

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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*Pesach*







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## Torah Wellsprings - Pesach

This week's *parashah* (7:12) discusses about the *korban todah*, a *korban* which we bring to express our gratitude to Hashem.

Rashi writes, "...he brings a sacrifice to thank Hashem for a miracle that happened to him. For example, he sailed the seas, crossed a desert, was released from prison, or was ill and became well. He must praise Hashem, as it states (*Tehillim* 107:21), יִדְּוּ לֵה' חֲסִדּוֹ, וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו לִבְנֵי אָדָם, 'Praise Hashem for His kindness and tell His wonders to mankind.' and bring the *todah* sacrifice.'..."

Due to the coronavirus many people feel imprisoned and quarantined in their homes. There are also many people who need *refuos* (healing) and *yeshuos* (salvations) *r'l*. They are looking forward to the time when they will be able to bring a *korban todah*, to thank Hashem for the miracles He will perform for them.

We are going through very trying times, but it is important to also focus on the good. Not everything is bad.

When a person brought a *korban todah* to the Beis HaMikdash to thank Hashem for the miracles Hashem performed for him, this didn't mean his life was perfect and he didn't have any troubles at all. But when he brought the *korban todah*, he focused on the good. Similarly, even in these times there is a lot of good we can focus on. It is important to do so, so that we don't despair from the hardships we are going through.

### Don't Panic

The Be'er HaGolah (end of *Choshen Mishpat*) writes, "I think the Torah commands us to protect our lives (as it states וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם) because Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world with His kindness...so people will

recognize His greatness, serve Him, keep His mitzvos, and study His Torah...and to give them a good reward for their toil. Someone who puts his life in danger it is as if he...doesn't want to serve Hashem and he doesn't want the reward. There is no greater *zilzul* and *hefkerus* than this."

But, together with our caution, we must avoid panic and depression, and be confident that Hashem will save us.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* wrote the following letter to his chassidim (*Imros Moshe, Igros Kodesh* 3):

"Don't allow what's happening at this time [the cholera plague] to frighten you. Hashem is with us. Trust in Hashem and rely on Him. הַבֹּשֶׁת בְּה' חֵסֶד יְסֻבֵּנוּ, 'When one trusts in Hashem, he is surrounded with kindness' (*Tehillim* 32:10)... As I told you before, when you have on Whom to rely, there is nothing to fear. Therefore, for Hashem's sake, keep your spirits up. Each person should encourage his fellow man... The counsel and the protection from this plague, *r'l* is that you shouldn't be afraid... Be afraid from the מִסַּכָּב וְלֹא מִהַסִּיכָה (be afraid from the One who brought the plague, and not from the plague). Keep your *emunah* and *bitachon* strong, because that is the best protection. Don't stop saying the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah* 51:12), ה' עִמָּנוּ, צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ, 'Hashem is with us...' Hashem will protect you and your children. Dear brothers...don't fear anything but Hashem, alone. When you follow this counsel, the plague won't harm you... Hashem's sole desire is to protect you and to save you from all bad, and to bless you with all goodness. I will also pray for you wherever I go. Dear brothers, be healthy, strong, and happy. Just don't worry. May I merit seeing your salvation, in *ruchniyos* (spiritually) and *gashmiyos* (physically). So writes the one who is connected

to you with a true love that endures forever."  
Signed...<sup>1</sup>

When there are worries and *chalilah* a pandemic, it is important to strengthen oneself with *simchah* (happiness) and *Bitachon* (faith). As the Divrei Shmuel taught (from the song *Yedid Nefesh*) אז תתחזק ותתרפא, "If you will be strong [with *simchah* and *bitachon*] you will be healed."

And let your joy and *bitachon* be "contagious" so others will also trust in Hashem, for that is the solution in these times.<sup>2</sup>

It states (*Shemos* 15:26), ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלוקיך והישר בעיניו תעשה ... כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רופאך, "If you will listen to Hashem, and you do what's correct in His eyes...all the diseases that I placed on

1. As it is known, the Rambam was the king's personal doctor. Some of the king's high-ranking officials were jealous that a Yid received this honored position, when there were many professional Moslem doctors around.

The king would respond that there is no doctor who has the capabilities and expertise as the Rambam does, but they insisted that there were very proficient Moslem doctors, too.

The king agreed to test it. The Rambam and a renowned Moslem doctor would be the contestants. Each one would give the other one poison to drink, and whoever can heal himself from the poison has proved himself to be the best doctor in the country.

The gentile doctor gave the Rambam the poison first, and the Rambam, with his wisdom, was able to save himself. (He prepared his students with remedies, and they gave it to him and healed him from the poison.)

Now it was the Rambam's turn to poison the gentile doctor. The doctor drank the Rambam's drink, and died a few days later.

The king called for the Rambam and wanted to know what he did to the Moslem doctor. The Rambam said, "*Chas veshalom*, I didn't give him poison. I would never do that to a human being. It was water. But the doctor was so afraid, he died from fear."

We can add that the Rambam knew that the doctor could heal himself from the Rambam's poisons, but when the potion was water, and the gentile doctor didn't know what it was, or what to expect, he became very afraid until he died from fear.

Fear is also poison. It can be more dangerous than the illness and the dangers themselves.

2. The Chofetz Chaim zt'l once said in his *drashah* that everyone is obligated to give *drashos* and to speak with people, and to do whatever they can to strengthen *Yiddishkeit*, which was becoming weak in his time. When the Chofetz Chaim finished the *drashah*, he heard some people saying, "Someone like the Chofetz Chaim can encourage others, but what can we do?"

The Chofetz Chaim replied with a *mashal*:

A king once asked his servants for water and they brought him water that wasn't perfectly clean. He shouted at them, "How dare you bring me unclean water? I am the king..."

The next day, there was a fire in the palace, and the king told his servants to put out the fire. It took them a long time until they purified the water. By the time they brought the water, most of the palace burned down. The king rebuked them, "When there's a fire, it doesn't have to be purified water. Any water is good to put out the fire."

The Chofetz Chaim explained that we are living in a time when there is a fire in the world (because many people were leaving the path of Torah). At such times, one doesn't wait for the purest *drashos* and the purest *tzaddikim* to bring people back to Torah. Everyone must do their share to put out the fire.

Mitzrayim I will not place onto you, because I am Hashem Your healer."

The Degel Machaneh Efraim (*Devarim Ekev* (ד"ה וכל מדוי) writes, "My brother, the renowned chassid, Rebbe Boruch [of Mezibuz], asks, which diseases were in Mitzrayim? Was *makas dam* (plague of blood) a disease? Was *צפרדע* (plague of frogs) a disease? Were the other *makos* (plagues) diseases? It should have stated, 'כל מכות אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך', 'All *makos* that I placed on Mitzrayim I will not place onto you.' However, with a lesson from our grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*, this question is easily answered. The Baal Shem Tov taught that Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't send an affliction to a person until He first sends him *מרה שחורה*, sadness. [Sadness is an illness, as] Chazal (*Bava Metzia* 107:) say, 83 diseases come from sadness, and 83 is the *gematriya* of *מחלה*, disease. Because sadness is the root of all illnesses and all afflictions."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef (*Mishpatim* (ד"ה ואלה) writes, "I heard from my teacher [the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*] that when Heaven wants to punish someone, Heaven takes away his *bitachon*. Therefore, it is proper to pray before Hashem that you be strong with *bitachon*."

For as long as one has *bitachon*, and as long as one is happy, nothing bad can happen to him.

At times cities in Eretz Yisroel need to be enlarged, so more people can live there. Also, sometimes, the courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash needs to be extended. The Mishnah (*Shavuos* 2:2) teaches the process of how this is done. One can't add onto the limits of a city in Eretz Yisroel, or to lengthen the measurements of the courtyard (*azarah*) of the Beis HaMikdash, without following this procedure.

The Mishnah states, "We don't add on to a city or on a courtyard, except with a king, *navi, urim vetumim, sanhedrin* of seventy-one judges, two *korban todahs*, and song..." The Gemara (*Shavuos* 15:) says that the "song" is referring to chapters 3, 30, 91, and 100 of *Tehillim*. Chapter 91 is called *שיר של פגעים*, the song of protection against *mazikim*, hazards. As we say in this chapter, *כי אתה ה' מחסי*, "Hashem, You are my shield..." and we say, *יושב בסתר עליון בצל שד"י יתלונן*, "Someone who sits under Hashem's protection, and is always protected by Hashem's shade..."

The Gemara tells that Reb Yehoshua ben Levi would say the *שיר של פגעים* (*Tehillim* 91) before going to sleep, for protection.

The Chinuch (מצוה תק"ב) discusses this Gemara, when he discusses the prohibition of *והבר חבר* (*Devarim* 18:10-11). He explains that *והבר חבר* means one may not say a mantra which he thinks will protect him from being bitten by a snake or scorpion, or to chant over a wound, because he thinks that will heal him.

The Chinuch writes, "Perhaps you will ask me from the Gemara (*Shavuos* 15:) which states that they would say the *שיר של פגעים*, song to protect from *mazikim* and hazards (*Tehillim* 91). And they would say (*Tehillim* 3, *ה' מיה רבו צרי*). So we see that chanting these chapters protects a person from damage and hazards. The Gemara says that Reb Yehoshua ben Levi would say these *pesukim* before going to sleep."

The Chinuch replies, "*Chalilah*, this isn't the prohibition of *והבר חבר*... Rather saying these chapters rouses a person's trust in Hashem, and causes him to rely on His kindness, and thereby, he will certainly be protected from all hazards."

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3. Reb Moshe Betzalel *zt'l hy'd* writes in the name of his father, the Sfas Emes *zt'l*, "According to the degree one strengthens himself that the matters that distress him shouldn't distress him and shouldn't confuse him, so will Hashem remove this distress from him."



So, it isn't mantras that are saving him, but *bitachon*, which is increased when he says these chapters.

Last week we wrote from the Lechovitzer that when there's plague, one shouldn't listen to the news, because it makes him sad. I'll add a little hint that I created to remind people to remain optimistic: קורנה is *roshei teivos* for קיימו וקבלו היהודים רעדן ווייניגער נייעס, "We accept on ourselves to speak less news."

### It is from Hashem

Throughout this trying time, it is important to remember that it is from Hashem. It didn't happen by chance, and it isn't because of someone's negligence, etc. Ultimately, everything that is happening was decreed from Above.

The Mabit (*Beis Elokim, Shaar HaTefillah* ch.16) writes, "In *galus* (exile), one must remember that whatever happens to him – from the minor matters, like stubbing one's toe to the major afflictions, until one dies– they are all from Hashem. Hashem has more *hashgachah pratis* (divine providence) over us during *galus* than when we lived on our Land and had our kingdom. The difference is that now the *hashgachah* is concealed – due to our sins. And because of the concealment, there are sinners among us who have doubts and ask that perhaps it wasn't from Hashem.

"The plague today is different in several ways from the plagues that took place when the Jewish nation was under Hashem's kingship in Eretz Yisroel [and Hashem's *hashgachah* was revealed]. For example, consider the plague that came because of the sins of Peor (see *Bamidbar* 25), and consider the plague in Dovid HaMelech's times (see *Shmuel* 2, 31). It was noticeable that the plagues came as a punishment for their sins. When they did *teshuvah*, Hashem had compassion on them [and the plagues ended]. The plagues in those eras were supernatural, because people died immediately, without first becoming ill. [Thousands of people would die in one day.] By the plague of Peor...the plague was for one day only and Pinchas

stopped it. That day, 24,000 people died. By the *machlokes* (dispute) of Korach, Aharon stopped the *mageifah* (plague) the day it began... 14,700 people died from that plague. Also, by the plague in Dovid's time (*Shmuel* 2, 31)... 77,000 people died, all in one day. That's how diseases used to be. They didn't follow the laws of nature, since no one became ill [preceding the deaths]. But in plagues of today, a person falls ill...and he lives some days in his illness."

The Mabit also notes how in the past, only the people who deserved punishment got the plague, while the plagues of the Mabit's time affected everyone, even children.

"It is proper that we give a reason for these differences. I say it is because the *Shechinah* (presence of Hashem) resided by Bnei Yisroel – due to the Mishkan, Beis HaMikdash, Eretz Yisroel, and Yerushalaim. Hashem's providence over the Jewish nation was revealed before all. The entire world saw the miracles and wonders Hashem performed for them when He took them out of Mitzrayim, and then into the desert, and afterwards when he brought them into Eretz Yisroel, and again when they were exiled to Bavel. Everyone who saw them knew that they were Hashem's blessed nation.

"There were also 'constant miracles' that Hashem performed for this nation. For example (*Shemos* 34), ולא יחמוד איש את ארצו, 'No one will desire your land' [and steal your property when you leave to go to Yerushalaim for the holidays]. The fruits of Eretz Yisroel were special in many ways. There were also ten continuous miracles that occurred in the Beis HaMikdash (see *Avos* 5:5). There are many other examples, too many to count. And it is all because Hashem promised them, והייתם לי, 'You will be My treasure among all nations... A nation of priests, a holy nation...' Due to Hashem's providence over them, He would punish them immediately when they sinned. And it was obvious that it was punishment for their sins, so they could do *teshuvah*... If someone

didn't sin, nothing bad happened to him... When they did *teshuvah*, the *tzarah* (affliction) left them.

"However, ever since the *Shechinah* left us, due to our sins, this *hashgachah* isn't as revealed anymore. Now the rewards and the punishments are concealed. The rewards and the punishments come in ways that leave room for the stubborn person to think that it is natural. This is how it is today: Plagues come in gradually, and some of the people smitten by the plague become better, and the plague doesn't begin immediately after they committed a sin... This causes some to think it isn't from Hashem. But the wise and the thinking person understands that everything that happens to us in exile – for the individual and for the community – is all caused and controlled by Hashem's *hashgachah*. As it states, עושה נפלאות גדולות לבדו, 'Hashem does great wonders, alone' because [only Hashem knows of the wonders He performs] and the person, to whom the wonder happens, isn't aware of it (*Midrash Tehillim* 136). If a person will think about everything that happened to the Jewish nation throughout the exile – for the individual and for the community – he will recognize Hashem's providence in them."

