discusses **HOW** we should tell the story.

This section reflects the statement in the Mishna: '"l'fi da'ato shel ha-ben, aviv melamdo" - based on the level of the child, the parent should teach [the story]. [See Pesachim 116a.]

Based on this dictum, the Haggada quotes a Mechilta, which offers **four** examples of **how** to tell the story to different types of children - each example based on a pasuk in Chumash (where the father answers his son).

The opening statement of this section: 'baruch ha-Makom...' serves as a 'mini' "birkat ha-Torah" [a blessing recited before Torah study], as we are about to engage in the study of a Mechilta - the Midrash on Sefer Shmot. The quote itself begins with "keneged arba banim dibra Torah..."

[For a deeper understanding of this Mechilta, see the TSC shiur on 'The Four Sons' - tanach.org/special/4sons.doc]

This section certainly teaches us HOW to be a 'dynamic' teacher as we tell this story, and adapt it to the level of our audience. However, note once again that the story has yet to begun!

"YACHOL ME-ROSH CHODESH"

In the next section, beginning with: 'yachol me-rosh chodesh...' we discuss yet another aspect of our 'obligation to tell the story' - this time concerning **WHEN** we are obligated. Here, the Haggada quotes an analytical discourse which arrives at the conclusion that the story must be told on evening of the Seder.

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[In case you'd like to follow the logic behind this discourse: Because the Torah's first command to **remember this day** is recorded in Shmot 12:14, as part of a set of commands given to Moshe on Rosh Chodesh Nisan (see 12:1-2), one might think that the phrase "v'haya ha'yom ha'zeh l'**zikaron**" (in 12:14) refers to Rosh Chodesh [that's the "hava amina"].

However, when Moshe relays these laws to Bnei Yisrael in chapter 13, he informs that they must remember this day that they left Egypt, not eat chametz & eat matza for seven days (see 13:3-7), and then they must tell the story to their children **on that day** "ba'yom ha'hu" (see 13:8) - which may refer to the **day time,** i.e. when they first offer the Korban on the 14th in the afternoon [based on Shmot 12:6 and hence "yachol m'b'od yom..."].

The drasha rejects that possible understanding based on the next phrase in 13:8 - "ba'avur zeh" - where "zeh" in its context must be referring to the matza - hence the story must be told at the same time that we eat matza and the korban Pesach, i.e. on the **evening** of the 15th.]

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[At most Seders, probably at least an hour has gone by, but we haven't even begun to tell the story!]

"MI-TCHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA..."

After defining the various aspects of our obligation, it appears that MAGGID finally begins telling the story with the paragraph that begins with "mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." (apparently following Rav's opinion in Pesachim 116a).

If so, it would seem that we actually begin the story with the story of our forefathers [the Avot] and how Avraham grew up within a family of idol worshipers.

However, if you read this paragraph carefully, you'll notice it isn't a story at all. Instead, the Haggada is making a very important **statement**, and then proves that statement with a text-proof from Yehoshua chapter 24.

To appreciate what's going on, let's take a closer look at this statement and its proof.

The Statement:

"Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara.hayu.avoteinu, ve-achshav kirvanu ha-Makom le-**avodato**"

At first, our forefathers were servants to strange gods - but now, God has brought us closer to Him - **[in order] to serve Him**!

The Proof:

"And Yehoshua said to the people: 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt in the past - beyond the River, even Terach - the father of Avraham, and the father of Nachor - and they **served** other gods.

And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Yitzchak.

And I gave unto Yitchak Yaakov and Esav; and I gave Esav mount Seir, to possess it; and Yaakov and his children went down into Egypt" (Yehoshua 24:2-4).

This statement should not surprise us, for once again we find the Haggada emphasizing the point (discussed above) that God chose the people of Israel for a purpose - i.e. to **serve** Him!

However, if you study the quoted text-proof, you'll notice that it only proves the first half of our statement, i.e. that we were once idol worshipers, but it doesn't proves the second half - that God brought us close in order to serve Him.

RE-AFFIRMING BRIT SINAI in Sefer Yehoshua

The solution to this problem is very simple. To show how this quote from Yehoshua proves the second point as well, we simply need to read the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. In that chapter, after teaching a short 'history lesson' (see 24:2-13), Yehoshua challenges the people saying:

"Now - fear the LORD, and **serve Him** in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and **serve ye the LORD.**

And if it seem evil unto you to **serve the LORD**, choose you this day **whom you will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD**" (Yehoshua 24:14-15).

The entire reason why Yehoshua gathered the people in Shchem and reviewed their history was in order to challenge them with this goal - i.e. their willingness to truly serve God. After all, as Yehoshua explains, it was for this very reason that God chose Avraham Avinu. Thus the proof on the second half of the opening statement comes from the continuation of that chapter!

Note as well how the chapter continues, emphasizing over and over again this same theme:

"And the people answered: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for the LORD our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and that did those great signs in our sight...

therefore we also will **serve the LORD**; for He is our God.'

And Yehoshua said unto the people: '**You cannot serve the LORD;** for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins....

And the people said: 'Nay; but **we will serve the LORD**.'

And Joshua said unto the people: 'You are witnesses that **you have chosen God to serve Him.** - And they said: 'We are witnesses.'--

And the people said unto Yehoshua: '**The LORD our God will we serve**, and unto His voice will we hearken.'

So Yehoshua made a **covenant** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem."

[See Yehoshua 24:16-25!]

Hence, the proof for the entire statement of 'mi-tchila...' is found in the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. Most probably, when this section was first composed, the Haggada assumed that its readers were well versed in Tanach, and knew the continuation of that chapter.

[Note as well how psukim that we do quote from Yehoshua (see 24:2-4) form a beautiful summary of Sefer Breishit, as they focus on the key stages of the 'bechira' process.

Should you be looking for something novel to do at your Seder, you could have the participants read from this section. Note as well that Yehoshua 24:5-7 is an excellent (albeit short) review of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.]

This background can help us appreciate how this statement of 'mi-tchila' sets the stage for the story that we are about to tell - for it explains why God originally chose Avraham - i.e. to become the forefather of a nation that will serve Him. The next paragraph of MAGGID will explain its connection to the story that we are about to begin.

"BARUCH SHOMER HAVTACHATO"

In the next paragraph we find yet another 'statement' (and not a story) followed by a proof-text, that relates once again to God's original choice of our forefathers. We will now show how this section explains why the story must begin with Avraham.

Statement:

"Baruch shomer havtachato... - Blessed is He who keeps His promise [of redemption] to Am Yisrael, for God had calculated the end [time for redemption] as He had promised Avraham Avinu at brit bein ha-btarim. As God stated:

Proof:

'Know very well that your offspring will be **strangers in a foreign land** which will **oppress and enslave them** for four hundred years. But that nation who will oppress them I will judge, and afterward they will go out with great wealth"

[See Breishit 15:13-18].

In this statement, we thank God for keeping His promise to Avraham Avinu, at “brit bein ha-btarim”, to ultimately redeem Bnei Yisrael from their affliction, after some four hundred years.

At first glance, this statement sounds like yet another expression of gratitude. However, when considering its position in Maggid, one could suggest a very different reason for its mention specifically at this point.

Recall how the previous paragraph explained that God had chosen our forefathers to establish a nation to **serve** Him. In order to become that nation, God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu – i.e. "brit bein ha’btarim" - which forecasted the need for Avraham’s offspring to first undergo suffrage in ‘a land not theirs’ in order to become that nation.

In other words, this historical process of slavery, followed by a miraculous redemption, was to serve as a ‘training experience’ that would facilitate the formation of that nation. [See concept of "kur ha'barzel" and its context in Devarim 4:20.]

Hence, this paragraph explains why the story of the Exodus must begin with “brit bein ha’btarim” - for our slavery in Egypt was not accidental, rather it was part of God's master plan. In a certain sense, God put us into Egypt - in order to take us out!

[This does not imply that every event that happened to Am Yisrael was already predetermined since the time of Avarham Avinu. Rather, this overall framework of becoming a nation in someone else's land - followed by oppression and servitude - then followed by redemption - was forecasted. How exactly it would play out, who would be the oppressor, and how intense that oppression would be- was yet to be determined. See Rambam Hilchot Teshuva chapters 5 & 6; see also Seforno's introduction to Sefer Shmot as his commentary on the first chapter.]

As we thank God for fulfilling His promise to Avraham, we are in essence thanking God for His covenant **and its very purpose**, not just for taking us out of Egypt.

Therefore in this section of Maggid, before we tell the story of WHAT happened - we must first explain WHY it happened.

This point is proven in the next paragraph:

"VE-HEE SHE-AMDA"

As we lift our cups and recite the "v'hee sh'amda" - we declare yet another important statement, connecting that covenant and the events of the past with today:

"ve-HEE she-amda la-avoteinu **ve-LANU** "

- And it is THIS [Promise that was part of the COVENANT, i.e. brit bein ha-btarim] which stood for our fathers, AND for us as well. For not only once [in our history] did our enemies try to destroy us; but in EVERY generation we are endangered, but God comes to save us [for the sake of His covenant]."

The word "hee" in this statement obviously refers to the promise ['havtacha'] of brit bein ha-btarim (mentioned in the previous paragraph). This statement is so important that our custom is to raise the cup of wine before reciting this proclamation!

Here we explain that "brit bein ha-btarim" was not merely a 'one-time coupon' promising one major redemption, but rather it defined an eternal relationship between God and His people. The events of Yetziat Mitzrayim are only the initial stage of this everlasting relationship. Therefore, anytime in our history, whenever we are in distress - God will ultimately come to redeem us. However, the reason why God redeems us is in order that we can return to serve Him (that's why He chose us).

This provides us with a deeper understanding of why every generation must tell-over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. At the Seder, we are not simply thanking God for the 'event' but rather for the entire 'process'. Yetziat Mitzrayim was not simply a 'one-time' act of redemption. Rather, it was a critical stage in an on-going historical process in which God desires that Am Yisrael become His special nation.

As this purpose is eternal, so too the need to remind ourselves on a yearly basis of the key events through which that process began.

This understanding explains why redemption requires spiritual readiness, for in every generation Bnei Yisrael must show their willingness to be faithful to that covenant.

[In our TSC shiur on Parshat Bo, we explained how this concept explains the symbolism of why we must rid ourselves of chametz, prior to and during the time when we thank God for Yetziat Mitzrayim.

This may also explain why we invite Eliyahu ha-navi, when we begin the final section of the Haggada, where we express our hope for our future redemption. According to the final psukim of Sefer Mal'achi (the Haftara for Shabbat ha-Gadol!), Eliyahu will come to help the nation perform proper 'teshuva' - to become worthy for redemption.]

At most Seder's - surely, over an hour has passed; yet we still haven't told the story!]

"TZEY U-LMAD" / "ARAMI OVED AVI"

With this thematic background complete, the Haggada is finally ready to tell the story (for those who are still awake). However, as you may have noticed, we do not tell the story in a straightforward manner.

Take a careful look at the next section of MAGGID, noting how the Haggada takes four psukim from Devarim 26:5-8, and quotes them one word (or phrase) at a time. Each quote is followed by a proof of that phrase, usually from either the story of the Exodus in Sefer Shmot or from a pasuk in Sefer Tehillim.

[To verify this, be sure to first review Devarim 26:1-9 before you continue.]

This section begins with "tzey u-lmad: ma bikesh Lavan...." which is simply a drasha of the opening phrase 'arami oved avi', and then continues all the way until the 'makkot' -the Ten Plagues. In a nutshell, this section constitutes a rather elaborate Midrash on four psukim from 'mikra bikkurim' (Devarim 26:5-8).

The reason why MAGGID chooses this format to tell the story is based once again on a statement in the Mishna in the tenth chapter of Masechet Pesachim: "ve-dorshin me-arami oved avi ad sof ha-parasha" - and then we elaborate on the psukim from 'arami oved avi' until the end of that unit - and that is exactly what the Haggada does!

In other words, the Haggada uses Devarim 26:5-8 - beginning with 'arami oved avi' - as the 'framework' for telling over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Even though 'technically' it would suffice to simply quote these psukim, we elaborate upon them instead, in an effort to make the story more interesting and meaningful. [In fact, we are quoting a Sifrei - the Midrash on Sefer Devarim, which most probably was composed for this very purpose.]

From a 'practical' halachic perspective, this is critical to understand - for in this section we finally fulfill our obligation to TELL THE STORY - and hence this section should be treated as the most important part of MAGGID!

[Unfortunately, this section is usually one of the most neglected parts of the Haggada, since we are usually 'out of steam' by the time we reach it. Also, if one is not aware of the elaborate nature of these quotes, it is quite difficult to understand what's going on. Therefore, it's important that we not only pay attention to this section, but we should also be sure at this point to explain the details of the story to those who don't understand these psukim.]

WHY MIKRA BIKKURIM?

It is not by chance that Chazal chose to incorporate a Midrash of "mikra bikkurim" - even though it is rather cryptic - as the method through which we fulfill our obligation of sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Let's explain why.

Recall from our shiur on Parshat Ki Tavo, that "mikra bikkurim" (see Devarim 26:1-10) serves as a yearly proclamation whereby every individual thanks God for His fulfillment of the final stage of brit bein ha-btarim.

[This is supported by numerous textual and thematic parallels between the psukim of mikra bikkurim (Devarim 26:1-9), and brit bein ha-btarim (see Breishit 15:7-18). Note as well the use of the word 'yerusha' in 26:1 and in 15:1-8!]

This proclamation constitutes much more than simply thanking God for our 'first fruits'. Rather, it thanks God for the Land (see Devarim 26:3) that He had promised our forefathers (in brit bein ha-btarim / see Breishit 15:18). The 'first fruits' are presented as a 'token of our appreciation' for the fact that God has fulfilled His side of the covenant - as each individual must now declare that he will be faithful to his side of the covenant.

As mikra bikkurim constitutes a biblical 'nusach' ['formula'] through which one thanks God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim, one could suggest that it was for this reason that the Mishna chose these same psukim as its framework for telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

[It very well may be that this custom to tell the story at the Sefer with "mikra bikurim" began after the destruction of the Temple (note that the Tosefta of Mesechet Pesachim does not include this custom, while the Mishna (compiled later) does include it! Without the Temple, the individual could no longer recite "mikra bikkurim". However, we can at least remind ourselves of this yearly need to proclaim our allegiance to God's covenant - by quoting from "mikra bikurim" at the Seder!

This may explain why the Haggada only quotes the first four psukim of mikra bikkurim (where it talks about Yetziat Mizraim) but not the pasuk that describes how He bought us into the Promised Land.

Finally, note also the word 'higgadeti' in Devarim 26:3 and compare it with the word 've-higgadeta' in Shmot 13:8!

See also Rambam Hilchot Chametz u-Matza chapter 7, especially halacha 4.]

THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES

When you study the "drashot" of these four psukim, note how the drasha of the final pasuk leads us directly into the Ten Plagues. At this point, the Haggada quotes an additional drasha - by R. Yossi ha-Glili - that there must have been 5 times as many plagues at the Red Sea than were in Egypt [based on the ratio - 'etzba' of the Makkot to 'yad' at Kriyat Yam Suf, i.e. hand/finger = 5/1].

Then R. Eliezer and R. Akiva add multiples of 4x and 5x for each plague - based on Tehillim 88:49.

[Note in the Rambam's nusach of MAGGID, he skips this entire section. This suggests that this Midrash is an additional 'elaboration', but not a necessary part of the story that we must tell. In other words, if you need to skip something, this section is a 'good candidate'.]

DAYENU

Now that the story is finished, it's time for 'praise' -following the format of the Mishna "matchilin bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach' - and we will now explain how DAYENU serves as a special form of HALLEL (praise).

You are probably familiar with all the questions regarding what we say in Dayenu, for example, how could a Jew say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a 'zionist' say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

However, the answer to all those questions is rather simple, once one understands that each time we say the word "dayenu" - it really implies that 'it would have been enough - **to say Hallel**'.

In other words, we say as follows:

- Had God only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea, but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel**...**

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"`al achat kama vekhama..."

- How much more so is it proper **to thank God** for He has performed **ALL** these acts of kindness ..

He took us out of Egypt, **and** punished them, **and** split the sea, **and** gave us the manna etc.

In essence, this beautiful poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating how each single act of God's kindness in that process would be reason enough to say Hallel, now even more so we must say Hallel, for God did all of these things for us.

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise]. and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel and building the Temple.

This takes on additional significance, as it concludes in the same manner as the final pasuk of "arami oved avi" - which for

some reason we do not include in our Seder (even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should)! Recall that according to Devarim 26:9, the proclamation should conclude with: "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh"

According to Chazal - he brought us to the Bet ha'Mikdash!

"va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot" he gave us the land of Israel

Even though we don't elaborate upon this pasuk in our version of Maggid, "dayenu" enables us to include it!

In this manner, the song of "dayneu" serves as both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

It is also interesting to note that we find 15 levels of praise in the Dayenu, that most probably correspond to the 15 steps leading to the Bet ha-Mikdash, better known as the 'shir ha-ma'a lot', i.e. the 15 psalms in Tehillim (120-134) / composed for each step.

Finally, note how Dayenu discusses fifteen 'stages' in the redemption process. This beautifully reflects the theme that we have discussed thus far - that we are thanking God for the entire **process** of redemption, and not just for a specific event!

[For a full shiur on the topic of Dayenu, see: www.tanach.org/special/dayenu.txt]

"RABBAN GAMLIEL"

Even though we have completed our story, before continuing with the Hallel, the Haggada wants to make sure that we also fulfill Rabban Gamliel's opinion (in Masechet Pesachim chapter 10) that we have not fulfilled our obligation of "v'higadta l'bincha" unless we have explained the connection between that story and the commandment to eat PESACH, MATZA & MAROR.

[It appears that Ramban Gamliel understands the word "zeh" (in Shmot 13:8) refers to the 'korban Pesach' - probably based on his understanding that the phrase "ha'avoda ha'zot" in 13:5 also relates to 'korban Pesach'. Hence, Raban Gamliel requires that we explain to our children (and whoever is gathered) why we are eating not only matza, but also pesach and maror.]

Rabban Gamliel's statement could also imply that our obligation of eating matza and maror is not complete unless we explain how they connect to the story that we just told. This would explain why it is added at the conclusion of the "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" section, as we are about to fulfill our obligation to eat matza, and maror.

[In our times, this section may also be considered a 'fill in' for the KORBAN PESACH itself. During the time of the Bet ha-Mikdash, MAGGID was said while eating the korban pesach. Nowadays, since the korban cannot be offered, we mention pesach, matza, and maror instead of eating the korban. Thus, this section forms an excellent introduction to the Hallel, which in ancient times was recited as the Korban Pesach was offered, and later when it was eaten.]

This section forms the conclusion of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim", and sets the stage for our reciting of Hallel - to praise God for our salvation. [See Rambam Hilchot chametz u'matza 7:5, where his concluding remark implies that "haggada" ends here.]

"BE-CHOL DOR VA-DOR"

Considering the integral connection between the events of the Exodus and "brit avot" (discussed above) the statement of:`"be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim..." takes on additional significance.

Before we say HALLEL, we conclude our story by stating that in every generation - each individual must feel as though HE himself was redeemed from Egypt. As the purpose of this entire historical process of redemption was to prepare Am Yisrael for their national destiny - it becomes imperative that every member of Am Yisrael feels as though they experienced that same 'training mission'.

One could suggest that this closing statement complements the opening statement of MAGGID (in the avadim hayinu paragraph) that had God had not taken us out of Egypt we would still enslaved until this very day. Now that we have told the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we are supposed to feel as though we ourselves were redeemed.

As stated in Devarim 6:20-25, the events of Yetziat Mitzrayim obligate Am Yisrael to keep not only the mitzvot of Pesach but ALL of the mitzvot of the Torah! [See Sefer Kuzari section 1.]

[Note how the phrase "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham" that we recite in this section of MAGGID is quoted from Devarim 6:23! Note as well how Chazal most probably arrived at this conclusion based on Moshe Rabeinu's statement in Devarim 5:2-3 (at the very beginning of his main speech) that God's covenant at Har Sinai was made with the new generation, even though they themselves were not born yet!]

LEFICHACH / HALLEL

As an introduction to the first two chapters of HALLEL, we recite 'lefichach...'. Note how this section contrasts 'suffering' with 'redemption' (note the numerous examples). This too may reflect our theme that we thank God for the process, and not just for the event.