In review, in past times, the *Shechinah* resided among Bnei Yisroel and the *hashgachah pratis* was very clear. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to rouse people to *teshuvah*, he brought a plague. No harm would befall those who didn't sin. When someone did *teshuvah*, the disease left him. But in our times Hashem's *hashgachah* isn't revealed. Plagues come in ways that appear natural, like a contagious disease that passes from one person to the next. The wise recognize that everything that happens to us in *galus* is all Hashem's providence.

### Quarantine

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 36:) states, "What difference does it make for the *malach hamaves*, (angel of death) here or there?" If it was destined that someone will die, no

matter where he is, the *malach hamaves* can find him.

The Mabit writes that nevertheless, there is a benefit in running away from troubles (which is what people used to do when there was a plague).

The Mabit explains that the self-imposed exile of running away is an affliction, which atones. So even if it was decreed that he will die, he can be granted life because his sins were atoned for.

We repeat this to encourage those who have to be in quarantine. It definitely is not a pleasant experience, but accept Hashem's decree with love, because it might be that this temporary uncomfortable situation is the *yesurim* (suffering) that will save you from much worse, *chalilah*.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 74:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the *levyasan*, male and female. When He saw the world won't exist [if these giant animals have offspring] Hashem killed the female *levyasan* and preserved it for tzaddikim of the future.... The male *levyasan* remained alone. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to it, 'You aren't alone. I will be at your right side and I will play with you.' As it states (*Tehillim* 104:26), לוֹוִיתָן זֶה יִצְרָתָא לְשִׁחָא בִּי, "This *levyason*, You created, to play with it." Similarly, we say to those who have to be alone, "You aren't alone. The Creator of the world is with you to keep you happy."

It states (*Tehillim* 31:8-10), אֲנִילָה וְאַשְׁמַחָה בַּחֲסֶדְךָ, "I rejoice in Your kindness, because You saw my afflictions and You know the distress of my soul..." It seems that Dovid HaMelech is praising Hashem for saving him from his troubles. But if that is the correct translation, the following words of this chapter are difficult. Because two pesukim afterwards, it states, חַנּוּנִי ה' כִּי צָר לִי, "Have compassion on me, Hashem, because I am suffering." It seems that he is still suffering, and he wasn't saved yet.



The Nesivos Shalom answers that the first praise, *אשר ראית את עניי ידעת בצרות נפשי*, is praising Hashem for seeing me, and for knowing what I am going through. That in itself is a great comfort. Then Dovid requests that he be totally freed from his *yesurim*.<sup>4</sup>

### Tefillah

The Naom Megadim tells the following *mashal*(parable): There was once a person who was talking to a king. It was his first time in the palace, and he was mesmerized by its beauty and majesty. While the king was talking to him, he was busy observing the decorated walls and elaborate chandeliers, etc.

The king then hit him on the head with his staff to get his attention.

If the man is foolish, he will run away. But if he is wise, he will understand that the king wants his attention and that the king wants to speak to him, and that is a wonderful honor.

The *nimshal* is, if one doesn't speak to Hashem, Hashem might punish him to get his attention. The King wants you to communicate with Him, and that is the greatest honor.

This is hinted at in the *pasuk*, *אשרי העם, יודעי תרועה*, who knows

that even when matters are *רעה*, bad, it is also very good, *ה' באור פניך יהלכון*, because this directs them to turn and look at Hashem's face.

### Shabbos Hagadol

This Shabbos is called *שבת הגדול*, "The great Shabbos" because it commemorates a great miracle.

The Tur (430) writes, "The Shabbos before Pesach is called, *שבת הגדול* because a *גדול*, great miracle, happened on that day."

The Tur explains that in Mitzrayim, on this Shabbos, all the Yidden bought a sheep and bound it to their bedpost. The Mitzrim (Egyptians) asked them, "What are you doing with this animal?" They were concerned, because they worshipped the sheep. It was their *avodah zarah*. The Yidden replied, "Hashem commanded us to slaughter it for a *korban Pesach*. The Mitzrim were very upset, but they didn't say anything. The Tur writes, "The teeth of the Egyptians hurt (*שניהם קרות*) because the Jewish people would be slaughtering their god, but they didn't have permission to say anything. For this miracle, the Shabbos is called *שבת הגדול*."

*Tosfos* (Shabbos 87: quoting a Midrash) states a different miracle that occurred on that Shabbos. "When they bought the *korban* on Shabbos, the firstborns of the nations of the world gathered in front of the Jewish people

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4. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* and Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli were once locked in a prison cell. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset, because there was a smelly bucket in the room, used as a toilet, and he couldn't say a word of Torah or *tefillah*. Rebbe Zusha told him, "My dear brother, why are you upset? Hashem granted us the opportunity to perform the rare mitzvah of not studying Torah and not davening at a place where it is forbidden. It would be proper to dance, because we have the merit to do this rare mitzvah."

They started to dance around the bucket. The guard came quickly, and demanded to know why they were so happy. They didn't answer; they just continued dancing around the bucket. The guard said, "Oh, so the bucket is making you happy!" and he took it away from them.

Now they were able to daven and learn.

Presently, many communities aren't able to daven with a minyan, they aren't able to celebrate *simchos* with their entire family, the children can't go to cheder, etc. To some extent, everyone is in quarantine. Yet, we can be happy in these times, when we remember that Hashem has given us a rare opportunity to perform the mitzvah of *ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם*, to guard our lives, and to guard the lives of others. Let's accept this situation with joy, because this is the test that Hashem chose for us, today.

and asked, 'Why are you doing this?' They replied, 'This is a *korban Pesach* for Hashem, because He will kill all the firstborns.' The firstborns went to their parents, and to Pharaoh, pleading that they release the Jewish people, but they refused. The firstborns declared war and killed many Egyptians. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, לַמָּכָה מִצְרַיִם בְּבִכּוֹרֵיהֶם, 'To smite the Egyptians by the firstborns' (Tehillim 136:10)."

On this Shabbos we commemorate this miracle. As the Shulchan HaRav concludes, "They established that this miracle should be commemorated for all generations on Shabbos, and they called the Shabbos Shabbos HaGadol..."

Others explain that this Shabbos is called Shabbos HaGadol in anticipation for the יום ה' הגדול והנורא, Hashem's great and awesome day, when Moshiach will come. As it states (Malachi 3:24), הִנֵּה אֲנִי שׁוֹלֵחַ לָכֶם אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא, "Behold I will send you Eliyahu HaNavi before Hashem's great and awesome day arrives."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught that just as the 10th of Tishrei (Yom Kippur) atones for all sins, similarly, Shabbos HaGadol (which commemorates the miracles of the 10th of Nisan) also atones for all of one's sins. It is called Shabbos HaGadol, the great Shabbos, just as Yom Kippur is called *Yoma Rabba*, the great day.

To express the specialness of this Shabbos, the Ohev Yisroel *zt'l* (Likutei Na'ch, Shabbos HaGadol) writes, "The origin and the fountain of all Shabbosim of the year comes from two

Shabbosim: from Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuvah. They are the heads of all the Shabbosim throughout the year."

May we merit keeping this Shabbos with joy, and then its influence will be felt on Pesach, and throughout all Shabbosim of the year. And may we merit the יום ה' הגדול והנורא, Hashem's great and awesome day of the redemption, speedily in our days, Amen.

## Preparations

Once, at the start of Nisan, the directors of the Satmar institutions came to the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* to discuss financial matters. The Satmar Rebbe asked them to come back after Pesach. He explained, "Reb Yehoshua of Kroli *zt'l* said if one doesn't attain *ruach hakadosh* at the Seder, he isn't a human being.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we must prepare for it. I prefer to discuss financial issues after Pesach..."

The Avodas Yisroel *zt'l* (Shabbos HaGadol, ד"ה הנגמרא) writes, "All other holidays [Succos, Shavuot, and so on], the holiness of the holiday doesn't come to the person all at once. One draws the holiness out of the *yom tov* gradually via the *tefillos Maariv, Shacharis* and *Minchah*. But on Pesach, the *kedushah* of the *yom tov* comes to us at once. That's the reason it's called פסח, which literally means *to jump* [because one jumps right into the peak of the *kedushah* of the *yom tov*].

It follows that Pesach needs preparation. A bright spiritual light will come down to us and one needs to be pure in order to receive this bright light."<sup>6</sup>

5. Some say that Reb Yehoshua of Kroli said, "If one doesn't have *giluy Eliyahu* at the Seder and on Yom Kippur it's a sign his forefathers weren't at Har Sinai."

6. The Avodas Yisroel *zt'l* concludes, "המץ symbolizes the *yetzer hara*. We destroy the *chametz* (the *yetzer hara*) on *erev Pesach*, so we can receive the great holiness that is revealed on the night of Pesach..."

The Gemara (Beitzah 2) says, "If an egg was laid today, that is an indication that its shell was completed yesterday. The Imrei Emes *zt'l* says that this is the reason we place an egg on the קערה (Seder plate). The egg is a reminder that whatever happens tonight, at the Seder, was completed and prepared earlier. The amount of *kedushah* one receives is dependent on how much one prepared.

There was once a *baalebusta* who didn't know how to make *cholent*, so when she saw an advertisement for

## Knowing Hashem

Yirmiyahu HaNavi says (2:8), ותופשי התורה לא ידעוני, "Those who study Torah didn't know Me." Yeshayah HaNavi says (1:3), ישראל לא ידע, "The Jewish nation didn't know [Me]." Similarly, the Arizal says that in Mitzrayim, the Jewish nation didn't know Hashem. The Chareidim (ch.1) clarifies that these sources don't mean that they didn't know Hashem at all. "Even an *am ha'aretz* (ignorant person) knows Hashem. "If you ask him if he believes in Hashem, he will respond with a resounding "yes." But *emunah* has many levels. The *emunah* of the Yidden in Mitzrayim didn't reach the level of *daas*, "knowledge." It wasn't

as clear to them as the matters they saw with their eyes. Our goal is to attain *emunah* that is as clear and certain to us as the things we witness with our eyes.

We accomplish this by speaking about *emunah*, and by reviewing *emunah*.

As the Lechovitzer *zt'l* said, האמנתי I believe in Hashem, כי אדבר, because I speak about *emunah* (*Tehillim* 116:10).

The Baal HaTanya says that the י' of אהר of Shema is large, and it looks like a large hammer. This implies that one must hammer *emunah* of אהר ה' into his head.<sup>7</sup>

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a Shabbos cooking course called "Cholent 'N' More" she immediately signed up. After several months of studying, she graduated, and even received a diploma, stating that she is an expert, and is capable of making a delicious *cholent*.

That Shabbos, she told her husband that she will make the *cholent*, using the ingredients and tricks she learned. On Shabbos morning, however, there was a bad odor coming from the kitchen. The *cholent* spoiled, and the food was inedible.

She called her teacher on *motzei Shabbos* to find out what went wrong. Her teacher asked a few questions, but it seemed that her graduated pupil did everything right. Then the teacher asked, "Did you clean the pot before you began?"

She remembered that she didn't, and whatever was in the pot before she began cooking, ruined the taste of her cooking.

Pesach is approaching and we hope to receive the many blessings that this *yom tov* offers. But we must first clean and purify ourselves so we can receive the great light of the *yom tov*. If the "utensil" isn't clean, the final product won't turn out right.

People call a fool, "the *chacham* from the *Mah Nishtanah*," the *chacham* of the Hagaddah.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* asked, "Why do we call a fool this way? The *chacham* of the *Mah Nishtanah* asks wise questions! It would be more appropriate to call him "the חכם from the *Mah Nishtanah*."

The answer is, the *chacham* comes on the Seder night and asks wise questions, but where was he until now? Didn't he see everyone cleaning for Pesach, buying matzah, and so on? Why didn't he ask his questions then? Why did he wake up only now? Ay, the *chacham* from the *Mah Nishtanah* isn't very wise after all.

Let's not be that *chacham*. Let's prepare ourselves for these holy days now.

7. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said to his grandson, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*, "Eliyahu HaNavi comes to the Seder of every Yid, and there are tzaddikim who see him." The Sar Shalom raised his head to heaven and said, "But an even higher level is to believe that Eliyahu comes to our homes."

The following story demonstrates this point:

After saying שפך המזך, the Noda BeYehudah would escort Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l*, out of his house, and walk with him down the stairs in front of his home. The Chidushei HaRim said that the Noda b'Yehuda didn't actually see Eliyahu Hanavi but he believed that he was there, and believing is greater than *giluy Eliyahu*.



The Chida *zt'l* says that we should tell the following story at the Seder:

A woman in Tzefas was plagued by a *dibuk* (spirit). The Arizal sent his student, Reb Chaim Vital, to heal her.

When Reb Chaim Vital came into the room, the spirit immediately turned its face to the wall, explaining that he doesn't have permission to look at the *Shechinah*.

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

The spirit replied, "This woman woke up early in the morning and was striking flint stones to make a fire, but she wasn't succeeding. She became frustrated and shouted, 'Let it be for the Satan,' and with those words, I had permission to enter her as a *dibuk*."

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

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

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

"I believe, and if occasionally I have other thoughts, I regret them totally." And she began to cry.

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

There are many levels of belief in Hashem and in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Our goal is to attain a greater level of *emunah*.

The purpose of the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* (telling over the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*) is to help us increase our belief, so that our *emunah* in *yetzias Mitzrayim* should reach the level of *daas*, knowledge of Hashem.

## A New Pattern for Miracles

The Rishonim teach that, as a rule, Hashem wants *למעט הנס*, to minimize miracles. For example, Noach's *teivah* (ark) didn't have enough room for all the animals. It was a miracle that they all fit in. So why did Hashem command Noach to build a large *teivah* (300 *amos* long, 50 *amos* wide, 30 *amos* high)? Why couldn't Noach build a small *teivah*, and then the miracle would have been much greater when all the animals found room in the *teivah*? The answer is that Hashem wants to conceal His miracles, so that they won't be so noticeable.