The two chapters of Hallel that we recite at this time are also quite meaningful. The reason for 'be-tzeit Yisrael mi-Mitzrayim' is rather obvious. But note the opening words of the first chapter:

"hallelu **AVDEI** Hashem, hallelu et SHEM Hashem..."

In other words, as we are now God's servants ['avdei Hashem'] - and no longer slaves to Pharaoh, it is incumbent upon us to praise our new master.

THE 'SECOND CUP'

We conclude Maggid with the blessing of "ge'ula" [redemption] on the 2nd cup of wine.

As we recite this blessing, note how most fittingly we express our hope that we will become worthy of God's redemption speedily in our own time

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Even though much of our above discussion may seem 'technical', our analysis alludes to a deeper concept, that the Seder is not only about 'gratitude' - i.e. thanking God for what happened; but more so - it's about 'destiny' - i.e. recognizing why it happened!

. Let's explain.

Many of us are familiar with a concept called 'hakarat ha-tov' - recognition of gratitude. Simply translated, this means that people should express their gratitude for help (or assistance) provided by others. In relation the Seder, by telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim [the Exodus] and reciting afterward the Hallel [praise], we express our gratitude to God for our redemption from slavery in Egypt.

However, if "hakarat ha-tov" is the sole purpose of Maggid, then a very serious question arises when we pay attention to the details of the story that we have just told. Recall (from the paragraph "baruch shomer havtachato...") how we thank God in the Haggada for the fulfillment of His covenant with Avraham - that he would ultimately save Am Yisrael from their bondage. Yet in that very same covenant, God promised not only our redemption, but also our enslavement! [See Breishit 15:13-15.]

If there was a real teenager [or 'chutzpedik'] son at the table, he could ask a very good [but 'cynical'] question:

Why should we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, after all - it was He who put us there in the first place!

To answer this question, I'd like to introduce the concept of 'hakarat ha-ye'ud' [shoresh yod.ayin.daled] - the recognition of destiny [and/or purpose]; in contrast to "hakarat ha-tov".

As we explained above, our obligation to 'tell the story of the Exodus' stems not only from our need to remember **what** happened, but more so - from our need to remember **why** it happened. In other words, we are actually thanking God for both

putting us into slavery **and** for taking us out; or in essence - we thank God for our very relationship with Him, and its purpose - as we must recognize the goal of that process and the purpose of that relationship.

In our shiur, we have both discussed the biblical background that supported this approach, and shown how this understanding helped us appreciate both the content of structure of Maggid.

This point of "hakarat ha-ye'ud" is exactly that we emphasized in our introduction. As our 'ye'ud' - our destiny - is to become a nation that will serve Him, God found it necessary to send us down to Egypt in order that He could redeem us.

This could be the deeper meaning of Rashi's interpretation of the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-bincha ... ba'avur zeh" - that we must explain to our children that God took us of Egypt **in order** that we keep His mitzvot. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra 13:8.] Rashi understands that the primary purpose of "magid" is not simply to explain why we are eating matza, but rather to explain to our children why God took us out of Egypt - or in essence, why He has chosen us to become His nation and hence keep His mitzvot.

To complement this thought, we will show how this same theme may relate as well to the very purpose of God's first covenant with Avraham Avinu - "brit bein ha'btarim".

ETHICS & the EXODUS -

Recall that when God first chose Avraham Avinu in Parshat Lech Lecha (see Breishit 12:1-7), He informed him that he would become a great nation and that his offspring would inherit the land, However, only a short time later (in chapter 15), God qualifies that promise by informing Avraham Avinu (at brit bein ha'btraim) that there would be a need for his offspring to become enslaved by another nation BEFORE becoming (and possibly in order to become) God's special nation (see Breishit 15:1-18).

Even though some commentators understand this 'bondage' as a punishment for something that Avraham may have done wrong (see Maharal - Gevurot Hashem); nonetheless, the simple pshat of Breishit chapter 15 is that this covenant was part of God's original plan. This begs for an explanation concerning why this framework of 'slavery' was a necessary part of this process.

> [We should note that according to Seforno (based on Yechezkel 20:1-10), even though God forecasted our slavery, it didn't have to be so severe. Its severity, he explains, was in punishment for Bnei Yisrael's poor behavior in Egypt. (See Seforno's intro to Sefer Shmot and his commentary on Shmot 1:13.) .]

One could suggest that the answer lies in what we find in the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, immediately after they leave Egypt.

Recall the numerous commandments that include the special 'reminder' of "v'zacharta ki eved ha'yita b'eretz Mitzraim" - to Remember that you were once a SLAVE [or STRANGER] in Egypt. Just about every time we find this phrase, it is not a 'stand alone' mitzvah, but rather as an additional comment following a law concerning the proper treatment of the 'less-fortunate' - i.e. it serves as an extra incentive to keep some of the most very basic ethical laws of the Torah.

To prove this, simply review the following list of sources in your Chumash, paying careful attention to when and how this phrase is presented, noting both its topic and context:

- Shmot 22:20 & 23:9 (note the type of mitzvot found in numerous laws recorded between these two psukim). Note especially "v'atem y'datem et nefesh ha'ger" in 23:9, that phrase highlights our above assertion.
- Vayikra 19:33-36 (concluding "Kdoshim tihiyu"!)
- Vayikra 20:26! and 25:55! (note the context of Vayikra 25:35-55, noting especially 25:38.)
- Devarim 5:12-15 (shabbos is to allow our servants a chance to rest as well - v'zachrta ki eved hayita...")
- Devarim 16:11-12, in regard to "simchat yom tov"
- Devarim 24:17-18, noting context from 23:16 thru 24:18
- Devarim 24:19-22, continuing same point as above
- Note as well concluding psukim in Devarim 25:13-16

REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU

In light of these sources (a 'must read' for those not familiar with these psukim), it becomes clear that part of God's master plan (in the need for our enslavement to Egypt before becoming a nation) was to 'sensitize' us, both as individuals and as a nation, to care for the needs of the oppressed and downtrodden.

God is angered when any nation takes advantage of its vulnerable population (see story of Sedom in Breishit chapters 18-19, noting especially 18:17-21!). In our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we suggested that this may have been one of the underlying reasons for God's choice of a special nation, a nation that will 'make a Name for God', by setting an example in the eyes of there nations, of ideal manner of how a nation should treat its lower classes, and be sensitive to the needs of its strangers and downtrodden. [Note also Yeshayahu 42:5-6!]

Hence, after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must receive a special set of laws are Har Sinai that will facilitate their becoming that nation. As they are chosen to become God's model nation (see Devarim 4:5-8), these laws must set reflect a higher standard, to serve as a shining example for other nations to learn from. Note as well how the opening laws of Parshat Mishpatim (which immediately followed the Ten Commandments), begin with special laws for how to treat our own slaves, whether they be Jewish (see Shmot 21:1-11) on non Jewish (see 21:20 & 21:26-27). [Not to mention the laws that follow in 22:20 thru 23:9.]

With this background, one could suggest that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, i.e. their being taken advantage of by a tyrant etc., would help teach Bnei Yisrael what 'not to do' when they form their own nation, after leaving Egypt.

As anyone who is familiar with the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu (and just about all of the Neviim Acharonim) knows, it was this lack of this sensitivity to the poor and needy that becomes the primary reason behind God's decision to exile Israel from their land, and destroy the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

A YEARLY 'RE-SENSITIZER'

Let's return to the very pasuk from which we learn our obligation to tell the story at MAGID -"v'higadta l'bincha... ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li b'tzeiti m'Mitzraim". If we follow the interpretation of Rashi & Ibn Ezra, then this pasuk is commanding us that we explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt in order that we can fulfill His commandments. Or in essence, God orchestrated all the events forecasted in "brit bein ha'btarim" to help us become that nation. Certainly, this approach fits nicely with our explanation thus far.

Finally, the very pasuk that Chazal chose that we must recite twice a day to 'remember' the Exodus on a daily basis (see Bamidbar 15:41) may allude as well to this very same point: "I am the God who took you out of Egypt IN ORDER to be your God...". In other words, God took us out of an Egypt **in order** that He become our God. Our deeper understanding of the purpose of the events (of the Exodus) can serve as a guide and a reminder to assure that we act in the manner that we assure that we will indeed become God's model nation.

In summary, when we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, we must also remember that one of the reasons for why He put us there - was to sensitize us towards the needs of the oppressed. Should we not internalize that message, the numerous "tochachot" of the Bible warn that God may find it necessary to 'teach us the hard way' once again (see Devarim 28:58-68 and Yirmiyahu 34:8-22).

In this manner, the message of the Seder is not only particular -in relation to the obligations of the Jewish people; but also universal -in relation to their purpose - the betterment of all mankind. Or in the words of Chazal - "ein l'cha ben choriin ele mi sh'osek b'Torah" - 'Who is considered free - one who can dedicate his life to keeping God's laws

Freedom - to dedicate one's life to the service of God, both as an individual and a member of God's special nation - to internalize and eternalize God's message to mankind - that's what the Seder is all about!

chag sameiach, menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. V'ACHSHAV KIRVANU HA'MAKOM L'AVADATO

This key statement of the MAGID section (as discussed in our shiur on MAGID), that God chose the Jewish people in order that they could serve Him (by acting as His model nation) - is proven not only from our quote of Yehoshua 24:1-3, but more so from the remainder of that chapter - a 'must read' for anyone not familiar with that chapter!

For those of you familiar with Sefer Yehoshua, here's an observation that you may appreciate. One could suggest that the gathering, as described in Yehoshua 24:1-27, may have taken place at an earlier time, even though it is recorded in the final chapter of the book. Based on the content of this speech (and challenge) by Yehoshua for the entire nation to serve God - it would have made more sense for this gathering to have taken place soon after the original wave of conquest, and not at the end of his life.

In my opinion, the most logical time for this gathering to have taken place would have been at the same time when Bnei Yisrael first gathered at Har Eival to re-convene their covenant with God, in fulfillment the God's command in Devarim 27:1-8! This covenantal gathering, similar to the original covenantal gathering at Har Sinai (compare w/Shmot 24:3-11) is described in detail in Yehoshua 8:30-35. Note that the city of Shechem - where the events in chapter 24 take place, is located at the foot of Har Eival (where the events in chapter 8:30-35 take place!