But when we consider the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, we notice a different pattern. Hashem sought to *increase* the miracles. Hashem could have redeemed them from Mitzrayim with one *makah*, but Hashem performed ten *makos*. Why didn't Hashem minimize the miracles, as He usually does?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* answers with an analogy:

A bakery places its most attractive baked goods in the show case. The baked goods that are for sale aren't as beautiful. This is because the baked goods in the window and the baked goods on the shelves serve two different purposes. The baked goods on the shelves are for consumption, whereas the baked goods in the window are to draw consumers.

Generally, the purpose of the miracles that Hashem performs is to save the Jewish nation. When that's the purpose, there is a principle that Hashem wants to minimize the miracles. But by *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the purpose was that everyone should recognize and know Hashem. Being that the purpose was to draw awareness, then the more miracles the better. Each miracle increased our awareness that Hashem created and runs the world.

The Pri HaAretz (beginning of *parashas Bo*) adds that this is the reason Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. If the goal was to free the

nation it wasn't necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart. But when the purpose is, למען תספר שמי בכל הארץ, so the entire world will know about Hashem and His wonders, it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart, so that more miracles could take place.

It is always good to discuss the miracles that Hashem performs. However, it is particularly important to tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, because the purpose of the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is to teach us *emunah*. Through these discussions we acquire a heightened and improved *emunah*.

The difference between a *segulah* and a *refuah* is that a *refuah* is a remedy that can be explained scientifically. A *segulah* is a remedy that doesn't have a logical explanation. It is just a fact that this *segulah* helps and heals. The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* says that speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. This means that it isn't solely logical – that by talking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* one will believe in Hashem more. It is also a *segulah*. In ways that we can't explain, and in ways that we can explain, speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* increases *emunah*.

### The Mitzvah of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim

Before *magid*, when we tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, some people read the following section from the Zohar:

"Every person who tells the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and is happy with it will be happy with the *Shechinah* in the Olam HaBa (world to come) – which is the greatest joy of all. He is happy with his Master, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with the story he tells. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* of heaven and says, 'Come and listen to My praise that My children are telling. They are happy with My redemption!' The *malachim* listen and see that they are happy with the redemption... The *malachim*

praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miracles and for His holy nation that He has on earth, who are happy with His redemption... Thereby, Bnei Yisroel give strength to their Master, just as a king's power increases when his subjects praise him and express their gratitude to him... Therefore, we must praise Hashem and tell this story... If a person will ask, why do we have this mitzvah? [The answer is] of course one must retell all of Hashem's miracles. His words go up to heaven and all the angels gather and praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This brings honor to Hashem above and below. ברוך ה' לעולם אמן ואמן."

The Yesod Yosef (85) writes, "Whoever says the...Haggadah with happiness, without any anger, without laziness, and without feeling that it's a chore, *chas veshalom*...the *Shechinah* spreads out its wings on him to save him in all places and in all travels, and he merits miracles..."<sup>8</sup>

There are commentaries who say that the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך isn't just at the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the father has the mitzvah להגדת לבנך, to teach him about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But we strive to have the children ask questions about *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the Seder, because this night is *mesugal* for teaching *emunah*.

The Ohev Yisroel explains that on the Seder night the message of *emunah* will be engraved clearly in the child's heart and mind, in a way that can't be achieved any other day of the year. Therefore, the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) says, ואם אין דעת אביו מלמדו, "If the child isn't wise enough to ask questions, his father should teach him to ask questions." We want the child to ask questions, to obligate us with the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך on this night when *emunah* makes such a strong impression on the children.

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

The Ohev Yisroel writes, "The truth is, even if the child asks his father these questions other times during the year, the father must also answer him... Nevertheless, the holy Torah teaches us that throughout the year, even if you tell your son the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the words will not settle in his heart. Therefore the...Haggadah teaches, לא אמרתי אלא בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך. This means on the night of Pesach, when the mind is open for understanding...the light of wisdom is revealed, and *emunah* and *bitachon* hovers over all Jewish people, at this time, when you will answer your son and you will tell him the entire story, the father's words will certainly enter the son's ears, and he will truly believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But the rest of the year, when there's darkness in the world, the son isn't able to take in the father's words and truly believe them."

Every year, at the Seder, Reb Yaakov Yosef Weiss z'l from Manchester would tell his family how he was saved in the Holocaust. This is his story:

"I was sent to the camps together with a close childhood friend. I encouraged him to trust that Hashem will save us, but he wasn't able to accept such words.

One day, the Germans announced that it was our turn to go to the showers. We knew that this meant the gas chambers. My friend bitterly asked me, 'What do you say now?'

"I replied, 'Chazal say, even if a sharp sword is resting on one's neck, he shouldn't lose hope.'

"The Nazis pushed us into the gas chambers, but the doors didn't close. There were so many people. I was near the door, so a Nazi pulled me out. That saved my life..."

Reb Yaakov Yosef Weiss would repeat this story each Seder night, and he said he

received his strong *emunah* from his father who would strengthen their *emunah* at the Seder.

At the Seder we have the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך, to tell our children the miracles that occurred at the time of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This is our annual time for transmitting *emunah* to the next generation, and due to the holiness of the night and the holiness of the mitzvah, our words have a deep effect on our children's *neshamos*.

In *Shemonah Esrei* we say, השיבנו אבינו לתורתך, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah." Why do we call Hashem, "Father," in this *brachah*?

The *Tur* (115) explains that we are saying, "Hashem, You are our Father, and a father is obligated to teach his children Torah. Therefore, like a father, open our hearts and teach us Torah."

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l said that this also happens at the Seder. Hashem keeps the entire Torah, including the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך, to tell our children the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. We are Hashem's children, so at the Seder, Hashem teaches us *emunah*. He opens our hearts to grasp the wonderful miracles that occurred. And when Hashem is the teacher, we will surely perceive the lessons very well.

### Kittel

The head of the family customarily wears a *kittel* at the Seder, because it resembles shrouds. The Chasan Sofer zt'l explains that this is to remind him that there will be a time when he will be dressed in shrouds, and then he won't be able to teach his children about *yetzias Mitzrayim* and belief in Hashem. He should take advantage of the Seder night to teach them the fundamentals of *emunah*, for if not now, when?<sup>9</sup>

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9. After the Beis Yisroel of Gur's zy'a Seder, when he was taking off his *kittel* he said, "Earlier tonight, we put the *kittel* on and now we're taking it off. There will come a time when we'll wear a *kittel* and never take it off..."



Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* said that children don't always take their father's messages seriously. They think, "He's just saying it, but he doesn't really mean it." However, when the father is about to die, then the children know that everything the father says is very important. Fathers wear a *kittel* at the Seder, clothes resembling shrouds, so the children should understand that everything the father is telling them about *emunah*, etc. is very important, and they should take it to heart.

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* said that if a *niftar* would come down from heaven to this world for only a few moments, he will certainly use his time well. He wouldn't squander those few moments idly and waste them. This explains why we wear a *kittel* for the Seder. It is to help the head of family imagine that he was dressed in shrouds, buried in the ground and came back to the world for a short time, to perform the Seder. After imagining something like that he will utilize the time well.

The Maharal (*Hagaddah shel Pesach*, ענין לבישת, הקטל) compares the *kittel* to the white clothes that the *Kohen gadol* (High Priest) wore on Yom Kippur, when he entered the *kodesh kadoshim*.

Taking this a step further, we can understand that when we perform the Seder, it is like we are entering the *kodesh kadoshim*.<sup>10</sup>

יהי

Rebbe Meir of Djikev *zy'a* (*Imrei No'am*) says that a parent shouldn't conceal his good deeds from his children, so that they can learn from him. This is the meaning of the

*pasuk* (*Tehillim* 31:20), מה רב טובך, most of your good deeds, אשר צפנת ליראך, you should conceal. פעלת לחוסים בך, but for those who rely on you – your children, נגד בני אדם, do your good deeds in front of them, so they can learn from you.

On the words, והגדת לבנך, Onkelus writes, ותחוי לבנך, "Show your children." It is a night when the parents show their qualities to their children so they can learn from their ways.

This idea is alluded to with *yachatz*. We hide and put away the larger half of the matzah. This implies that we should be humble and conceal most of our good deeds. But the children search and find the *afikomon*. This is because on the Seder night, when we instill *emunah* into the children, it is proper to reveal even that half, which is generally concealed, so the children can learn from their parents.<sup>11</sup>

### Belief in Hashem, Alone

We say in the Haggadah, כנגד ארבע בנים דברה, תורה: אחד חכם ואחד רשע.

Notice that it states אחד by the *chacham* (wise one) in contrast to ואחד stated by the *rasha* (wicked one). The added וא in ואחד רשע indicates that the *rasha* of the Haggadah believes in the One Hashem, but he also believes in something else.

For example, when someone asks him, "How will you manage your upcoming expenses?" he replies, "Hashem will help. Also, I plan to do this, and I plan to do that..." This person believes in Hashem, but

10. When the Seder is on Friday night, some don't say שלום עליכם, the song that greets the Malachim, before Kiddush. One of the explanations for this is because at the Seder it is like we are in the *kodesh kadoshim*, about which it states, (*Vayikra* 16:17), וכל אדם לא יהיה באהל מועד בבאו לכפר בקדש, "No man may be in the Ohel Mo'ed when the *cohen gadol* enters the *kodesh kadoshim*..." The Yerushalmi (*Yoma* 5:2) adds that even *malachim* may not be there. We don't sing שלום עליכם at the Seder because the house receives a holiness similar to the קדש קדשים and the *malachim* cannot remain with us for the Seder.

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

not exclusively. It is **ואחד**, also Hashem. It isn't **אחד**, exclusively Hashem.

**אחד חכם** means that when one trusts in Hashem alone, he is wise. But when one says **ואחד** that he trusts in Hashem and also in something else he is called *rasha*. His *bitachon* isn't complete.<sup>12</sup>

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 60) writes, "All the mitzvos of the *korban pesach* are about **אחדות**, oneness... [It states] **על כרעיו ועל קרבו** (Shemos 12:9) [and Rashi writes, 'Roast it all at once: its head together with its feet together with its innards...'] because it isn't proper that this *korban* be divided into sections... Something that's cut into sections isn't one... Everything about this *korban* is about oneness.

"It states, **בבית אחד יאכל**, 'You shall eat it in one house' (12:46). The *korban* can't be divided and eaten...in two different places (see *Pesachim* 86.). This demonstrates oneness.

"And it states, **שה תמים בן שנה**, 'A perfect sheep, one year old...' (12:5). It must be 'one'

in years, too. If it was two years old, it wouldn't be one...

"Specifically **שה** (goat or sheep) is sacrificed, and not an **עגל**, calf, because a **שה**, due to its delicate nature is totally one. As *Chazal* say... 'When a sheep injures one limb, its entire body feels it...' The explanation is, **שה** is very delicate; it doesn't have a heavy nature like oxen... Therefore, when one of its limbs is injured, the entire sheep feels the pain... [this makes it 'one'].

"And, it states, **אל תאכלו ממנו נא ובשל מבושל כי אם** **צלי אש**, 'Don't eat it half-baked or cooked. Only roasted on the fire...' (12:9) ... This is because when something is cooked in water or in any other liquid, the meat particles separate. But roasting the meat takes out its juices, and the meat becomes firm and solid. [It becomes 'one' by roasting it]... This also explains why it can't be semi-roasted (**נא**). Roasted meat demonstrates oneness, and it is proper that the *korban* should be one for the One Hashem...

## 12. Consider the following *mashal*:

Witnesses and evidence pointed towards the guilt of someone accused of murder. The defense attorney said, "My client didn't commit the crime. The true murderer will be coming into the courtroom in less than five minutes and he will admit in front of the judge and jury that he committed the crime."

The jury, the judge, the witnesses, and everyone in the courtroom, kept looking towards the door to see who would come in and admit that he committed the crime. But five minutes passed, and then ten, and the doors remained closed.

The judge said to the defense attorney, "Why did you lie to us? No one is coming, and you knew that."

"That's true," the defense attorney said, "however, what happened in this courtroom these past ten minutes proves that the witnesses are false. As you saw, everyone in this courtroom was looking towards the door, including the witnesses who claimed my client committed the crime. Now, if they witnessed the murder and are certain that my client committed the crime, why were they interested to know who would come in? It should be obvious to them that no one is coming in. Why were the witnesses looking towards the door? That's my proof that they are false witnesses..."

However, the judge reached an opposite conclusion. He said, "It's true, everyone was looking to the door, including the witnesses, but I noticed that the accused didn't look towards the door, even once. It's obvious that he committed the crime, and he knew that no one was coming."

The *nimshal* is, when one believes that Hashem is the source for *parnassah*, and for all one's needs, he won't be looking around to see who can help him. He will do *hishtadlus*, because that is everyone's obligation, but he knows that Hashem alone is helping him, and no one else. There is no reason to look elsewhere for help.

"Similarly, it states, עֲצֵם לֹא תִשְׁבֵּרוּ בו, 'Don't break the bones,' for this would be dividing it... In short, the *korban pesach* should be whole because it is to teach us that Hashem is One. The Jewish nation has this mitzvah because Hashem is One and therefore, He chose the Jewish nation, who is one..."

The lesson of the *korban Pesach* is that Hashem is אחד, one. For our subject, this means we should turn to Him alone, and trust solely in Him.

### Everything Happens by *Hashgachah Pratis*

This night is called Seder, order. But are we commemorating something that is in order, or something totally out of order? Aren't the miracles that occurred totally distant from the order of how the world is generally run?

However, when we know that everything happens through *hashgachah pratis*, there is no difference between miraculous times and natural times. They are both expressions of the "order" that Hashem chooses. At the Seder we become aware that nature isn't the order of the world, Hashem's will is.

Matzos are round, to symbolize a cycle, an order (see *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 25:30). By יִחַץ we break the round matzah to remind ourselves that things don't just run on their own cycle. Everything runs only through Hashem's decree – and that is the true order of the world.