Even though the events in chapter 24 should have been recorded after the events in 8:30-35, Sefer Yehoshua preferred to 'save' that speech for its concluding section, because of its thematic and everlasting significance.

If so, then Yehoshua chapter 23 would have been the last gathering of the people with Yehoshua prior to his death (as seems to be simple pshat of the opening psukim of that chapter), while the events described in chapter 24 were 'saved' for the conclusion of the book (even though they took place much earlier). [Note how the story of Yehoshua's death in 24:28-33 is not an integral part of the story in 24:1-27]

Hence, it may not be by chance that the Haggada quotes from this chapter to present its key point - that God chose us, and gave us the special Land, for the purpose that we would be able serve Him. Its thematic importance results in its special placement at the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, and similarly, at a key position in MAGID.

B. MAGID & SEFER DEVARIM

For those of you familiar with our Intro shiur to Sefer Devarim (i.e. in regard to the structure of the main speech), it will be easier to appreciate why the Haggada begins its answer to the "ma nishtana" with "avadim hayinu...". [Or basically, Shmuel's opinion for "matchilim b'gnut" in the tenth perek of Mesechet Psachim"/ see 116a.]

Recall how that speech began in chapter 5, where Moshe Rabeinu introduces the laws [the "chukim upmishpatim"] by explaining how they part of the covenant that God had made with Am Yisrael at Har Sinai; while the laws themselves began with the famous psukim of Shema Yisrael that begin in 6:4.

In that context, the question in 6:20 concerns the inevitable question of children relating to the very purpose for keeping all of these laws, while the phrase "avadim hayinu" (see 6:21) is only the first line of a four line answer to our children, that explains why God chose us, and why we are obligated to keep all of His laws (see 6:20-25).

Hence, it is not by chance that the Haggada uses specifically this pasuk to explain why we are obligated to 'tell the story of the Exodus' every year, as that very pasuk begins the Torah's explanation for why we are obligated to keep all of God's laws.

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **lmaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of this lengthy speech are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot".

In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15! This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

One could even suggest that reciting these psukim as well may be what the statement in the Mishna in Pesachim refers to when instructing us to read from Arami oved Avi (from Devarim 26:5) until we finish the ENTIRE Parsha. If we read the entire Parshia, the should certainly should include 26:11, and may even allude to 26:12-15 (|"vidduy maaser"), (and in my humble opinion even to the concluding psukim of the entire speech in 26:16-19!). ["v'akmal"]

AVADIM HAYINU & SEFER DEVARIM

To appreciate why MAGGID quotes specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to begin its discussion of our obligation to tell the story of the Exodus, we must study its source (and context) in Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our study of Sefer Devarim how Moshe Rabeinu delivers a lengthy speech (chapters 5 thru 26), in which he reviews the numerous laws that Bnei Yisrael must observe once they enter the land (see Devarim 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.). As part of his introductory remarks concerning those mitzvot - Moshe states as follows:

> "Should [or when] your child will ask - What [obligates us] to keep these laws and statutes and commandments that God our Lord has commanded? -
> And you shall tell him - AVADIM HAYINU le-Pharaoh be-Mitzrayim... - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but God brought us out with a mighty hand..."
> (See Devarim 6:20-21, and its context.)

In other words, Sefer Devarim used the phrase 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its explanation for why Bnei Yisrael are obligated to keep ALL of the mitzvot.

But when we continue to read that explanation in Sefer Devarim, we find the reason **WHY** God took them out:

> "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham, lema'an havi otanu el ha-aretz..."
> And God took us out **in order** to bring us to the Land that He swore unto our fathers [='brit avot].
> And the LORD commanded us to do all these laws, to fear the LORD our God, for our good...
> And it shall be the just thing to do, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He hath commanded us." [See Devarim 6:22-25.]

Here again, we find that the Torah states explicitly that God took us out of Egypt for a purpose - i.e. **in order** to inherit the

Land and to serve God by keeping His laws.

This statement supports Rashi & Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the pasuk 'ba'avur zeh...' (as we discussed earlier in this shiur), that we are to explain to our children that God took us out of (and put us into) Egypt, in order that we keep His mitzvot.

Therefore, it is very meaningful that the Haggada chose specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its discussion of WHY we are obligated to tell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim on this special evening.

In fact, one could suggest that this may have been the underlying reasoning behind Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a). By stating that we begin the story with the pasuk of 'avadim hayinu', Shmuel is simply stating that before we tell the story, we must explain the reason for this obligation - just as we do in MAGGID!

C. BCHOL DOR V'DOR & SEFER DEVARIM

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **lmaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot". In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15!

This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

D. "HA LACHMA ANYA"

This opening paragraph of MAGID is difficult to understand not only due to the Aramaic, but also due to its context and content. Let's begin by explaining the problems.

After breaking the middle matza for YACHATZ - we begin MAGGID with the following statement:

> "ha lachman anya..." - 'This [matza that we are now looking at] resembles the poor man's s bread that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'

First of all, it would make more sense to understand this statement as the completion of YACHATZ (since it refers to the matza that we just broke), and not necessarily the beginning of MAGGID (for it doesn't tell the story). However, even if this section is not an integral part of Maggid, it will form a significant transition between 'yachatz & maggid'- as we shall soon explain.

Secondly, this opening statement leaves us with the impression that we are eating matza at the Seder to remember how Bnei Yisrael ate matza during their slavery. However, Sefer Shmot leaves us with the impression that we eat matza in order to remember the hurried nature in which Bnei Yisrael left Egypt (see Shmot 12:33-40 and subsequently 13:3 & 13:8). In other words, should we be explaining at this time that matza on our table is to remind us of our slavery, or to remind us of our redemption?

The simplest answer would be to explain that 'this is the matza that our forefathers ate in Egypt - **when they brought the very first korban Pesach'**! In other words, we are not stating that this poor man's bread was the 'staple' of the daily diet of our forefathers in Egypt - rather, it is the special bread that God commanded us to eat with the original Korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:8).

Furthermore, the reason for calling this bread "lechem oni" [lit. either bread of affliction or bread of poverty] is obviously based on Devarim 16:3 ["shivat yamim tochal alav matzot lechem oni - ki b'chipazon...."]. However, when studying the context of those psukim (see Devarim 16:1-4), the phrase "lechem oni" can be understood as a description of what matza is, and not necessarily as the reason for the commandment to eat it. [The question is whether 'lechem oni' defines for us WHAT matza is, or explains WHY we eat matza.]

This returns us to our discussion of the two reasons for matza (see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo) - where we explained that the reason for eating matza with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with the fact that we later rushed out on the next day. Rather, there had to be some intrinsic reason for eating matza (and not chametz) with that korban; either to remind us of our slavery, or to symbolize our need to reject Egyptian culture to be worthy of redemption.

If we continue with our understanding that this is the'matza' that our forefathers ate together with the first Korban Pesach, then the next statement of "kol dichfin" - which otherwise is very difficult to understand - begins to make sense. Let's explain why.

The next statement (right after explaining that this matza used to be eaten by our forefathers) - at first sounds like an invitation:

> "Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who is in need, let him come and join in the Pesach, this year 'here', next year in the Land of Israel; this year - slaves, next year - free men"

It can be understood in one of two ways, either:

- an open invitation for others to join us. - or
- a quote of what our forefathers once said.

These two possibilities are a result of how one understand s the word "v'yifsach" in the phrase "kol ditzrich yete v'yifsach" [anyone who needs, let him come and join our Pesach].

If we take the word "va'yifsach" literally, then this must be an invitation to join in the korban Pesach - and hence, it must be a quote from an earlier time period.

If "va'yifsach" is not translated literally, and hence it refers to the Seder, then this section was composed to be recited as an invitation (to the Seder). But this wouldn't make much sense at this time, since everyone is already sitting down, and considering that we've already made Kiddush and eaten "karpas" - isn't it a bit late to be inviting people!

Let's return therefore to the possibility that "va'yifsach" refers to the actual 'korban Pesach' (which seems to be the simple meaning of this word). If so, then we can easily pinpoint exactly who we are quoting - as it must be from a time when the korban Pesach was offered, but also when we were not yet living in Israel, and still in slavery!. There answer is simple - this must be a quote of what our forefathers said to one another (translated into Aramaic) in preparation for the very first korban Pesach (i.e. the one in Egypt, as described in Shmot 12:1-23).

It can only refer to that very first korban Pesach, for that was the only time in Jewish history when the korban Pesach was offered when we were both (1) in slavery (hoping next year to be free) - and (2) living outside the Land of Israel (hoping be next year in the Land of Israel)! If this interpretation is correct, then the flow of topic makes perfect sense. We break the matza, and explain that this was the same type of bread that our forefathers ate with the first korban Pesach in Egypt, and then we quote what they said to one another in preparation for that special evening - fulfilling what God instructed them in Parshat ha'Chodesh (see Shmot 12:3-8!).

This quote of our forefathers, from the very first Seder in Jewish History, is quite meaningful - for we begin MAGGID by emphasizing the connection between our own Seder and the very first Seder that Am Yisrael kept thousands of years ago (and its purpose). By quoting from the special atmosphere of that very first korban Pesach family gathering, we highlight the continuity of our tradition and our hope for the fulfillment of its goals.

[Note how this would conform to Shmot 12:14, in its context!]

"DA'YENU" - shiur for Pesach & for Yom Atzmaut

How could an observant Jew say, let alone sing, that -'it

would have been enough'- even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a Zionist say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

Nevertheless, every year at the Seder, we all sing the popular song of "dayenu", which seems to convey precisely that message!

In the following shiur, we attempt to answer this question.

INTRODUCTION

"Dayenu" is a very simple, yet beautiful poem - containing fifteen stanzas describing acts of God's kindness - each stanza stating that it would have been 'enough' had God only helped us in one way.

For example, we begin by saying it would have been enough had He only taken us out of Egypt, and not punished the Egyptians. The poem continues stage by stage through the process of redemption from Egypt (until we arrive in the Land of Israel and build the Temple), saying how each stage would have been 'enough', even had God not helped us with the next stage.

However, some of those statements appear very strange, for they include that it 'would have been enough had we not received the Torah', which simply doesn't make sense!

To understand what we are 'really saying' in "dayneu", we must consider its context, as well as it content.

A PREP FOR HALLEL

In the Haggadah, "dayenu" does not 'stand alone'. Rather, we recite (or sing) "dayenu" towards the conclusion of Maggid; after we tell the story of the Exodus, but before we sing the Hallel.

Following the guidelines of the Mishna (in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim), in Maggid - we tell the story of the Exodus by quoting (and then elaborating upon) the psukim of "arami oved avi" (see Devarim 26:5-8). But that very same Mishna also instructs us to begin the story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise ["matchilin b'gnut - u'msaaymim v'shevach"/ see Pesachim 10:4).

Taking this Mishna into consideration, we find that "dayenu" is recited in Maggid - precisely when we finish telling the story of the Exodus (with the discussion of the Plagues) - and right at the spot where we are supposed to begin our "shevach" [praise].

Therefore, "dayenu" should be understood as a poem that was written as a form of praise, to conform with the guidelines set by the Mishna. This consideration will allow us to explain its full meaning - in a very simple manner:

Within this context, the refrain of "dayenu" has an implicit suffix. In other words, - "dayenu" should not be translated simply as 'it would have been enough'; rather, "dayenu" means '**it would have been enough - to PRAISE God**, i.e. to say Hallel - even if God had only taken us out of Egypt, or only if He had split the Sea, etc.

In this manner, the poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating that each single act of God's kindness in that process obligates us to praise Him: e.g.

- Had He only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea,but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel**...**

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"`al achat kama vekhama," - How much more so is it proper to thank God for performing ALL these acts of kindness, as He took us out of Egypt, and punished them, and split the sea, and gave us the manna etc.

"Dayenu" relates a total of fifteen acts of divine kindness, each act alone worthy of praise - even more so we must praise God, for He had performed all of them!

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise]. and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

SIPPUR & SHEVACH

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel. This is also congruent with the last pasuk of "arami oved avi", that includes arriving in Israel (see Devarim 26:9! - "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh, va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot"), which we don't elaborate upon in our version of Maggid, even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should!

In this manner, "dayneu" is both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

The 'HASHKAFA' of DAYENU

According to our explanation thus far, "dayenu" sets the stage for Hallel, as we will now praise God [by singing Hallel] not only in gratitude for taking us out of Egypt, but also in appreciation for each significant stage of the redemptive process. We thank God not only for the Exodus, but also for the 'manna', for shabbat, for coming close to Har Sinai, for the Torah, for the Land of Israel..., and finally for the building of the Bet HaMikdash.

From a certain perspective, this poem may allude to a very profound 'hashkafa' [outlook on life], and a message that is very applicable to our own generation.

Today, there are those who focus at the Seder only on the first stanza of "dayenu," viewing 'freedom from slavery' as the final goal, and hence the ultimate goal of redemption. For them, this first stanza of "dayenu" is 'enough' - and to them, that is the entire meaning of Passover - a holiday of Freedom.

Others focus only upon the last stanza, that without the entire land of Israel in our possession, and without the re-building of the bet-ha'Mikdash, the entire redemptive process is meaningless. In their eyes, Hallel should only be sung when the entire redemption process is complete, and Am Yisrael reaches its final goal.

The beautiful poem of "dayenu" seems to disagree with both approaches. Instead, each significant stage in the process of redemption deserves our recognition and for requires that we praise God for it, even though it is 'not enough'!

It is this hashkafic message, i.e., the understanding and appreciation of each step of the redemptive process, which "dayenu" can teach us. "Ge'ulat Yisra'el" - the redemption of Israel - even in our time, is a process which is comprised of many stages. Every significant step in this process, be it simply sovereignty, or partial borders, or victory in battle; or freedom to study Torah, even without complete redemption, requires our gratitude and praise to Hashem.

For each stage in that process, it is incumbent upon Am Yisrael to recognize that stage and thank Hashem accordingly, while at the same time recognizing that many more stages remain yet unfulfilled - and reminding ourselves of how we need act -to be deserving of that next stage.

"Dayenu" challenges us to find the proper balance.

chag samayach,
menachem

[P.S. - Save this shiur! You can 're-use' it for Yom Atzmaut.

Parshat Tzav: A Sin Offering But No Sins?

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Sefer VaYikra (Leviticus) opens with the "korbanot manual," seven perakim (chapters) of instructions about sacrifices: what different types of sacrifices there are, under what conditions we are to bring each sacrifice to Hashem, and all of the details about the actual process of sacrifice and its aftermath (e.g., when and by whom various korbanot are to be eaten). To many of us nowadays, this manual is not only technical and unfamiliar, but can seem like a closed book. Our goal, then, is to unpack some of the ideas behind the korbanot: when we bring each of the various different types of korban, what are we trying to accomplish? How do the details of the process of bringing each type of korban effectively accomplish what we want/need to do? (As usual, we draw on a variety of sources. Almost none of these ideas are my own.)

Our first step is to get our bearings. Why is this manual placed here at the opening of Sefer VaYikra, between the completion of the construction of the Mishkan (portable Temple) in Sefer Shemot (Exodus) and the Mishkan's inauguration in VaYikra? The most accessible answer seems to be that since the inauguration's centerpiece is its korbanot, we need to know what the different types are, how they are brought, and what is the purpose of each, otherwise the inauguration won't mean much to us.

LAST WEEK: THE "SHELAMIM":

Last week we looked at one of those types of korbanot -- the shelamim -- and discussed some of its details and their significance:

1) Possible meanings of the name "shelamim."
2) Under what circumstances I would bring a shelamim.
3) We focused especially on the parts of the shelamim offered to Hashem on the mizbe'ah (altar): the helev (certain parts of the animal's fat), a symbol of the best, richest part, given to Hashem, and the blood, the symbol of life, placed on the mizbe'ah before Hashem to show respect for life and recognition that Hashem is the master of life -- a crucial lesson in context of the shelamim, since we are given permission to take life for food. This is also why the Torah stresses the prohibition of eating blood particularly in the shelamim context: we have to be reminded that life must be respected even when we are given permission to take it. Eating the symbol of life would obviously show disrespect for the sacredness of life.

A "SIN-OFFERING?"

This week we will look at a different type of korban: the korban hattat, the so-called "sin-offering."

First of all, what does "hattat" mean? Usually, translators translate the korban hattat as "sin-offering." This is no shock, since "hattat" means "sin." When I commit a sin inadvertently, I must bring a korban hattat to Hashem to atone for the sin: in order to be forgiven for particularly serious averot, I need to do teshuva and also bring a korban hattat. The problem with this translation of "hatta" is that according to the Torah, I must bring a korban hattat not just when I sin, but also on many other occasions which seem to have nothing at all to do with sin. Here are some examples:

1) Yoledet: a woman who gives birth becomes tamei (ritually impure), and when she reaches the end of the period of impurity, she must bring a korban hattat. Surely there is no sin in giving birth! If anything, the parturient (yoledet) deserves a parade, not penance! What is the hattat for, then? (Some talmudic authorities, such as R. Shimon b. Yohai, propose that the yoledet, overcome by pain, swears "I'll never do this again!" and then usually violates the oath by having another baby. But see Shevuot 8a, this appears not to be the mainstream position; if so, why does she bring a "sin-offering"?)

2) Zav: a man who experiences a gonorrheal genital several times becomes tamei. When the discharge stops and he goes through a period of seven clean days, he can then purify himself -- and he must also bring a hattat (in most cases). But since there is no sin here, why is there a "sin-offering"?

3) Zava: a woman who experiences a menstrual blood flow at an unexpected time, and which continues for three days, becomes tamei. When the blood stops and she marks a period of seven clean days, she can then purify herself -- and she must also bring a hattat. But since there is no sin here, why is there a "sin-offering"?

4) Metzora: someone who has the skin condition called tzara'at (formerly translated "leprosy," now often translated "scale

disease") becomes tamei. When the metzora recovers, he or she must bring a hattat. But once again, there is no apparent sin, so why is there a need for a hattat? (Note that even according to those talmudic authorities, such as R. Shmuel b. Nahmeini, who hold that tzara'at is triggered by sin, hold that the hattat itself does not atone for the sin; instead, the suffering brought on by the disease itself atones, and the hattat serves a different function; see Shevuot 8a.)

5) The Para Aduma: people who come into contact (halakhically defined) with dead human bodies become tamei. A reddish cow (para aduma) is slaughtered and its ashes (together with other ingredients) are poured over the tamei people; this is a necessary element in purifying the people. Now, the para aduma is referred to by the Torah as a "hattat." But since there is no sin in contracting ritual impurity by touching a dead body (unless you are a kohen or a nazir), why is the para aduma called a hattat? There is no sin for which to atone!

6) The nazir: the nazir voluntarily takes on a set of prohibitions, usually for a set period of time: he or she swears off wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and must avoid all contact with dead bodies. When he or she completes the period of nezirut, or when it is cut short by his becoming tamei, he must bring a hattat. But why?

ANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES?

It looks like it will be hard to explain how all of these cases are connected in some way to sin. If so, then it is difficult to translate "korban hattat" as "sin-offering," since the hattat is offered in many cases where there seems to be no sin.

One other problem -- and here we are on the verge of a solution -- is that the word "hattat" does not grammatically come form the word "het," meaning "sin," but instead from the word "hattei," which means to "cleanse," "purify," or "decontaminate." Where is "hattat" used in the Torah to mean "cleanse" or "purify" or "decontaminate"? Some examples:

1) Shemot 29:36 -- in the instructions given to Moshe for how the Mishkan inauguration ceremony is to be done, Hashem commands: "Make a bull as a hattat each day [of the inauguration] besides the purifications, and purify ["ve-hitteta"] the altar . . . ."

2) VaYikra 8:15 -- During the actual inauguration process, as part of one of the korbanot: "It was slaughtered; then Moshe took the blood and placed some on the corners of the altar all around with his finger; he purified ["va-ye-hattei"] the altar . . . ."

3) VaYikra 14:52 -- in the context of tzara'at ha-bayyit, a fungus-like growth which can appear on the walls of a house and causes tum'ah (impurity): "He should purify [ve-hittei"] the house with the blood of the bird . . . ."

4) BeMidbar (Numbers) 8:7 -- when the Leviyyim (Levites) are appointed as caretakers and transporters of the Mishkan, they are to undergo a special purification ceremony: "So shall you do to them to purify them: sprinkle upon them waters of purification ["mei hattat"] . . . and they will be purified."