The first Ani Maamin states, אֲנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאֱמוּנָה, שְׁלִימָה שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ שֶׁמוֹ הוּא ... עָשָׂה וְעוֹשֶׂה וְיַעֲשֶׂה לְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים, "I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His name...did, does, and will do all deeds." The top matzah represents our belief in עָשָׂה – that everything that happened in the past was from Hashem. The middle matzah represents עוֹשֶׂה – that everything happening now is according to His will. The bottom matzah represents יַעֲשֶׂה – everything that will happen in the future will be from Hashem. We break the middle matzah because it is hardest for us to believe that even the present, that

everything that is happening now is completely Hashem's decree.

In the Haggadah it states, וִירְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרִים כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר... וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר... בִּיד כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר... וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר... "The Mitzrim afflicted us, as it says... Hashem heard our prayers, as it says... Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim... with an outstretched arm, as it says..."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* translates this paragraph as follows: "The Mitzrim afflicted us, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, because Hashem decreed it. We went out of Mitzrayim, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, because Hashem decreed it." Everything happens by Hashem's decree. The hardships and the salvations, the great matters, and the seemingly trivial matters, they are all כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, according to Hashem's decree and will.

In the Torah it states (*Shemos* 13:3), הַיּוֹם אַתֶּם הֵיוֹתֶם הַיּוֹם אַתֶּם, "Today you are leaving, in the month of Aviv."

Rashi asks, "Don't we know when they left Mitzrayim? Moshe was telling them: Take notice of the *chesed* Hashem performed for you: He redeemed you when the weather was comfortable [for travel]; when it wasn't too hot and it wasn't too cold, and there was no rain."

It seems odd that the weather should be mentioned. The joy of the redemption was so great; did the Yidden really care about the weather?

To understand the question, imagine that a Holocaust survivor told you that he jumped out the window of a moving train. The train was headed towards the concentration camps and he managed to save his life by taking the huge risk of jumping out the window. Would you ask him, "How was the weather that day? Was it hot, cold, or raining?" He will probably respond, "Don't you understand what I'm telling you? My life was saved! The weather was completely unimportant." Nevertheless, the Torah tells us to take note of the comfortable weather Bnei Yisroel enjoyed when they left Mitzrayim to teach us that everything, even the seemingly trivial, weather related detail



is orchestrated by Hashem for the benefit of His people. Nothing is insignificant. It is all part of the *seder*, order of the world in which we live.

Similarly, in life, it isn't only the major issues that are pre-destined and planned by Hashem. Even the minutest details are predestined and planned by Hashem.

The Yidden enslaved in Mitzrayim were probably looking forward to the time when they would be free men, when they could eat wholesome bread, instead of the poor man's bread – matzah. But when they left Mitzrayim, they were eating matzah again! As we say in the Haggadah, *הא לחמא עניא די אכלו*, אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים, "This is the bread of affliction that we ate in Mitzrayim," and we say, *מצה זו שאנו אוכלים... על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמין* that we eat matzah because this is what they ate at the time of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This teaches us that Hashem's will always prevails. If Hashem wants Bnei Yisroel to eat matzah, they will do so as slaves and as free men. Because everything is in His hands and happens by His decision alone.

We add that even when a human being who has free will, does something to you, that too is part of Hashem's *hashgachah*.

As it states (*Bereishis* 45:23), *ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה*, חמרים נשאים מטוב מצרים, "Yosef sent his father ten donkeys..." The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 10) explains that donkeys don't know what they are carrying, nor do they know why they are carrying it. Yosef sent his father ten donkeys to hint to his father that his ten brothers aren't responsible for selling him to Mitzrayim. Like donkeys, they didn't know what they were doing. They thought they were acting on their own, but they were really carrying out Hashem's plan. "Don't be angry at my ten brothers who sold me. Ultimately, it was Hashem's plan that I should be sold to Mitzrayim –and that's the primary reason that everything occurred."

## Everything is for the Good

A renowned *mechanach* (educator) of Yerushalaim, whose wife wasn't emotionally stable, brought a few *bachurim* to his home for the Seder. Halachah states, (472:1) *יהא שולחנו*, ערוך מבעוד יום כדי לאכל כשתחשך, "The table should be set in the daytime so one can start the meal [and begin the Seder immediately] when it turns nighttime..." But in this home, everything was topsy-turvy. It seemed that they didn't even begin preparing the home for the *yom tov*. The *bachurim* were taken aback.

Their host told them, "In this house, we celebrate true freedom. In many homes, the tables are beautifully set, the children sit with *derech erez* (*proper conduct*), dressed in their finest *yom tov* clothes. The sight is a delight to behold. But that isn't freedom, because they are enslaved to this perfect state. If anything was out of order, they wouldn't know how to handle their disappointment. But in this home, we believe Hashem is leading us in the very best way. Therefore, we are happy with everything that happens to us – and that is true freedom."

On Erev Pesach Reb Bertze z'l (a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Karlin zy'a) set the Seder table himself (as he would, every year), and left for shul to daven Maariv.

Meanwhile, at home, his wife's apron got caught on the tablecloth, and as she walked by, the matzos and wine fell to the floor.

When Reb Ber'tze came home, he found the house in a messy state, and his wife moping in bed.

She blamed him for what happened. She said, "Why weren't you more careful with the matzos and wine? You put them at the edge of the table, where they can topple over easily!"

Reb Ber'tze said, "It wasn't my fault and it wasn't your fault. This was Hashem's plan." And Reb Ber'tze celebrated the Seder with joy.

The next morning Rebbe Asher of Karlin *zt'l* spoke about the Sedarim of people in his generation (which he perceived with his *ruach hakadosh*). And then he said, "But the Seder of Reb Ber'tze was greater than all others. No one reached the heights which he attained." This was because he remained happy despite his overturned Seder table and upset wife and because he believed that everything is from Hashem, and everything is for the good.

There are four sons in the Haggadah. Rebbe Hirsh Rimovver said, "In my opinion, the *שאינו יודע לשאול* (*the one who can't ask questions*) is the best off. because he doesn't ask any questions. He accepts everything that happens to him with *emunah*. He knows that this is how it has to be.

As we say in the Haggadah, *וירד מצרימה אנום*, על פי הדיבור, that by Hashem's decree we went down to Mitzrayim. The *galus* (exile) to Mitzrayim, and everything that happens in our life is determined and decided by Hashem and everything is for the best.

ומורא גדול זה גלוי שכניה

There are many indications that the *Shechinah* is present at the Seder.

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 114) states, *הביאו לפניו*, "They bring before him [the *karpas*]..." It seems it should have stated, *הביאו לו*, "They bring him [the *karpas*]" (as the Mishnah before this one says, *מוגו לו*, "They pour him..."). The Tiferes Shlomo answers the discrepancy by explaining to us that the Mishnah is alluding to everything we do on the night of the seder. This night is *before Him*, before Hashem.

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

The Shlah HaKadosh (quoted in *Mishnah Berurah* 473:71) states that we shouldn't read *magid* while leaning back (*הסיכה*). We can explain that this too is because the *Shechinah*

is present. (Similar to the halachah that one doesn't recline at the Seder when his Rebbe is present.)

Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l* would have a *taanis dibur* at the Seder. He explained, Hashem Himself is at the Seder, as we say, *ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך*, "I came to the land of Mitzrayim, I and not an angel..." How can we speak before the King?

The Maharil says that if a person has collateral from a non-Jew, he may place it on his table on Pesach (quoted in *Magen Avraham* (תע"ב סק"ב). The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos Shabbos HaGadol* vol.2 p.255) explains, "Due to the holiness of telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *tumah* of those utensils won't affect us, even if they weren't *toveled*."

The Maharal teaches us that the *malachim* were Hashem's emissaries to perform the *makos*. To protect Klal Yisroel, Hashem raised the Yidden above the *malachim*. The *makos* didn't affect them because they were on a higher level. *Makas bechoros* was performed by Hashem Himself. As it states, *ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך*. "I passed through Eretz Mitzrayim, I and not an angel..."

So how were the Yidden saved? The Maharal teaches that Hashem elevated the Yidden up to His level. They became a *חלק ממעלה*, *kivayachol*, united with Hashem, and thereby they were saved.

This explains why this *yom tov* is called *פסח*, which means to jump (*Rashi Shemos* 12:23). On this holiday, we jump up to Hashem's level, *keviyachol*.

The Seder has fifteen *simanim*, which is the order of the Seder: *קדש ורחץ כרפס* etc. Customarily, we say these titles before performing the mitzvos, and the *sefarim* suggest that there is a holiness in just saying these words (see *Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah*).

Notice the order, 1) *קדש ורחץ*, holy (2) pure. This is the order that the *malachim* use, as we say in *Shacharis*, *ובטהרה בקדושה ובהדרה*, *kedushah* precedes *taharah*.

Generally, human beings must be pure, and then they can become holy (טהרה וקדושה).

But at the Seder, we jump to a higher level – to the level of *malachim*. We begin with *kedushah*. Afterwards, comes the forty-nine days of *sefiras ha'omer* when we attain *טהרה*, *taharah*, too.<sup>13</sup>

Rebbetzin Chavah Leah married the Chasam Sofer's son, the Ksav Sofer *zt'l*. Her sisters-in-laws told her about their father's wondrous Seder. They told her that it is literally impossible to look at the Chasam Sofer's face at the Seder, because his countenance shines so brightly.

Rebbetzin Chavah Leah didn't believe them. She thought it was imaginations. At the Seder she tried to look at her father-in-law's face, and she admitted that she couldn't.

The Avnei Nezer said, "My father-in-law (the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l*) always appeared like a *malach*, but at the Seder, he appeared like a *saraf* (a higher angel). On the night of the Seder, the Rebbe of Kotzk was elevated in a manner that we didn't see by him, even on Yom Kippur.... During the second half of the Seder, sparks of fire spurted from his mouth..." (אביר הרועים ע"ג, שם"ד).

The great emotion and *yiras Shamayim* of these tzaddikim at this time is understood, because of the holiness of the night. As we say in the Haggadah, ובמורא גדול זה גילוי שכינה, "[Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim] with immense fear; the *Shechinah* was present."

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 12) states that one shouldn't daven in Aramaic because the *malachim* don't understand that language. But when the *Shechinah* is present, one may daven in Aramaic, because his words are spoken directly to Hashem. He doesn't need the *malachim* to understand them and to elevate his *tefillos* in order that they should reach Hashem.

For example, when visiting the sick, one may pray for the ill in Aramaic because the *Shechinah* is present – as it states (*Tehillim* 41), ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי, "Hashem supports him on his sick-bed" – and you are speaking directly to Hashem.

At the Seder, we also say some words in Aramaic. We say, הוא לחמא עניא, etc.

The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that Hashem is present at the Seder, therefore we can speak in Aramaic.

The Seder ends with הרי גדיא, which is also Aramaic. This hints that Hashem is present

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13. There are hints to *avodas Hashem* in these words, and in the order of the Seder.

Rebbe Yochanan Rachmistrifka *zy'a* taught: קדש ורחץ, if a person wants to sanctify and purify himself, the path is כרפס, which is *roshei teivos* for כלא ראשון פיה סגור, the first rule is to keep the mouth shut. By avoiding forbidden speech, one is able to attain holiness and purity. יחץ מניד means that when you do speak, say only half of what you were planning to say.

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* silently repeat to himself the *simanim* of the Seder (קדש ורחץ כרפס etc), before he began the Seder. Chassidim explain that he was reminding himself of all the wonderful steps of the Seder, so he could keep each step properly. Sometimes a person reaches נרצה and he regrets that they had so many special opportunities at the Seder that he didn't take full advantage of. Therefore, even before starting the Seder, Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* reminded himself of the order of the night. This reminder would inspire him to take advantage of all the mitzvos of this holy night.

The order of the Seder, קדש ורחץ etc. are called *simanim*. When someone claims a lost object, he had to give evidence of ownership and then he can get back the lost object. Throughout the year, due to his sins, a person can lose some of his holiness. We can say that when he does all the *simanim* of the Seder he can get his lost *kedushah* back.



from the beginning of the Seder until the end.

This also sheds understanding on why the Seder night is such an auspicious time for *tefillah*. Hashem is present and therefore whatever we request has a strong impact in Heaven.

We say, *כל דכפין ייתי ויכול*, "Whoever is hungry, come and eat." What will be if there are many hungry people and they all accept our offer and come to the Seder? How will we have enough room for all of them? How will we have enough food for all of them?

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*drashos Shabbos HaGadol* (תקס"ב ד"ה כי תבאו)) answers that on this night, our homes receive the holiness of Eretz Yisroel, and wherever there's holiness there is plenty of room and abundance.

As Chazal (*Avos* 5:5) say, "No one ever said he doesn't have a place to sleep in Yerushalaim." Due to the holiness of Yerushalaim, there was always enough room for whoever came.

Chazal also say, *עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רוחים*, they stood in the Beis HaMikdash tightly, one next to the other, but when they bowed down, everyone had place.

Chazal also say that the *לחם הפנים* was sufficient for all the *Kohanim* present. Even if one received only a tiny bit of the bread, it was enough to satiate him.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that this is all because when there's holiness there is room and bounty.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "In past times, many people lived in Eretz Yisroel. Today, there isn't enough room in Eretz Yisroel for that amount of people. The holy city Yerushalaim, which was holier, contained all the people of Eretz Yisroel [on the *yomim tovim*] and no one ever said he doesn't have a place to sleep in Yerushalaim. All those people were able to go to the *עזרה*, courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash, because it was even holier. They would stand *צפופים*, next to one

another, and bow *רווחים*, with plenty of room. The Midrash states that in the times of Yehoshua bin Nun, the entire nation stood between the two poles of the *Aron*. This is because holiness doesn't take up space in this physical world... This also applies to *הסתפקות*, to having enough food. Hashem's blessing was in their food and in all their utensils. This happened due to the holiness of the Jewish people and the holiness of the land.