If the "hattat" in "korban hattat" means "purifying"/ "cleansing" -- and not "sin" -- then the korban hattat is not a "sin-offering," it is a "cleansing offering" or a "purification offering." This makes sense not only grammatically, but also helps explain why there is a korban hattat in so many cases where there is no sin at all, but there is instead impurity: yoledet, zav, zava, metzora, nazir, para aduma (the para aduma is referred to by the Torah as a "hattat"). Since the hattat is a purification offering, it makes sense that it is brought in case of impurity.

SIN AND PURIFICATION:

It makes sense that a ritually impure person offers a korban hattat to attain full purity, but why does a person need to bring a korban hattat when he or she commits a sin? What does sinning have to do with being purified?

This brings us to a crucial element of the Torah's perspective on sin: according to the Torah, committing a sin is not just a rebellion against Hashem (of course, committing an avera on purpose is more of a rebellion than doing so unintentionally) and a rejection of His command, it also has a spiritual effect on us and the environment. It produces tum'ah in us and in the environment around us. Not only has a person done something morally wrong when he does an avera, he actually affects himself and his environment when he does so.

JUST HAVING A PUFF?

When you smoke, you're not smoking just for now -- it's not an activity in which you engage just for now and which is then

over and leaves no trace. Every time you take a puff, you inhale little pieces of sticky filth which are distributed through your lungs. If you have a serious smoking habit, you eventually accumulate so much dirt in your lungs that you make it hard for yourself to breathe. And not only does smoking affect you, it also affects everyone around you -- today we call this "second-hand smoke," and medical studies show that exposure to second-hand smoke can be harmful as well.

The same is true of averot (sins): they are not just actions in which we engage and which then disappear forever (and for which Hashem may punish us) -- they have a concrete effect on our "spiritual lungs" and on our spiritual environment. According to the Torah, they make us tamei, impure. It is no surprise, then, that a person who does an avera needs to purify himself of the tum'ah caused by the avera: he must do teshuva (repent) and he must bring a korban hattat -- a cleansing offering -- to clean up the mess he has made through the avera. Note, though, that there are two completely different kinds of tum'ah in the Torah: "moral tum'ah," tum'ah produced by doing an avera (and which cannot be transmitted to others), and "ritual tum'ah," tum'ah produced by certain ritual situations, such as coming into contact with a dead body, giving birth, menstruating, becoming a metzora, etc.; there is of course nothing sinful about this latter type of tum'ah. What is common to both types of tum'ah -- moral and ritual -- is that both must be mopped up, and the "mop" for both is the korban hattat.

Getting back to "moral tum'ah": what does the korban hattat actually clean? Where is this spiritual dirt? The first place where this impurity is found is in the sinner himself. But the solution for this kind of impurity is not to go to the mikvah, it is to do teshuva. The Rambam addresses this requirement in the last section of his code on the laws of ritual purity. He begins by observing that we all know that tum'ah is not dirt which is washed away by the mikveh; it is a status invented by the Torah for a particular purpose (what exactly this purpose might be, the Rambam addresses in his Guide to the Perplexed). But in order for the mikveh to properly "work," the person who is dunking himself in it must be aware of what he is doing and intend thereby to become pure (unlike taking a shower to clean away dirt; the shower works just as well even if you are sleeping). The Rambam says that the same thing applies to "moral tum'ah":

"Just as one who sets his intent on purifying himself [from ritual tum'ah], once he has immersed in the mikveh, he is tahor [pure] even though nothing at all has changed in him physically, so it is with one who sets his intent on purifying his soul from impurities of the soul [something like what I have called "moral tum'ah" -- EM], which are evil thoughts and evil character traits; once he has decided in his heart to abandon those behaviors and has immersed his soul in the waters of knowledge, he is immediately purified . . . . May Hashem in His great mercy purify us from all of our sins, transgressions, and iniquities, Amen."

Purify? From sin? What does impurity have to do with sin? Clearly, the Rambam is making the connection the Torah makes in many places between sin and moral tum'ah. Sin is not just a decision to disobey, it makes a mark in a concrete way.

Besides doing teshuva, in order to be forgiven (i.e., in order for the stain on his spirit to be cleaned) the sinner must also supply powerful "detergent," and this is provided by the Torah in the form of the korban hattat. The blood of the hattat, which is placed on the mizbe'ah, is a symbol of life. As we will see as we go further in Sefer VaYikra, life is always connected with purity, so when the blood is placed on the mizbe'ah, the person who brought it is making a statement: instead of producing death and impurity through sins, he is committing himself to producing purity and life.

SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY: CLEANING UP THE ENVIRONMENT:

The second dimension of the hattat is that the offerer must also clean up the environment: he has to find every person who has inhaled the smoke from his cigarettes and make sure that their lungs are cleaned. In terms of the korban hattat, that means that when we make the environment impure by doing an avera, we have to clean up our mess. We have to counteract the impurity with blood, which represents life and purity.

Let's look at some examples of how this works out in Sefer VaYikra:

Example 1: VaYikra 18:24-30 -- After delivering a long list of sexual crimes (incest of various sorts, male homosexual sex, bestiality, sex with a menstruating woman, etc.), Hashem warns us not to commit sexual averot so that they do not make us and Eretz Yisrael impure. This would be a strange equation (sin=impurity) unless we had made this connection earlier:

"Do not impurify yourselves through all of these [actions], for through all of these were impurified the nations whom I am sending away from before you [i.e., throwing them out of Eretz Yisrael -- EM]. The land became tamei, and I recalled its sin upon it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. You shall keep my laws and commandments -- do not do these

abominations, neither citizens nor strangers among you, for the nations who lived in the land before you did all these abominations, and the land became tamei -- so that the land should not vomit you out when you impurify it, just as it vomited out the nation before you."

The word "tamei" appears here about seven times in as many pesukim; one gets the idea that this is a concept the Torah wants to drive home very clearly. Our actions affect not only our individual fates and spiritual stature, but affect the entire community and its relationship with its holy surroundings, Eretz Yisrael. As an antidote to the impurity produced by our averot, we must clean up the mess we have made of both ourselves and our environment.

FALL CLEANING:

Example 2: VaYikra 16:15-20, 30-34. Nowadays, we think of Yom Kippur as a day of teshuva and prayer. But when we had a Beit haMikdash (Temple), Yom Kippur was not just a time for teshuva, it was also time to let loose the heavy guns of purification in the Mikdash, to release the most powerful "hattat-detergents" of the entire year:

16:15-20 -- "He [the Kohen Gadol, High Priest] should slaughter the hattat-goat which belongs to the people [the whole nation] and bring its blood inside the curtain [=into the Holy of Holies] . . . and sprinkle it on the Ark-covering and before the Ark-covering. He should purify the holy place from the impurities of Bnei Yisrael, from their transgressions with all their sins; he shall do the same with the Ohel Mo'ed [the rest of the Mishkan], which resides among them in their impurity. . . . He should leave [the Mishkan] and go out to the altar which is before Hashem and purify it: he shall take from the blood of the bull and the goat and put it on the corners of the altar all around."

What is clear from this command to purify the Mishkan from our sins is that the Mishkan is made impure by a year of the people's sins. Their sins produce tum'ah not only in themselves, but also in the Mishkan itself! Every time a person commits an avera, he not only blackens his own "lungs," he also dumps a bucket of filth into the Mikdash, so to speak.

But why is the Mishkan connected with our averot? Why is it made impure by our averot? The Mishkan is the focal point of purity and holiness in Am Yisrael. It is our spiritual lungs, so to speak, where we inhale Hashem's presence, the place where the Shekhina rests in purity and holiness, the central source of our contact with Hashem and His holiness. It is only natural that the Mishkan is blackened by averot we commit; a little bit of the Mishkan's purity is pushed out by a little bit of the impurity we produce. The same thing also happens to us as individuals, so once a year, Hashem commands us to bring on the heavy cleaning artillery and scour ourselves and the Mishkan from all the dirt with which he have filled it during the year.

16:30-34 -- Here the Torah summarizes by telling us what Yom Kippur is all about: "For on this day, you will be atoned for so that you will be purified ["le-taher"] from all of your sins; before Hashem will you be purified . . . [The kohen] shall purify the Holy of Holies, the Ohel Mo'ed, the altar, the kohanim, and the people . . . to purify the Bnei Yisrael from all of their sins once a year . . . ."

Again, the Torah makes it clear that both the Mikdash and the people are made tamei by the people's sins, and must be cleansed on Yom Kippur. The reason this is such a serious business is the same reason smoking is such a serious business. A few puffs may not really hurt us much, but it starts to accumulate quickly -- and sin, like smoking, becomes a habit. Eventually, the lungs become blocked to the degree that it is a real exertion to climb a few flights of stairs. Then the smoker develops a cough that won't go away, or a frightening case of asthma. Covered with dirt, the lungs can no longer do their job. This is not just a technicality, it can become life-threatening; sometimes, when the lungs have had enough of the dirt we keep throwing down, they rebel and the smoker develops lung cancer.

The same is true of our own personal spiritual lungs and our communal spiritual lungs. When we ignore what Hashem wants, we begin to close off our spiritual connection with Him. It becomes a little harder to "breathe," and we find that Hashem seems a lot more distant than He was before. And as we fill the Mishkan, His house, with filth, He begins to withdraw. Who would live in a house where people come to dump their garbage? Hashem is the essence of purity and holiness, and when we make the Mishkan impure, we make it inhospitable for His Presence. Inevitably, He moves out and withdraws from us. This is communal spiritual lung cancer -- that is what it means when Hashem abandons the Mikdash and withdraws His protection and Presence from us. It is only a matter of time until another nation is sent to destroy the physical shell of the Mikdash, which we ourselves have already destroyed in a spiritual sense. And it is only a matter of time until the Land spits us out, no longer willing to tolerate our incessant dumping of filth everywhere, and we are forced to find our way in foreign countries.