"With these ideas, I explain, *כהא לחמא עניא די*, *אכלו אברהמא*, 'This is the bread of poverty our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim with hunger and suffering.' We are still eating the same poor-man's bread [because we are poor]... Nevertheless, *כל דכפין ייתי ויכול כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח*, 'Whoever is hungry, come and eat with us.' There will be enough. As Chazal say, 'The entire nation can eat the same *korban Pesach*.' Our apartments and homes will become spacious, and there will be room for all the guests. This is perfectly logical, because as we tell Hashem's wonders and miracles our house becomes like a miniature Eretz Yisroel. Chazal (*Megillah* 29.) say, 'In the future, the *batei midrashim* and the *batei knesiyos* will move to Eretz Yisroel.' Our houses will also move to Eretz Yisroel. This is the meaning of the words, *השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל*, 'We are here now. Next year *this house* will be in Eretz Yisroel'..." and therefore an aspect of Eretz Yisroel exists at the Seder, and there will be room and food for everyone.

### An Inherently Special Night

The *Piyut* (*poem*) *אז רב נסים הפלאת בלילה* talks about the many miracles that happened on this special night. Many of the miracles happened even before *yetzias Mitzrayim*. It seems that this night is inherently special (and not only because the redemption from Mitzrayim took place on this night).

The *piyut* says:

Avraham Avinu conquered four mighty kings on this night.

On this night Hashem warned Lavan in a dream that he mustn't harm Yaakov.

Hashem also came to Avimelech in a dream on the first night of Pesach, telling him that he mustn't harm Sara.

Yaakov fought with the *malach* and won, on this night.

Yitzchok blessed Yaakov, on this night.

The Targum Yonasan (*Toldos* 27:1) says that Yitzchok said to Yaakov, "My son, on this night all the angels in heaven are praising Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and the treasures in heaven are open." This all happened before *yetzias Mitzrayim*!

The Torah (*Shemos* 12:16) says, *וביום הראשון מקרא קדש וביום השביעי מקרא קדש יהיה לכם* "The first day [of Pesach] is a holiday and the seventh day is a holiday..." This *pasuk* was said on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, two weeks before *yetzias Mitzrayim* occurred!

The Kedushas Levi (*Beshalach* *היום הזה*) explains that it isn't the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* that happened on this night that makes the night special, rather, it is because the night is special that the miracles occurred. He writes, "There are days when Hakadosh Baruch Hu bestows His goodness to His nation, Yisroel, and reveals His love to them. The most *mesugal* day for this is Pesach."

As the Midrash says, "What is Hashem occupied with on the first night of Pesach? He is occupied with performing miracles for Klal Yisroel." As the *piyyut* says, *אז רוב ניסים, הפלאות בלילה*, "Most miracles happened on this night." May we merit miracles this year as well.

## Chumros

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught that generally one doesn't need to be excessively *machmir* (stringent). The exception is *chametz* on Pesach, because each *chumrah* creates an ornament for the *kallah* (the *Shechinah*).

Indeed, there are many *chumros* when it comes to Pesach – each family and community has their own set of stringencies – and it is important to keep these *chumros* in a spirit of joy. Rebbe Bunim calls the *chumros* "ornaments for the *kallah* (*Shechinah*)", and when one adorns a *kallah* for her *chasunah*, there is an atmosphere of joy and excitement. We should keep the *chumros* in a similar happy spirit.

The *rasha* in the Haggadah asks, *מה העבודה, לא ידענו*, "Why do you do this work?" The Pela Yoetz (*Elef HaMagen, Bishalach*) explains that the *rasha* is asking, "Why do you have so many *chumros* on Pesach? Isn't keeping halachah enough? Why do you need to add more and more *chumros*?"

We tell the *rasha*, *אילו היה שם לא היה נגאל*, that if he was in Mitzrayim, he wouldn't be redeemed.

The Pela Yoetz explains that this is because we were redeemed from Mitzrayim because Klal Yisroel practiced *chumros*.<sup>14</sup>

He explains:

At *kriyas Yam Suf* the *malachim* said, "The Yidden are also idol worshipers. Why should they merit to be saved while the Mitzrim are drowned?"<sup>15</sup>

Why, indeed, were they saved?

14. Perhaps the Yidden in Mitzrayim had *chumros* to safeguard them from *chametz*, like the *chumros* we have today. Or perhaps it is referring to the *chumrah* that they didn't change their names, language, and clothing, to protect them from intermarrying and intermingling with the Egyptians.

15. Similarly, it states *לָקַחַת לְךָ גֹּי מִקֶּרֶב גֹּי*, "to save a nation from the midst of a nation." The Jewish nation wasn't noticeably different than the Mitzrim. It wasn't so clear that they should be saved and not the Egyptians.

It was because of the *chumros* that the Jewish nation practiced. As the Gemara (*Brachos* 20:) says, Hashem has compassion on the Jewish nation, even when they don't deserve it, because they go beyond the letter of the law, and are *machmir* (stringent). "Hashem says, 'How can I not have compassion on the Jewish nation? I obligated them to *bench(bless) birchas hamazon* when they eat bread to satiation, but they are stringent, and they *bench* after eating only a *kezayis*...'"

Even if the Yidden didn't deserve *kriyas Yam Suf*, Hashem had compassion on them because they would go beyond the letter of the law and do more.

However, the *rasha* in the Hagadah doesn't want *chumros*. He only wants to do what is obligatory, and no more. We tell him, "We were saved because of our *chumros*. If you were there you wouldn't be saved."

Often, the *chumrah* is a family custom, and then one must be even more careful to uphold it. As it states, *אל תשוש תורה אמך*, "Don't abandon the Torah of your mother," and Chazal say that this *pasuk* is referring to abiding by the customs of our forefathers.

There was a *chasan* (a Belzer chassid) who wasn't planning on wearing a *shtreimel* after his *chasunah*. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a* asked him about that. The *chasan* replied, "Clothes don't mean anything to me. A *shtreimel*...a hat... they're the same to me. What's inside the person is important."

The Rebbe told him the following Gemara (*Gittin* 60:):

לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה שנאמר כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a pact (*bris*) with Yisroel solely because of the oral Torah. As it states (*Shemos* 34:27), "Because of these words [the oral Torah] I am making a *bris* with you and with Bnei Yisroel."

What is the oral Torah in our times, now that the Mishnah and Gemara were written down? Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz said, "In our

generation, the oral Torah is the customs, the *minhagim*. Customs are so important that for them, Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes a *bris* with the Jewish people."

It states (*Devarim* 1:44), *בשעיר ער חרמה*. The Slonimer tzaddikim explained, "To veer away from a family custom, even a hairsbreadth (*בשעיר*), ends with, *ער חרמה*, destruction, and totally falling away from *Yiddishkeit*."

The Haggadah therefore calls the *rasha* a *כופר בעיקר*, a non-believing Jew. As we explained, the *rasha* doesn't want any safeguards. But without these safeguards, one can fall to low levels, until he becomes a non-believer. For these reasons, keeping family *chumros* are essential.

## Perspective

Although *chumros* are essential, especially a family custom, one must be cautious with them, because taken the wrong way, it can cause one to fall rather than to grow.

It is important to put things into perspective, and to know what is a *chumrah* and what is halachah.

Sometimes a person transgresses a *chumrah* and he feels depressed, as though he transgressed halachah itself. This is taking the *chumrah* too far.

Consider the following story:

A student of the Noda B'Yehudah left the path of Torah and eventually became a priest. The Noda B'Yehudah contemplated how to bring him back. After making some inquiries, he heard that the priest has a set time each day when he relaxes on his porch and watches the passersby. The Noda B'Yehudah decided to pass by at that hour and greet him. If the priest returns his greeting, it meant that there is hope to bring him back to Judaism. But if he ignores him, there is nothing he can do to help him. As Chazal say, "Just as there is a mitzvah to say something that will be heard, there is a



mitzvah to refrain from speaking what will not be heard."

When the Noda B'Yehudah passed by, the priest greeted him first. This was a good sign. The Noda B'Yehudah answered his greeting in a friendly manner, and they shared a few pleasant words. Then the Noda B'Yehudah continued on his way. When the Noda B'Yehudah came home, he asked one of his students to invite the priest to his house. The priest arrived soon afterwards.

The Noda B'Yehudah came straight to the point. He asked his former student, "Why did you leave the path of Torah?"

"One Pesach, when I was eating *teig* [in that era yeshiva students ate in the homes of the townspeople] a kernel of wheat was found inside one of the pots. The head of the household sent me to ask you whether we may eat it. You said that the food is permitted according to halachah, but because of the *chumros* of Pesach, it would be proper not to eat it.

"I returned to the house and told them what you said. They were G-d fearing people and immediately accepted your *psak* (*Halacha ruling*). They were about to throw everything out, but I wanted to eat it, so I asked them to leave a portion for me, and I ate it with relish.

"But I immediately regretted what I did. I felt like a *rasha* for consuming questionable food. I couldn't stop thinking about how I succumbed to temptation. Due to my depression and despair, I fell to low levels. Eventually, as you see, I became a priest."

The Noda B'Yehudah exclaimed, "But I told you that it was permitted. There was no sin at all! I was just recommending a *chumrah*. Therefore, from now on regret all your sins and return to Hashem."

The student followed this counsel and he became a *baal teshuvah*.

Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov *zt'l* once came to Baron Rothschild, and the Baron greeted

him with immense honor. The Baron showed the Rebbe that he has a special house for Pesach. "This way I know my house is perfectly clean from *chametz*."

The Baron noticed that the Rebbe remained silent, so he asked, "Aren't you impressed with this *chumrah*?"

The Rebbe replied, "My grandfather was the Tzanzer Rav, and as you know, he wasn't wealthy. Nevertheless, if he felt something was important, or even ideal, money never prevented him from doing what he thought was important. My grandfather never had a Pesach house. Apparently, he didn't consider it a necessary *chumrah*.

"Matzah is made specifically from ingredients that can become *chametz*. We don't make matzah from potatoes or rice, only from flour and water, which have the tendency of becoming *chametz*. Hashem wants us to be in a challenging place, and to pass the test..."

The Baron praised the Rebbe for his wise response and gave him a large donation (3000 *reinish*. He continued donating this generous sum the following years, too).

So, we see that not every *chumrah* should be pursued. It is important to keep this in mind.

### When a *Chumrah* Hurts Others

Some people have no regrets when they harm and embarrass others in order to uphold a *chumrah*. That is certainly taking the matter too far. Embarrassing another Yid is a *de'oraysa*, a sin from the Torah. This consideration should come before any *minhag* and *chumra*.

Reb Meshulem Igra *zt'l* ate matzah only at the Seder (as a precaution from *chametz*). And even then, he ate only from the matzos that he baked himself, with extreme caution.

Once, on *erev Pesach*, Reb Meshulam Igra's children were hungry, and the maid was thinking what she could give them. The

*chametz* was already burned. She found some matzah – she didn't realize that these were Reb Meshulem Igra's special matzos – and she gave them to the children.

When the *rebbetzin* discovered that her husband's matzos were given to the children, she decided to leave home and return just in time for the Seder. She didn't want to be home when her husband found out that his matzos were taken, because she knew he would be upset.

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

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

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

He realized that his stringencies were a *chumrah*, while becoming angry and insulting others is a Torah prohibition. He chose to be cautious with the latter.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's son once got angry with the maid when she put matzah into the soup (rendering the soup *gebroks*). Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer told him, "Now you may eat this matzah too." He was telling him that getting angry and insulting others, is worse than *gebroks*.

A *chasan*, only a couple of weeks after his *chasunah* (wedding), was participating in his father-in-law's Seder. When the soup was served, he found a wheat kernel in his plate. His in-laws said they cleaned the house very well, and they don't know how this happened. But the *chasan* abruptly took his wife, and left the house. He felt that he couldn't trust his in-law's level of *kashrus*.

This left everyone feeling uncomfortable and ashamed.

He went directly to Rav Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalaim, and told him what happened. He was certain the Rav would say he did the right thing by leaving the house.

The Rav took the *chasan's streimel*, shook it forcefully, and a few wheat kernels fell out. Apparently, on the Shabbos before his *chasunah*, wheat kernel confetti were thrown at the *chasan* (as customary) when he had his *aliyah leTorah*, and they were still in his *streimel*.

It wasn't his in-laws who were at fault. The *chasan* was guilty for not cleaning his *streimel*. He embarrassed his wife and his in-laws in the name of righteousness, and it was all an error.

One year, at the Seder of Reb Binyamin Rabinowitz *zt'l* (dayan of the Eidah haChareidis, Yerushalaim) *shulchan orach* began just twenty minutes before *chatzos*. His children began serving the meal quickly so they could get to the *afikomon* before *chatzos*.

Reb Binyamin *zt'l* said, "The *rebbetzin* worked hard to prepare the meal. She may be upset if we rush through the meal without enjoying what she prepared."

Reb Binyamin added, "All the *chumros* we have at the Seder aren't worth anything if it will cause another Yid to *krechitz* (sigh)."

Reb Shlomo Frishtik *shlita* would eat machine matzos, growing up in his father's home. When Reb Shlomo Frishtik married Rebbe Gedalya Moshe of Zvhill's *zt'l* daughter, Reb Shlomo Frishtik was wondering whether he should eat machine matzos when he visits his father, or whether, in honor of his wife and in honor of the prestigious lineage that he just joined via marriage, he should respect their custom and eat solely hand matzos. The couple was supposed to go to his father's home for the Seder, and he didn't know whether they should eat the machine matzos.

He asked the rabbanim of Yerushalaim for counsel, and they advised him to ask Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler (his wife's grandfather) directly.

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "In heaven they won't ask you whether you ate hand matzah or machine matzah. They will ask you only two questions: (1) Did you guard your eyes? (2) Did you guard your mouth from hurting another Yid?"

Once, a guest in Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's home was eating *gebroks*. Some members of Reb Shlomke's family wanted to stop him, but Rebbe Shlomke signaled to them that they shouldn't say anything.