Note that it is also natural that the more serious the avera, the more deeply the impurity penetrates into the Mikdash and

the more powerful a detergent is necessary: when a member of the people commits an avera and must bring a hattat, the blood is placed on the mizbe'ah -- the altar in the courtyard just outside the Mishkan building proper. But when a Kohen Gadol or the High Court sins, the tum'ah penetrates further, so when they bring their hattat, the blood is placed on the inner mizbe'ah, the incense altar which is actually inside the Mishkan. And when people sin purposely, the tum'ah is powerful enough to penetrate into the Kodesh ha-Kodashim itself, where the Ark is. Of course, a korban hattat cannot be offered by an individual for an intentional sin, but that does not mean the Ark remains tamei forever -- as the Torah tells us, it is purified with the blood of the communal hattat on Yom Kippur, when the Kohen Gadol enters the holiest space on Earth and atones not only for inadvertent sins, but also for wanton sins: "pesha'im."

BROADER IMPLICATIONS:

One of the most crucial implications of this system is that the entire community is together responsible, each individual for every other individual. Since everyone's action affects the Mikdash, every individual is responsible to the community to clean up his mess so that the tum'ah does not accumulate in the Mikdash and begin to force Hashem away from the entire nation as a whole. In this way, the spiritual status of every individual in the nation is linked to everyone else's -- we all suffer the consequences of the sins of each individual, unless each individual is responsible and cleans up. In closing, I can only echo the words of the Rambam: "May Hashem in His great mercy purify us from all of our sins, transgressions, and iniquities, Amen."

Shabbat Shalom

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Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

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PARSHAT TZAV
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TZAV AND VAYIKRA

Is Parshat Tzav simply a repeat of Parshat Vayikra?

In the following shiur, as we undertake a 'tedious' study that will explain how and why they are very different - we will also arrive at several conclusions that will help us appreciate why we eat 'kosher' meat.

INTRODUCTION

In both Parshiot Vayikra and Tzav we find an organized set of laws concerning each of the five basic categories of korbanot: OLAH, MINCHA, CHATAT, ASHAM and SHLAMIM. However, in each Parsha, the order and detail of their presentation are quite different.

A priori, it would have been more logical for the Torah to combine all these laws into **one** unit. To understand why they are presented separately, the following shiur analyzes Parshat Tzav in an attempt to understand its internal structure, and then compares it to Parshat Vayikra.

A KEY PHRASE

The 'key' towards understanding Parshat Tzav is the phrase "v'zot torat ha'...". To verify the centrality of this phrase, briefly review the seven "parshiot" that comprise chapters 6 & 7, noting how just about each "parshia" begins with this same phrase: "zot torat..." - as it introduces each new category.

For example, in 6:2 we find "zot torat ha'olah", in 6:7 - "zot torat ha'mincha", in 6:18 - "zot torat ha'chatat", etc. [See also 7:1 (asham), and 7:11 (shlamim).]

Then, study the last two psukim of this unit (i.e. 7:37-38), noting once again how this phrase forms a very fitting summary for each of these introductory phrases:

"zot ha'torah - la'OLAH la'MINCHA, v'la'CHATAT..." (7:37).

Furthermore, recall that we didn't find this phrase (or anything similar) in Parshat Vayikra. Hence, to understand what Parshat Tzav is all about, we must first understand the meaning of the word "torah" in this context.

Today, the word "torah" is commonly used to describe the entire Torah [i.e. Chumash], and hence the most general category encompassing all of the mitzvot. However, in Sefer Vayikra the word "torah" carries a more specific meaning, as "torah" is only one of the various categories of laws, distinct from "chukim" and "mishpatim". [See for example 18:1-5.]

Another example of the use of the word "torah" in a more specific context is in regard to God's comment to Yitzchak concerning Avraham Avinu:

"ekev asher shama Avraham b'koli - v'yishmor mishmarti mitzvoti chukotei, v'TORAHtei" - (see Breishit 26:5)

Here, the word "torah" clearly implies a specific category (and not a general one); and so claim Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Ramban, and Seforno (even though each gives a different explanation of what that category is).

To understand the specific meaning of the word "torah", let's consider its "shoresh" [root] - the verb "l'horot" - to instruct. Hence, we should expect the word "torah" in Sefer Vayikra to refer to an instructional (or procedural) law, i.e. a series of actions necessary for the completion of a given process.

[The same is true in Sefer Bamidbar, as we shall see in our discussion of Parshat Parah.]

HOW OR WHAT

Based on this context, the pasuk in Parshat Tzav "zot torat ha'mincha..." (see 6:7-10) should be translated as, "This is the PROCEDURE for offering the "korban mincha", as this pasuk introduces the details regarding HOW the priest must offer the korban mincha. More specifically, this would include:

a) taking it to the mizbayach;
b) offering a handful ("kometz") from its flour and oil;
c) eating the leftovers as "matza" in the courtyard, etc.

In this manner, Parshat Tzav details the procedures for HOW to offer all the other types of korbanot. Herein lies the basic difference between Parshat Tzav and Parshat Vayikra. Whereas Parshat Tzav deals primarily with the procedures for **HOW** to offer the various korbanot, Parshat Vayikra focuses on **WHAT** korban (or which korban) is to be offered. Let's explain.

Parshat Vayikra discusses which offerings the individual ***can*** bring should he wish to offer a korban ["n'dava"], as well as which offering he ***must*** bring should he transgress ["chova"]. In contrast, Parshat Tzav explains ***how*** the "kohanim" offer these korbanot, i.e. the procedures for the "kohanim" to follow once the owner presents them with the "korban".

This distinction explains why the opening pasuk of each Parsha directs itself to a different audience.

* Parshat Vayikra begins with:
  "...Speak to BNEI YISRAEL and tell them, if an INDIVIDUAL among you WISHES TO OFFER a korban... " (1:1-2)

* Parshat Tzav begins with:
  "Command AHARON & HIS SONS saying, this is the procedure for bringing the OLAH..." (6:1-2)

Parshat Tzav is addressed specifically to the KOHANIM for it explains HOW they must offer the korbanot, while Parshat Vayikra directs itself towards Bnei Yisrael, since everyone must know WHICH specific korban he CAN or MUST bring in any given situation.

In other words, Parshat VAYIKRA serves as a 'halachik catalogue' - guiding the individual as to WHICH korban to bring, while Parshat TZAV serves as an 'instruction manual' - teaching the kohen HOW to offer each type of korban.

Chumash presents each 'manual' independently because each serves a different purpose. This can explain why the Torah divides these details into two separate sections.

[This distinction also explains why certain details are found in both Parshiot, i.e. those laws that must be known to BOTH the kohanim and to the individual.

Furthermore, certain procedures that only the kohen can perform are also included in Vayikra because the kohen serves in this capacity as the emissary of the individual offering the korban. Ideally the owner should offer the korban, but since only kohanim are permitted to come near the MIZBAYACH, the kohen must perform the "avodah" on his behalf. Additionally, the owner must also be aware of what he is permitted to do and which rituals are restricted to the kohanim. For example, the owner is permitted to do "shchita," but may not perform other "avodot."]

THE 'NEW ORDER'

This background also explains the difference in the ORDER of the presentation of the korbanot in each Parsha.

As we explained in last week's shiur, Parshat Vayikra discusses the categories of "korban yachid," beginning with the voluntary N'DAVA korbanot - OLAH & SHLAMIM - and then continuing with the obligatory CHOVA korbanot - CHATAT & ASHAM.

In contrast, Parshat Tzav makes no distinction between N'DAVA and CHOVA. Once the korban comes to the Mikdash, the kohen doesn't need to know why it was offered. Instead, he only needs to know its category. Hence, the order in Tzav follows the level of "kedusha" of the various korbanot: OLAH - MINCHA - CHATAT - ASHAM - SHLAMIM.

[The SHLAMIM is now last instead of second, since it has the lowest level of "kedusha" ("kodshim kalim").]

THE ORDER IN PARSHAT TZAV

One could also explain that the internal order of Tzav follows according to how much of the korban is consumed on the MIZBAYACH (in Chazal, known as "achilat mizbayach"):

The OLAH is first as it is totally consumed on the mizbayach. The MINCHA follows, as it is either totally consumed, in the case of a MINCHA brought by a kohen (see 6:16); or at least the "kometz" is consumed, while the leftover flour ["noteret"] can be eaten only by the KOHANIM.

Next we find the CHATAT and ASHAM, as their "chaylev" [fat] and "dam" [blood] is offered on the mizbayach; while the meat can be eaten only by the KOHANIM.

[All of the above korbanot are known as "kodshei kodashim", as the meat either is consumed on the mizbeyach or eaten by the kohanim, but must remain within the courtyard of the Mishkan. The Gemara explains that this meat eaten by the kohanim is considered a 'gift' to the kohanim from God (and not from the owner) -"m'shulchan gavohah k'zachu leh".]

The SHLAMIM comes last as some of its meat can be eaten by the owners (after the "chaylev" and "dam" are offered on the mizbeyach). As this meat can be eaten anywhere in the camp (and not only within the courtyard of the Mishkan), this category is known as "kodshim kalim."

AN OUTLINE of PARSHAT TZAV

The following table summarizes the overall structure of Parshat Tzav based on the principles discussed above. As you study it, note that not every 'parshia' begins with a "zot torat ha'--". Instead, we find several 'digressions' into 'parshiot' of related topics (noted by a '**"). We will discuss these digressions at the conclusion of the outline.

TORAT ha'OLAH - 6:1-6

1) bringing the daily "olat tamid";
2) "trumat ha'deshen" - daily removal of ashes from mizbeyach;
3) preparing the wood and fire on the mizbayach;
4) mitzvat "aish tamid" - to ensure a continuous fire.

TORAT ha'MINCHA - 6:7-11

1) the "kometz" (handful) of flour placed on the mizbayach;
2) the "noteret" (leftover portion), eaten by the kohen;

** RELATED LAWS: (6:12-16)

3) the "minchat chinuch" - the special inaugural meal offering brought by a kohen the first time he performs AVODA.
4) the "minchat chavitin" - offered daily by the Kohen Gadol.

TORAT ha'CHATAT - 6:17-23

1) the procedure how to offer the korban;
2) the portion eaten by the kohen;
3) where it can be eaten (in the "azara");

Related laws:

4) special laws concerning a case where the blood of a chatat touches a garment or vessel.

TORAT ha'ASHAM - 7:1-7

1) the procedure how to offer the korban;
2) the portion eaten by the kohen;
3) where it can be eaten;

[As "asham" forms the conclusion of the Kodshei Kodshim section, several laws concerning the reward of the kohen are added, such as the kohen's rights to the animal hides of the OLAH and the issue of who receives the "noteret" of the various types of korban mincha (see 7:8-10).]