The Rebbe explained, "In heaven, you will not be asked whether you ate *gebroks* or not. You will be asked whether you watched your eyes, and whether you guarded your tongue from hurting another Yid."<sup>16</sup>

Rebbe Yochanon Twersky of Tolne *zy'a* was extremely careful not to eat *gebroks*, as this was the strict *minhag* of the tzaddikim of Chernobyl for many generations. Once, on *chol hamoed*, the 19th of Nissan, the Rebbe lead a *tish* in honor of Rebbe Aharon of Karlin's *yahrtzeit*. At the end of the table sat a *litvishe* man eating *gebroks*. He was dipping his matzah into the soup. The chassidim around him were appalled and they rebuked him harshly. The embarrassed man quickly pushed his soup away.

The Rebbe asked his *gabbai* to bring him another bowl of soup. The *gabai* turned to go into the kitchen to bring it, but the Rebbe said, "No, I want the soup that was pushed to the middle of the table."

Everyone was shocked, because they knew it was *gebroks*. The Rebbe explained, "When people embarrassed this Yid for eating *gebroks*, it created a *kitrug* (*prosecuting angel*) over me and my family. I want to eat his soup to appease this man, and to save him from shame."

In conclusion, as important as these customs and *chumros* are, honoring our fellow man is a greater obligation. Often, one should keep his family's *chumros*, even when it causes some discomfort and unease. But it is important to keep in mind that it isn't a simple question, and every situation should be weighed individually.

### ***Bedikas and Biur Chametz***

We begin with a story that demonstrates the heights a person can attain by doing the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz* (*searching for Chametz*) with *mesirus nefesh* (*sacrifice*).

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* learned in the Chevron yeshiva, and he was the only *bachur* of his rented apartment who planned on staying there for Pesach. This meant that *bedikas chametz* was his responsibility.

He studied the halachos well, and on the night of *bedikas chametz* he checked for *chametz* for several hours.

Then he remembered that he hadn't yet checked the roof. The roof wasn't only his responsibility, it was the responsibility of everyone who lived in the apartment building. But knowing that people tend to rely on others, he realized that if he didn't take care of it himself, perhaps no one would.

He climbed up on the roof and found it very cluttered and dirty. It was almost impossible to do *bedikas chametz* there. He

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**16.** The Jewish nation is called *segulah*, as it states (*Shemos* 19:5), והייתם לי סגולה. The word סגולה comes from the word סגל, which is a vowel that has two dots above one dot below. They represent the two eyes and one mouth. Guard these, and you will be a סגולה, a special treasure for Hashem.

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



would need to clean up first, and then do *bedikas chametz*.

He realized that this would take hours (and he was already tired) but he kept reminding himself, "I'm doing the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz*" and that gave him the strength to continue. By the time he finished *bedikas chametz*, it was already morning.

He thought he would be tired at the Seder, but he found that he wasn't. He enjoyed each word of the Haggadah, as he had never before. He also felt very closely connected to Hashem the entire time. After the Seder he felt so inspired that he couldn't fall asleep. He stayed awake all night studying and learning about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Reb Shimshon tells how the entire Pesach was exalted, and how after Pesach, he continued to grow higher and higher, and he attributes it all to the *bedikas chametz* that he performed with *mesirus nefesh*.

He said, "If I have any quality today, it's because of that mitzvah *d'rabbanan* of *bedikas chametz*, which I did with *mesirus nefesh*."

Reb Shimshon was *niftar* on the 12th of Nisan. He was buried the next evening, on the 13th of Nisan, the night of *bedikas chametz* (that year Pesach was on Motzei Shabbos).

Chazal say, Hashem fills the lives of tzaddikim. They are *niftar* on the day they were born. Reb Shimshon Pinkus's life was completed on the date of his great elevation.

Reb Yeruchem, the *mashgiach* of Yeshivas Mir *zt'l*, elaborates on the immense purity a Yid attains on *erev Pesach* when he gets rid of the *chametz*, which symbolizes getting rid of all one's bad and sins. He said, "If we

came to this world just for these mitzvos, *דיינו*, it would also be worthwhile."

When Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov's sister once came to visit her brother, the Rebbe asked her, "Do you remember our father's *bedikas chametz*? It took all night and it was performed with tears and hisorerus..." This is because *bedikas chametz* signifies getting rid of all the *tumah* (impurity) and *aveiros* (sins).

Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes in a letter, "When the Jewish people lived in their land, *erev Pesach* was a joyous holiday. On this day everyone brought the *korban Pesach* and said *Hallel*. Today's *erev Pesach* should be similar... We should be busy with mitzvos all day long, burning the *chametz*, preparing for the Seder..."

The Bas Ayin (*Drush lePesach, Metzora*) writes, "*Erev Pesach*...when a person does *teshuvah sheleimah* (complete repentance) before Hashem, and eradicates all the *chametz* and all the bad in his heart, it is an *eis ratzon* (auspicious time), greater than the entire year..."<sup>17</sup>

When we burn the *chametz*, the world is cleansed from impurities, and the *tefillot* we say at this time are answered.

The Ateres Yehoshua of Djikev *zt'l* would recite the *tefillah* of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l*<sup>18</sup> when he burned his *chametz*.

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

Tzaddikim taught that the war of Gog and Magog, which heralds the coming of Moshiach, will take place on *erev Pesach*, during the three hours when people are burning their *chametz*.

17. The Bas Ayin adds, "When it is the sixth hour [of the morning] when the *chametz*, which represents the *yetzer hara*, is removed, and the time for *נצח* begins, the *ה'* of *נצח* is open [at its upper corner], which represents that whoever wants to come in with *teshuvah*, can come through there."

18. The *tefillah* is printed at the beginning of many siddurim and many *machzorim*.

In the *Hoshanos* (Succos) we say, הושענא שלש, שעות, "save us three hours." We are praying to be saved from the war of Gog and Magog, which will take place then.

A Russian czar passed an evil decree against the Jewish community. An activist of the Jewish community discovered that the decree could be abolished by giving a large bribe to one of the ministers.

He began a fundraising campaign, to raise money for the bribe. He spoke with many rabbanim and asked them to raise money from their congregants. He also sent a letter to Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l*, asking him to raise money from his many chassidim, but Rebbe Aharon didn't respond to the letter.

The activist sent people to explain to Rebbe Aharon the importance of the bribe, and the severity of the situation (and even Rebbe Yitzchak of Skvere *zt'l* came to his brother, Rebbe Aharon, to convince him to raise money) but Rebbe Aharon still didn't want to raise money for this.

On *erev Pesach*, when Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler was about to burn his *chametz*, he said, "Some say we annul *gezeiros* (decrees) with money, but that's not correct. We annul all evil decrees when we burn the *chametz*."

### Lessons from the Prohibition of *Chametz*

*Chametz* represents the *yetzer hara*. As the Gemara (*Brachos* 17) says, "Master of the world; You know we want to do Your will. Who prevents us? שאור שבעיסה ושעבוד מלכויות, "the *chametz* in the dough and the government taxes." Rashi explains that שאור שבעיסה means the *yetzer hara*.

The Radvaz (*chelek 3 siman 977*) writes, "In *pshat* (simple basic explanation), I didn't find an explanation for the severity of *chametz*. Therefore, I turn to the Midrash. The Midrash

says *chametz* on Pesach represents the *yetzer hara*. One must banish the *yetzer hara* from himself and search for it in all the corners of his thoughts. Even the smallest drop must be eradicated. This explanation is correct."

In Warsaw, there was a watchmaker who was a *tzaddik nistar* (hidden *tzaddik*). The Chebiner Rav purposely broke his watch so that he would have a reason to enter the store in the hope that he would receive a *brachah* from him. The watchmaker understood the Chebiner Rav's intention, so he said, "What do you want from me? I'm a simple person."

The Chebiner Rav replied, "If you won't give me a *brachah*, at least tell me a *dvar Torah*."

The *tzaddik* obliged. He said the following:

The Rema (432:2) writes that there is a custom to put out pieces of *chametz* before *bedikas chametz*, so that the *brachah* won't be said in vain. Sometimes, the person who is making the *bedikas chametz* will put out the pieces of *chametz* himself, before he begins.

The commentaries ask: If he knows where the pieces are, this isn't called בריקה, searching for *chametz*! He knows exactly where the *chametz* is!?

But we can bring a proof that this is called searching. It states (*Bereishis* 44:12)<sup>19</sup>, ויחפש בגדול, החל ובקטן כלה וימצא, "[Yosef's servants] searched, starting with the oldest son and they completed their search with the youngest son." They searched for Yosef's goblet, although they knew where it was (see *Rashi*). This proves that we can search for something even if we know where it is. The Torah calls it ויחפש, searching."

When we do *bedikas chametz* it's an ideal time to search for our *yetzer hara*. You may know about your *yetzer hara*, but as we've

19. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 7) uses this *pasuk*, along with several other *pesukim*, in reference to *bedikas chametz*, to prove that one searches for *chametz* with a candle.

seen, that is also called "searching." Look for it again, find the *yetzer hara* that you know is there, see where it plays a role in your life, and take steps towards doing *biur chametz*, totally cleansing yourself from the *yetzer hara*.

The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* said, sometimes a person says, "What can I do? Hashem gave me this *yetzer hara*! It isn't my fault." But we reply, "Pieces of bread were placed in your home so that you can find them and cleanse your house from them. Similarly, although the *yetzer hara* was given to you, it's your job to get rid of it."

One of the translations of מצה is to fight, as it states (*Yeshayah* 41:12), אנשי מצותך, "those who battle with you," because we must put up a battle against the *yetzer hara*.<sup>20</sup>

The Beis Ahron writes, "The difference between מצה and חמץ is only a small line (in the ה', which isn't in the ה' of מצה). This signifies a drop of bad. One must get rid of the drop of bad that's in his heart, throw it deep into the sea, and come close to the drop of good that's inside him..."

We say the *brachah*, על ביעור חמץ by *bedikas chametz*. We don't say the *brachah* when we burn the *chametz*. This hints that our obligation is to try and do the best we can. We can't make a *brachah* on the results because they aren't always in our hands. But we can make a *brachah* on our attempts to cleanse ourselves from all bad, and that is all that Hashem requests from us.

As Chazal (*Pesachim* 8.) state, one checks for *chametz*, עד מקום שידו מגעת, as far as his arm

can reach. He isn't expected to do more than he can.

And if we try, Hashem will help us succeed. He will help us get rid of the *chametz* that's within us.<sup>21</sup>

### Lessons from the Matzah

Tzaddikim said, "One should be involved in *avodas Hashem* (serving Hashem), constantly. If one doesn't have strength to concentrate on Torah, he should say *Tehillim*. If he doesn't have strength for *Tehillim*, he should give *tzedakah*..." but always be active and do something in Hashem's service.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that the way matzah is made represents this ideal. When one visits a matzah bakery, he is amazed by the constant work that goes into making the matzos, which hints to always being active in Hashem's service.

As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (459:2), לא יניחו, "Don't leave the dough idle – even for a moment – without kneading the dough..." If you leave the dough idle, it will become *chametz*.

Matzah also hints to the virtue of humility, an avoiding anger.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Deios* ch.1 and 2) teaches that each attribute has a good side, and therefore, the correct way is to follow the "golden middle path." For example, one shouldn't be excessively joyous, neither overly sad; one shouldn't be too generous with his money, on the other hand, one shouldn't be extremely stingy, either. The middle path is the ideal path to take.

20. The world says (in jest): Why do people bury the dead? It's because they don't protest (עיר לאסת זיך). If we will not protest, and allow the *yetzer hara* do whatever it wants with us, we will be buried alive. We must protest, take control of our life, and fight the *yetzer hara*.

21. It states (*Shemos* 13:7), ולא יראה לך חמץ ולא יראה לך שאור, "Don't see *chametz*, and don't see sourdough..." We can say that this is warning people not to go around with a sour face. Their face should beam with happiness.

Chazal (on this *pasuk*) say, שלך אי אתה רואה אבל של אחרים אתה רואה. This can be translated, you shouldn't see your own sourness, but you should see the sourness of others, and see what you can do to help them.



However, the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Deios* 2:4) "There are [two] attributes that a person shouldn't follow the middle path. He should be totally distant from them. One is arrogance...<sup>22</sup> This also applies to anger. It is a very bad trait and one must be extremely distant from it, to the furthest extent possible. One should train himself not to get angry, even when circumstances [might] warrant anger."<sup>23</sup>

We see that regarding anger and arrogance, one must totally cleanse himself from these negative traits.

It states (*Vayikra* 2:11), *כי כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקמירו*, "All leaven and all honey shouldn't be sacrificed for Hashem." Why?

Rebbe Chaim Hamdura *zt'l* explains that leaven (*chametz*) represents arrogance<sup>24</sup> and honey represents anger.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the *pasuk* is saying, *כל שאור וכל דבש*, arrogance and anger, *לא תקריבו ממונו אשה ה'*, avoid using them, not even for Hashem's service.

A person should never claim, "Now, for Hashem's sake, I must become angry..."

Or "In this situation, I must become arrogant. And it is for Hashem's honor." Avoid using these traits, even for Hashem's service.

When someone is arrogant, and when someone is angry, his heart fills with air. The matzah teaches us to be humble and serene.

Rebbe Shlomo Dovid of Slonim *zt'l* says that the broken ה' (the break in its upper left side) hints to a broken heart, to humility. The primary difference between *מצה וחמץ* is the ה' and the ה'. The difference between them is the broken heart, humility.

One year before Pesach, Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* asked a *bachur*, "Which *kabbalah tova* did you accept on yourself as a preparation for Pesach?"

The *bachur* said he didn't take on anything. Reb Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

Many, many years ago, someone from a third world country came to New York City and was astounded by the many skyscrapers he saw. Someone told him, "On the top floor of the empire state building, the tallest building of New York, there is an observation deck. You can go up there and see the entire city of New York."

"Amazing!" the man replied. "But who can walk up all those steps to the top of the building?"

"You don't have to walk up the stairs. You can use the elevator."

The foreigner never heard of an elevator before, so this person explained to him briefly that you go into a room, press the button of the floor you want to get to, and the elevator will bring you there."

The man went into the elevator but didn't press any button. The door closed, it turned

22. The Rambam elaborates on the evils of arrogance: "Chazal command, *מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח*, 'Be very, very humble.' And they say, 'Whoever is arrogant, it is like he is denying Hashem's existence.' And they say, 'Cursed is the one who has arrogance,' even just a little bit of arrogance."