TORAT ha'SHLAMIM - 7:11-34

1) the laws regarding the Korban Todah (thanksgiving);
2) the laws regarding a Korban Shlamim (freewill);

**RELATED LAWS:

3) laws concerning meat that becomes "tamey" (defiled);
4) the general prohibition of eating "chaylev" and "dam" (blood)
5) the kohen's rights to the "chazeh" (breast) and "shok" (thigh), a 'gift' to the kohen from the owner of the korban.

SUMMARY - 7:35-38 (this concludes the unit)

35-36: "This is the 'reward' of the kohanim from the korbanot. ["mashchat" = reward, but see m'forshim!]
37: ZOT HA'TORAH: l'OLAH, l'MINCHA, l'CHATAT v'l'ASHAM... ul'ZEVACH HA'SHLAMIM".

THE DIGRESSIONS

Even though most of outline follows according to the structure set by the phrase "zot torat..." (and hence its laws are directed specifically to the kohanim) we do find several digressions.

The first such digression is the 'parshia' of 6:12-16, and follows the laws of how to bring a "korban mincha". It describes both the:

* "minchat chinuch" - the inauguration flour-offering that the kohen brings on the day he begins his service; and the .
* "minchat chavitim" - an identical korban offered daily by the Kohen Gadol.

This digression is quite logical, as this law relates to both the korban mincha and to the kohanim.

Within the laws of the korban SHLAMIM we find two additional digressions. The first (7:22-27) discusses the prohibition to eat "chaylev v'dam" from any animal, even if was not offered as a korban SHLAMIM. The second (7:28-31) explains that the owner of the korban SHLAMIM must give the "chazeh' and "shok" to the kohen. Note how both of these digressions are directed to the entire congregation (and not just to the kohanim/ see 7:22&28) for everyone is required to know these related laws.

PRIESTLY REWARD

With these digressions in mind, and after reviewing the outline we may additionally conclude that one of the primary considerations of Parshat Tzav is the compensation that the kohen receives for offering the korban. In contrast to Parshat Vayikra, which does not at all raise this issue, Parshat Tzav tells us that the kohen receives the hides of the Olah offering, the leftovers of the Mincha offering, most of the meat of the "chatat" and "asham" and the "chazeh" & "shok" of the "shlamim".

The summary pasuk in 7:35-36 reinforces the significance of this point in the eyes of Parshat Tzav, as does the introduction in 6:1-2, which directs these laws specifically to Aharon and his sons.

KORBANOT THEN / KASHRUT TODAY

As we mentioned above, in the middle of the SHLAMIM section in Parshat Tzav we find a special "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael prohibiting them from eating the "chaylev" & "dam" (fat and blood) of any animal, even if that animal is not being offered as a "korban"!

This law, and its presentation at this location, suggests that the 'kashrut laws' of "chaylev v'dam" can be viewed as an EXTENSION of the laws of korbanot. In other words, Chumash purposely includes the laws of "chaylev" and "dam" in Parshat Tzav to teach us that they are forbidden specifically because these parts of the animal, had it been a korban, belong on the mizbeyach!

Ideally, as Sefer Devarim establishes (see 12:20-22), one should eat meat only within the framework of a korban shlamim. Eating "chulin" (meat which is not a korban) is allowed only when bringing a korban shlamim is unfeasible. [In Sefer Devarim this meat is referred to as "basar ta'ava" ('meat of 'desire').]

Nevertheless, even in the realistic, non-ideal condition, when one does eat "chulin," he still may not eat the "chaylev v'dam." Therefore, whenever a Jew does eat meat, he must remind himself that this animal could (or should) have been a "korban shlamim".

One could suggest that man's desire for meat may reflect an animalistic tendency latent in human behavior. By offering a korban shlamim, man can channel this desire in a more positive direction - towards the enhancement of his relationship with God.

[Recall from our shiur on Vayikra that the korban shlamim is the ideal "korban N'DAVA" in that it reenacts the covenantal ceremony between God and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai.]

Even today (without a Mikdash), by refraining from eating "chaylev" and "dam", we can elevate our physical world with "kedusha" and retain a certain level of "kedusha" - even while eating meat.

shabbat shalom
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. WHAT'S A MISHPAT?

What do you think is the difference between a "chok" and a "mishpat"? Consider the linguistic relationship between the words "mishpat" and "shofet" (= shoresh sh.p.t.), and recall Parshat Mishpatim (Shmot chapter 21) and its 'key' word (pun intended).

B. SOME MORE 'TORAH'

Note the similar use of the word "torah" - "procedure" - in Tazria-Metzora - see Vayikra 12:7, 13:59, 14:2,32,54.
See also Bamidbar 5:29-30, 6:21.
Note also Breishit 26:5 - see m'forshim!
Note how the word "torah" takes on a more general meaning in Sefer Devarim - see 1:5 & 4:44! Can you explain why?

See Shmot 24:12, And note the words TORAH & MITZVAH.

If "mitzvah" refers to TZIVUI HA'MISHKAN, i.e. Shmot 25->31, then to what does TORAH refer? Based on 7:37-38, could this be referring (at least partially) to Parshat Tzav?

Could it include other parshiot of mitzvot found in Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar? If so, can you explain why?

Relate to your answers to C & D above.

C. THE PROBLEMATIC FINALE

See 7:37, which accurately summarizes the entire Parsha, except for one 'small' detail:

"zot ha'torah la'OLAH la'MINCHA, v'la'CHATAT v'la'ASHAM *v'la'MILUIM* u'l'ZEVACH HA'SHLAMIM..."

What is "v'la'miluim" doing in this pasuk?
1. Scan the Parsha to make sure you understand the question.
2. Note the two directions taken by the commentators in dealing with this problem. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra.]
3. Relate these answers to 6:12-16 and the next perek (8:1-36).
4. Now relate this issue to Shmot perek 29.

Note that from 7:38 it appears that the mitzvot of Parshat Tzav were given on HAR SINAI, and NOT from the Ohel Moed as were the mitzvot in Parshat Vayikra [see Ramban].

How does this help answer the question concerning the word "miluim"?
5. Why are the laws concerning the 'miluim' recorded in Shmot (perek 29) while all the other "torot" appear in Vayikra?
6. How does all this relate to Shmot 24:12 and Parshiot Terumah - Tezaveh? To what does the word "torah" refer in that pasuk?

[Iy"h, next week's shiur will deal with this topic.]

D. THE SEVEN DAYS OF MILUIM

At the end of Parshat Tzav (8:1-36), we find the narrative describing the seven-day "miluim" dedication ceremony. Prove from the style of this parsha that it belongs in Pkudei. (Look for the repetition of the key phrase.) Where in Parshat Pkudei does this parsha belong? Why do you think it is placed here?

How does this parsha relate to Parshat Shmini?
Why do you think this narrative is included in Sefer Vayikra rather than Sefer Shmot?

Note as well that the fulfillment of all the commandments concerning how to build the Mishkan in Parshiot Terumah Tezaveh were repeated in Vayakhel Pekudei, EXCEPT the commandment concerning the seven day milium ceremony.

E. DAM HA'NEFESH

In the related parsha of "basar ta'ava" in Sefer Devarim (12:20-28), we find what appears to be a different reason for the prohibition against eating blood:

"Be sure not to eat the BLOOD, for the blood is the 'nefesh' (life/soul), and you must not consume the 'nefesh' with the 'basar' (meat)." (12:23)

In truth, however, this reason involves the very same principle we discussed. The sprinkling of the korban's blood on the mizbayach represents the 'nefesh' of the person offering the korban - "ki ha'dam hu ha'nefesh" (12:23). This is the reason why the blood was chosen to be sprinkled on the mizbayach, and this is the reason why we are not permitted to eat the blood.

How does offering a korban or refraining from eating certain animal parts bring anyone closer to God?

Man's relationship with God stems from his understanding that he was created for a purpose. Towards that purpose, God created man "b'tzelem Elokim" (Br. 1:27), i.e. with a creative mind (see first chapter of Moreh Nvuchim of the Rambam!). It is this trait of "tzelem Elokim" that differentiates man from animal. Upon seeing the blood of an animal, man should ask himself, how am I different from that animal? The animal's shape may be a bit different, but the blood is the same blood as the human being's, just as the inner organs and limbs are the same as his.

One could suggest that the experience of offering a korban stimulates this process of introspection; it may help man recognize that despite these similarities, he is different, insofar as he was created "b'tzelem Elokim" - for a purpose. The search for that purpose sets man on the proper path. As we say in Tehilim:

"Adam bi'kar" - a man [lives] with wealth and honor - "v'lo yavin" - but does not contemplate his way in life - "nimshal k'bhay'mot nidmu" - he is like the animals that perish. (Tehilim 49:21)

F. ANOTHER "DIBUR" OUT OF PLACE?

Imbedded within the parsha's discussion of shlamim we find yet another "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael (7:28-34). Again, why do we find a "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael in the Parsha intended for kohanim? Shouldn't these laws appear in Parshat Vayikra?

This "dibur" details the laws requiring the owner of the shlamim to give the "chazeh v'shok" to the kohen. These laws are in Parshat Tzav because they deal with the portion of the animal reserved for the kohanim. On the other hand, it must be emphasized that this portion is a gift to the kohen from the owner of the korban. As such, it requires a special "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael.

G. KORBAN TODAH & KORBAN PESACH

One could suggest that the korban Pesach is simply a 'special type' of korban Todah. The following questions (in lieu of a shiur) will help you understand their connection. (Read Vayikra 7:11-15 & Shmot 12:3-12.)
1. What is the time frame in which these korbanot can be eaten?
2. What type of bread must be eaten with each korban?
Do any other korbanot come with bread or matza?
3. Would you say these laws 'force' someone to invite people to join him in eating his Korban Todah?
Must one invite others to join him when eating the Korban Pesach?
4. What is supposed to happen during this "Todah" seudah?
Relate to Tehilim 107, especially pasuk 22!
How is this similar to "leil ha'seder"?
5. How does the recitation of "Hallel" apply to both korbanot?
Relate to Tehilim 100("mizmor l'Todah").
6. According to this comparison, why do we eat matza with the Korban Pesach?
Does it have anything to do with the matza that Bnei Yisrael baked after leaving Egypt (see Shmot 12:39)?
Iy"h, we'll have a shiur on this topic before Pesach.