23. The Rambam elaborates: "The early scholars say, 'Whoever becomes angry, it is like *avodah zarah*.' And they say, 'Whoever becomes angry, if he is wise, his wisdom leaves him. If he is a *navi*, he loses his *nevuah*.' Those who get angry often, their lives aren't a life. Therefore, the *chachamim* commanded that one should distance himself from anger until he doesn't get angry even over matters that deserve anger. This is the good way..."

24. *Chametz* represents arrogance, because the dough becomes filled with air like the heart of someone who is arrogant.

25. This is because honey is made by bees who have *עכם*, poison, and the letters *עכם* spell *בעם*, anger.

dark, and he was afraid that he was being locked inside. Panicking, he pressed a random button, and as it turned out, he pressed the emergency button. The emergency personnel freed him from the elevator, and they asked him, "When you came into the elevator, why didn't you press the button for the highest floor?"

He replied, "I didn't believe that pressing a button could bring me to the top floor. It takes so much effort to climb up all those stairs. How could it be achieved by the mere push of a button?"

Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that it is the same with tiny kabbalos. We think they are insignificant, and can't get us very far, but it isn't so. With each small kabbalah, one can grow immensely.

The Satmer Rebbe *zt'l* compared this to two people going to an escalator, but one took one step more than the other, and he got onto the escalator and his friend didn't. He will reach great heights, while his friend will remain on the ground level, all because of that extra step that he took.

This is the specialness of a *kabbalah tovah*. It is a small step that lifts us up very high.

The words *המץ* and *מצה* represent the specialness of a drop of good. The only difference between the letters of *מצה* and *המץ* is a small line that the *ה* has and the *ה* doesn't. This implies that minor breakthroughs (like the small breach in the *ה*) and small steps can make the difference between *chametz* and *matzah*, between holiness and impurity. What seems minor to you generates immense spiritual growth.

### **Bitul Chametz**

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* told the following parable:

Someone was once carrying expensive diamonds and he saw thieves walking behind him. He thought, "If I begin to run, they will know that I'm carrying valuables, and they will surely attack me and steal my

wealth. I'm better off walking calmly, like I have nothing to fear."

The *nimshal* is, the best way to overcome forbidden temptations is to not want them. If you will want them, but you run away from them because you know they are forbidden, the temptations will run, and catch up to you, and bring the temptations to you. Therefore, a wiser approach is to decide in your heart that you don't want these temptations. They are nothing to you. They are like the dust of the earth, to you. And then the *yetzer hara* won't be able to entice you.

The mitzvah of *bitul chametz* alludes to this concept. *Bitul* means that one decides in his heart (and he says it with his mouth) that he doesn't want the *chametz*. He says that he considers the *chametz* to be, *כעפרא דארעא*, like dust on the earth. When one has this attitude towards sin, one can overcome the *yetzer hara*.

Another way to overcome bad temptations is to want good things. If you want good, and you desire mitzvos, automatically you will not desire bad things.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* says that this is hinted to with the words, *מבטל בלבו*, "annul it in your heart." With your heart's yearning for goodness, you annul the *chametz* and the bad.

### **A Letter from Reb Shamshon Astropoli *zt'l* *hy'd***

*Erev Pesach* is an ideal time to study the letter written by Reb Shamshon Astropoli *zt'l hy'd* (printed in many Haggados). He promised that whoever reads this letter on *erev Pesach* will be saved the entire year, *מכל מכשול ומיתה משונה ושום אונם ואל ימשלו בו אויביו וכל שונאיו יפלו תחתיו ובכל אשר יפנה יצליח וישכיל*. This means he will be saved from all accidents, hazards, and troubles, and he will be successful in everything that he does.

The letter seems kabalistic but is actually not so difficult to understand. If one reads it

slowly, he can understand it. It is worth studying, ideally on *erev Pesach*, and you will thereby earn immense protection.

The Rav of Erloy *zt'l* told that during the Holocaust, in the month of Elul, he was in great danger. He remembered that he hadn't studied the letter of Reb Shamshon Astropoli that year. He studied it right then and there, and he had *siyata dishmaya* (Heavenly assistance) and was saved from the Nazis.

The Erloy Rav also said that his grandfather, the Hisorerus HaTeshuvah, would study that letter each year. When he was 94 years old, he didn't get around to studying the letter, and he was *niftar* that year. That year, he didn't have the promise of protection.

### Tefillah

In this section, we will discuss that one should pray on this holy night, when the gates of heaven are open and Hashem is near. All our requests will be answered when we turn to Hashem on this holy night.

The Rema says (*Darkei Moshe*): "Speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is like a *tefillah*, because we are saying Hashem's praises. That is why we wash our hands [by *ורחץ*], like we wash our hands before davening."

Every morning we say *אמת ויציב*, and at night we say *אמת ואמונה*. A primary theme of these *brachos* is *yetzias Mitzrayim*. And we conclude the *brachah* by saying, *ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל*, thanking Hashem for redeeming Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 4:) states, "Who is a *ben Olam HaBa*? It is someone who says *Shemonah Esrei* immediately after this *brachah*."<sup>26</sup>

Rashi explains that when one doesn't start *Shemonah Esrei* immediately, "it can be compared to the king's friend who knocks at the king's door, [and he leaves before the king opens the door]. The king sees that he already left, so the king also leaves. Rather, a person should appease Hashem with praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and then Hashem will come close to him. And when Hashem is nearby, he should ask of Him what he needs."

Hashem loves the praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. When we discuss *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem comes close to us, and He wants to hear our requests. Rashi explains that it is foolish to give up this opportunity, and to leave before Hashem opens the door and lets us ask for all our hearts' desires.

This lesson applies to the Seder as well. At the Seder, when we sing Hashem's praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem is near, and it is a good time to ask Hashem for our needs, and Hashem will grant them to us.

We shouldn't be stingy with our requests. We should ask for great things. As it states (*Tehillim* 91:11), *אנכי ה' אלקך המעלך מארץ מצרים הרחב פך*, *ואמלאהו*, "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Mitzrayim, open your mouth wide [ask for a lot] and I will fill your requests."<sup>27</sup>

There was once an innkeeper who was very behind in his rent. The *poritz* (landlord)

26. As the Gemara says, *איוהו בן עולם הבא, זה הסומך גאולה לתפילה*.

27. Why does the *pasuk* say *הרחב פך*, widen your mouth? It should have said *פתח פך*, "Open your mouth."

When one widens his mouth, he smiles. Thus, we can explain that the *pasuk* is saying, "Smile, be happy, and Hashem will provide all your needs."

Chazal say, "If your teacher is like a *malach*, learn Torah from him. But if he isn't like a *malach*, don't learn Torah from him." In what way should a teacher resemble angels? One aspect we know about *malachim* is that they are happy, for they serve Hashem with song and joy. A teacher should be similar to the *malachim*, happy and *lebedig*. If he's a happy person, he is suited to be a teacher of Torah.



warned him that if he doesn't pay up his debt, he will throw his entire family into a dungeon.

He traveled to the Apter Rav zy'a for Shabbos HaGadol to receive a *brachah*.

*Erev Shabbos*, the *gabai* told him that the Rebbe couldn't receive him, so the innkeeper decided that he would go to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*.

Shabbos afternoon, at the Shabbos HaGadol *drashah*(lecture), the Apter Rav delivered a very deep halachic *shiur*, which this Yid didn't understand at all. Then the Rebbe began discussing the Haggadah. He said, "When we reach *וַיַּצַּק אֶל ה'* it's a very special moment for *tefillah*. If one needs *parnassah*, a *refuah*, or if one works for a *poritz* and doesn't have money to pay the rent, and the *poritz* threatens to throw him out on the street, and a Yid shouts at this point in the Haggadah, and begs for a salvation, Hashem will save him."

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

Pesach night, when they reached *וַיַּצַּק* , they both prayed and shouted to Hashem for a salvation. Shortly afterwards, there was a knock on their door. It was a non-Jewish acquaintance. He told them that he had just killed his wife and needed to escape before the police arrested him. "I know I can trust you, because you are Yidden. I need you to watch my money for me." He brought in two barrels filled with gold coins and said, "You can keep one barrel for yourself. Send me the other one when I send you information of my whereabouts," he then turned around and left.

The Yid and his family continued the Seder joyously. Hashem had already sent them the money they needed to pay the *poritz*, and more.

The goyishe (gentile) neighbor never returned, so both barrels filled with gold became theirs.

After Pesach, they traveled to the city to buy new clothes, because now they didn't have to dress in rags anymore. They also went to the Apter Rav to thank him for the miracle he performed. He told them, "You don't have to thank me. You caused the miracle to happen on your own, through your *וַיַּצַּק*.

Many people experienced *yeshuos* when they prayed by *וַיַּצַּק* in the Haggadah.

I know the following story first-hand:

There was a family that was having a hard time finding *shidduchim* for their older sons. One was twenty-five, one was twenty-seven, and one was thirty. They all had full beards and weren't engaged yet.

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

They understood that his intention was that they should ask their Father in heaven for a *shidduch*, but one boy took the Rebbe's counsel literally. At the Seder he asked his father, "Why aren't I engaged yet?"

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

Their mother said, "It's *yom tov*. It isn't the right time to cry."

They knew she was right. They stopped thinking about their plight, and they celebrated joyously the rest of the Seder.

After the Seder, the father said, "Let's say *Tehillim*, from chapter 90 until the end, and pray that our sons be engaged"

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

Here's another story of a very special Yerushalmi couple who were childless for eleven years. On Pesach, they would go either to his parents or to hers. But one year he told his wife, "This time, we're staying home."

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

There was a person who had a problem with his legs. He often experienced immense pain, and he would take shots periodically to somewhat stabilize the situation. This was going on for years. One Pesach, he was celebrating the Seder in his brothers' house. When they came to *וּנְצִיעָה* he left the room and poured his heart out to Hashem. *Motzei Yom Tov* he received a shot for his leg, and that was the last time. Since then he never needed another shot.

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch *zy'a* said, people today think that all they lack is that Moshiach should come. But in Mitzrayim, they understood that waiting isn't enough. There's also a need for *tefillah*. The *geulah* came because of their *וּנְצִיעָה*.

I want to share a letter that I received from a member of our *chaburah* who lives in Beis Shemesh.

"In *תשע"ז*, after all our preparations for Pesach, we sat down joyously for the Seder together with my brother-in-law. There was only one matter that marred our joy. My brother-in-law's five-year-old son was born with a cleft lip, and he couldn't speak. He had many corrective surgeries, but he still couldn't speak. All that came out of his mouth were sounds. Every sound he made was like a dagger in his parent's heart. To make matters worse, the cheder recently

told him that the child couldn't continue learning there, because of his impaired speech.

"When we reached *הָא לַחֲמָא עֵינָא*, we remembered the *vort* from the Beis Aharon: *יִיְהִי וְיִפְסַח*, whatever a person needs, *כָּל דְּכַפֵּין*, he should have *פֶּה סָח* (a speaking mouth) and pray to Hashem for a salvation, because with prayer, all our needs can be fulfilled. We then prayed that this boy should be healed and that he be able to speak and learn Torah like all people.

"After the Seder was completed, the father of this boy said to his wife, *אָה פֶּתַח לוֹ*, implying that the opening of their son's speech abilities was up to them to attain through *tefillah*. They said *Tehillim* with tears the entire night. In the morning, a miracle occurred; their son started speaking. He spoke so much, it was as if he was making up for so much lost time..."

The letter concludes, "I used to wonder: What is the source from the *rishonim* that we should use the Seder for prayers. It doesn't seem to be a time of prayer. But then I saw (*שו"ת דברי יציב אבן העזר סו"ס פ"ג*) that our three daily *tefillos* (*Shacharis, Minchah, Maariv*) were established by the *avos* on the first day of Pesach. Furthermore, someone showed me the *Likutei Moharan* (ר"א) that the *Targum* (*Eichah* 2) states that on Pesach people shout during the *tefillah*. As it states, *קוֹל נִתְּנוּ בְּבֵית ה' כְּיוֹם*, *מוֹעֵד*, 'they shouted in the Beis HaMikdash like on a holiday.' And the Targum writes, *בְּקוֹל עַמָּא דְּמַצְלִין בְּחֵגא דְּפֶסַחא*, 'Like the voices of the nation who pray on Pesach.' Therefore, what better time is there for *tefillah* than at the Seder, the day that the *avos* established *tefillah*?"

*מִצֵּה* has three letters: *מִצֵּה*. When each of these three letters is spelled out in full, it looks like this: *מִצֵּה* *צִדִּיק* *הַא*. The added letters (all letters besides the primary letters *מִצֵּה*) are called the *מילוי*, filler letters. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said that if you take the *מילוי* of *מִצֵּה* it spells *אֶקְדִּים*, "I will come first..." The Sar Shalom said that that hints that some *tefillos* aren't answered immediately, but the

*tefillos* of Pesach אקדים, will be answered immediately.

There is a custom to eat an egg by *shulchan aruch*. The Meiri teaches that *beitzah* is often pronounced בעי which also means “to request.” This hints that the *tefillos* said at the Seder will be answered.<sup>28</sup>

The passuk says (*Bereishis* 21:25-26), והוכח אברהם את אבימלך על אדות באר המים אשר גזלו עבדי אבימלך, ויאמר אבימלך לא ידעתי מי עשה את הדבר הזה וגם אתה לא הגדת לי וגם אנכי לא שמעתי בלתי היום.

The Ahavas Shalom explains these *pesukim* in the following way: אברהם signifies the tzaddik and אבימלך symbolizes the King of the world, Hakadosh Baruch Hu. והוכח אברהם את אבימלך על אדות באר המים אשר גזלו עבדי אבימלך, The tzaddik asks Hashem, “Why are the wellsprings of Hashem’s bounty being stolen away from us and taken by the slaves – the nations of the world?”

Hashem replies, לא הגדת לי. The word הגדת is from the word מגיד. Hashem is answering, “At the Seder you didn’t pray to me by *magid*. וגם אנכי also on Shavuot, when we read

בלתי, I didn’t hear your prayers. אנכי ה' אלוקיך, I only hear your prayers on Rosh Hashanah (which is called *hayom*).

Hashem says, “I hear your *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah, but you don’t pray to me at the Seder or on Shavuot – two special times for *tefillah*. That’s the reason your bounty is being stolen, and that you aren’t receiving the blessings you desire.”

מה נשתנה

The Belzer Rebbes would clap their hands before saying *Mah Nishtanah*. As it states (*Shemos* 28:35), וישמע קולו בבאו אל הקדש, “The sound was heard when he entered the sanctuary...”

The ויגד משה quotes kabbalah sources that asking *Mah Nishtanah* is *mesugal* for having an open heart for learning Torah. “Therefore, I made it the custom in my house that whoever comes to me for the Seder should say *Mah Nishtanah*, and I daven for them that they should have an open heart for Torah. And after everyone says מה נשתנה, I say it as well.”<sup>29</sup>

28. Rebbe Leible Eiger said that we eat eggs at the Seder to indicate that just as an egg becomes a chicken when it is warmed under a hen, similarly many great things can happen to us on this night, but we must bring warmth – our enthusiasm and joy – and then we will merit it.

29. Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt”l* asked some children the day after the Seder, “Did you ask *Mah Nishtanah*?”

“Yes.”

“And what was the answer?”

“עבדים היינו.”

“Did you ask those questions last year?”

“We did.”

“And what was the answer last year?”

“The same, עבדים היינו.”

“So, if you received an answer last year, why did you ask the same questions again this year?”

The children tried to explain in various ways.

Reb Shlomo Zalman said, “When I was eight years old, I walked with my father to the Kosel the morning after the Seder, and on the way home, Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt”l* asked me the same question: ‘If you asked *Mah Nishtanah* last year, why did you ask it again this year?’ But the difference between me and



### Nirtzeh

*Nirtzeh* means that after we completed the Seder, we believe that Hashem is happy with our mitzvos. We are also certain that we earned immense gains – with both spiritual and material blessings.

To explain this, we begin with a story that happened with Reb Shmuel of Karov *zt'l*, a student of the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*.

Reb Shmuel never asked for financial aid from his fellow man. One *erev Pesach*, he didn't have anything in his home – he didn't even have matzah and wine – but he never asked for help and he hoped that this time would be no different.

The Chozeh, with his *ruach hakodesh*, knew about Reb Shmuel's predicament.

The wealthy Reb Shlomo Konkuli *z'l* came to the Chozeh of Lublin for a *brachah*. The Chozeh told him that Reb Shmuel Karov needs help for *yom tov*, and he should send him food.

Through Reb Shlomo Konkuli's actions, a delivery of scrumptious foods arrived at Reb Shmuel's door moments before Pesach. He was extremely happy to have merited a salvation, and that he didn't have to break his kabbalah never to ask for financial help.

Reb Shmuel's Seder was immensely joyful and uplifting. He thought he never had such a good Seder before.

The second night he was very tired, so he went to sleep before the Seder. When he awoke it was late, and he had to rush through the Seder to get to the *afikomon* before *chatzos*. He thought that the second Seder wasn't as good as the first one.

When he came to the Chozeh, the Chozeh said (with his *ruach hakadosh*), "Let's think about Reb Shmuel's Sedarim: The first Seder was celebrated with a lot of *kavanah*, but even so

it wasn't a perfect Seder. The second Seder however, now that was special! No one in the world made such a wonderful and holy Seder like that one..." The explanation he gave was that the second Seder was made with immense humility and with a broken heart. This is what made the second Seder extraordinary.

We never know what is most precious to Hashem. At times, a Seder we think to be terrible and not too successful is really considered to be most desired by Hashem. The main objective is to try our best and to believe that whatever level we attain before or during the seder we will merit all the blessings that were available for us on that night.

The *rasha* of the *Haggadah* says, *מה העבודה* *לכם*. As the *Haggadah* clarifies, the *rasha's* problem is that he says, *לכם ולא לו*, "for you, and not for him." He thinks the Seder is for others – for *tzaddikim* – but not for himself. He doesn't believe that his Seder could be worthy and special to Hashem.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (*Pesach* p.85:) warns us that we shouldn't make this same error. He writes, "The Seder isn't only for people who are on high, lofty levels. It's for every Yid, regardless of the level he is on. One must believe this..."

Alexander chassidim used to go to their Rebbe for the Seder. It was one of their largest gatherings of the year. All the chassidim wore special *kittels* that came with extra-large pockets. One pocket held a bottle of wine for the four cups and one pocket was for the matzah.

One chassid (who was *niftar* a few years ago) remembered a Seder that was held in Alexander, by the Yismach Yisroel. He told the following:

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you is that when Reb Yosef Chaim asked me this question, I cried, and when I asked you this question, you tried to answer me in various ways..."

"When the Yismach Yisroel came to the *tish* to begin the Seder, his face was white. He was quiet for a few moments, and then he said in a loud voice, "If someone doesn't believe that on the Seder night he can rise from the lowest level to the highest level, he is the *rasha* of the Haggadah."

The Gemara (Pesachim 116.) says, מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, "We begin with the disgrace [our slavery and our spiritual lowliness] and conclude with the praise [that Hashem redeemed us and brought us to His service]." The Yismach Yisroel *zt'l* says that this pattern repeats itself each year at the Seder. Even if one was at a lowly level at the beginning of the Seder, when he concludes the Seder, he is in a higher place.

Through performing the mitzvos of the Seder, we climb to very great spiritual heights.

It states (*Shemos* 19:4), ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים, "I carried you on the wings of eagles..." Why does the Torah mention specifically a non-kosher bird? To teach us that someone who is impure with sins automatically becomes pure by *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and by celebrating the Seder.

Similarly the Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* חק"ף) writes, "Just as one is obligated to imagine that he left Mitzrayim, so one must imagine that he was an idol worshiper and now [on this night] Hashem brought him

close to serve Him through observing the mitzvos of the night

This is the translation and deeper meaning of the word פסח: to jump up to levels that he couldn't reach the entire year.<sup>30</sup>

As a child, the Imrei Emes *zy'a* asked his father, the Sfas Emes *zt'l*, why we wear a *kittel* at the Seder. The Sfas Emes answered, "Yom Tov we wear nicer clothing and we don't want them to get ruined. We wear a *kittel* to protect the clothing."

Years later, the Imrei Emes remembered what his father told him, and he was certain that there was some deeper message hidden in his father's words.

The Imrei Emes concluded that his father was alluding to the Pesach seder when we rise to great heights and become like a new person. We must be careful to retain this cleanliness and not tarnish our souls again. We therefore wear a *kittel* to ensure that this new level will remain with us.

### Annual Salvations

It states (*Shemos* 12:42), ליל שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם, "This night is awaited for by Hashem to take them out of Mitzrayim, in all generations." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* says that this pasuk indicates that in "all generations," Hashem takes us out of Mitzrayim (source of hardship). It states, להוציאם, "to take them out" in future tense (although this *pasuk* is discussing after they left Mitzrayim).

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30. Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zy'a* taught, זבח פסח הוא לדר, means when a person, זבח, slaughters and overcomes his *yetzer hara*, פסח הוא לה, he jumps up all the way up to Hashem's throne.

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

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

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

This is because it is referring to every generation, because we will also go out of Mitzrayim.

As the Haggadah says, בכל דור ודור חייב אדם, "In every generation one is obligated to consider himself like he is leaving Mitzrayim." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that one should imagine this, because this is what occurs, each year. On Pesach, we leave our problems and hardships behind.

The Sfas Emes adds, "According to the degree that one believes he's leaving Mitzrayim, so will it happen."

As the Apter Rav *zy'a* writes, "When one says the *brachah*, 'Who redeemed us and Who redeemed our forefathers...' and believes that even in our generation Hashem continues to redeem us, he will be saved from any kind of trouble."

We were redeemed from Mitzrayim because we had *bitachon*. When we have this trust, in our times, we merit the redemption.

The Meor Einayim (*Tzav*) writes, "At the Yam Suf the *malachim* prosecuted and said that the Yidden also worshiped *avodah zarah*. If so, why indeed were they saved? He answers that in Mitzrayim they made a Seder at night precisely the way we make a Seder in our times, and they also told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. They trusted that they will certainly leave Mitzrayim. This is what brought down Hashem's kindness, and caused their redemption. And just as we were redeemed then, we will be redeemed in the future."<sup>31</sup>

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (*Shemos* 12:13) writes, "The blood on the doorways didn't prevent the plague from entering their home. Rather...whoever believed and trusted in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and he wasn't afraid of Pharaoh and his decrees, and he publicly sacrificed the Egyptian god...he is a *tzaddik*. He trusted in Hashem, so he deserves to be protected from the *mashchis* (destroyer)."

Similarly, the Seforno (*Shemos* 12:11) teaches, "וככה תאכלו אותו מתניכים חגורים, 'You were prepared to travel... This shows you trusted without any doubt in the redemption. They had this *emunah* while they were still enslaved.' When we will also show this trust, Hashem will save us from our present exile."

The Sfas Emes (5638) explains the *pasuk* (*Iyov* 9:10), עושה גדולות עד אין חקר ונפלאות עד אין מספר, "Hashem does great deeds... wonders, without a number." The reason there is no number to the wonders of Hashem is because each year new wonders happen. Therefore, it is impossible to count them.

This can be the translation of, אילו לא הוציא, "הקב"ה את אבותינו ממצרים הרי אנו ובנינו משועבדים, "If Hakadosh Baruch Hu wouldn't take us out of Mitzrayim, we and our children would be enslaved..." We can explain this to mean that we wouldn't have a way to free ourselves from our present personal *galus*. But through *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and through the mitzvos we perform in connection to this, and particularly through our *bitachon* that Hashem will redeem us, we can have *yetzias Mitzrayim* each year.

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**31.** Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* says that he heard from a *talmid chacham* in Kelm that he was by his grandfather, the Malbushei Yom Tov for the Seder. Before the Haggadah, the Malbushei Yom Tov sat in his place for a few minutes with great emotion. Then he said, "Just as we are making the Seder now with our family, so too is the entire city is making the Seder, exactly in the same manner, with matzah and *marror*, etc. The entire country is making the Seder this way, and also the entire world. Do you know where we saw this Seder? We saw it by our fathers. They saw it from their fathers, going all the way back to the generations of the *rishonim*, *emora'im*, *tanaim*, until the people who left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. Hashem said to the generation that received the Torah (*Shemos* 19:4), אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים, "You saw what I did in Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, 'It isn't a tradition that you received, it isn't just words that I am telling you. It isn't a testimony. Rather, you saw what I did in Mitzrayim.'



## Discussing the Miracles

Talking about the miracles, causes them to happen again.

As the Noam Elimelech *zt'l* (ר"ה ולמען *Bo*) writes, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu does a miracle for Bnei Yisroel...in the future, in whatever generation, when Bnei Yisroel need [this miracle]...Hakadosh Baruch Hu performs it for them, because Hashem's compassion in this matter was already roused. This is the translation of the *pasuk*, ולמען תספר... אשר התעללתי במצרים, 'So you will tell what I did in Mitzrayim.' When you tell [the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim*], it rouses that compassion again..."<sup>32</sup>

The Igra d'Kalah (*Ekev*) writes in the name of tzaddikim that when a person needs a *yeshuah*, like *refuah*, *hatzlachah*, or to cross a sea without harm, then he should discuss miracles that occurred in this regard to the tzaddikim of the past, and this will cause the miracle to happen to him too.

The Igra d'Kalah explains that this is the reason Zeresh told Haman they should hang Mordechai. She said that any other type of murder they would try to carry out, such as drowning, burning in a furnace, etc., the Yidden would study about the miracles and salvations that happened to the Jewish nation in the past, and the learning itself will cause the miracle to repeat itself. The only

type of murder that did not bring about a miraculous salvation was hanging.

Hashem therefore made a brand-new miracle for Mordechai and saved him.

Chazal say, "Whoever studies about a *korban olah*, it is like he brought an *olah*..." The Sfas Emes (5648) adds that when one studies about the slavery of Mitzrayim, it is like he was enslaved in Mitzrayim. It is like it happened to him. Therefore, if it was *bashert* for him to go through hardships, it is as though he endured those hardships simply by speaking about their slavery.

The Sfas Emes writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent us to *galus* in Egypt...so when people speak about it, it will be instead of actual *yesurim*. As Chazal (*Menachos* 110) say, 'Whoever studies about a *korban olah*, it is like he brought an *olah*...' This also applies to the story of *yetzias mitzrayim*. Speaking about it is considered as if we were there in *galus*."

## A Great *Eis Ratzon*

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes, "It is amazing, the many great things...that occur in the upper worlds with the matzah, with the *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, and with all the other mitzvos the Jewish nation do at the Seder on this night!"<sup>33</sup>

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32. We say in the Haggadah, כל המרבה לספר הרי זה משובח, the more we speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the better. The Arizal explains, הרי זה משובח בחסדים, he will earn more kindness from Above. Because by speaking about the miracles, he is drawing them down again.

33. The Maharil writes, "Don't take any of these matters lightly. Even if there are aspects of the Seder that seem insignificant to you, be wise and keep them, because nothing is superfluous."

Even if one doesn't know the great secrets of the Seder, they happen automatically when we go about the customs and halachos of the Seder.

Rebbe Shalom of Shatz *zt'l* said that this is the reason the *kaarah* is round. This signifies that we go around, doing all the customs and halachos of the Seder, and all the *brachos* and all the wonders that have to take place, will occur, automatically.

To explain this a drop more, the Rebbe of Shatz gave the following *mashal*:

Someone tied a donkey to a mill, and as the donkey walked circles around the mill, the wheat kernels were ground into flour. The donkey doesn't understand what it is doing. If it could speak it would say, "This

Esther decreed a three day fast, which also included the Seder night. That year, instead of eating matzah and *maror*, the Jewish nation fasted.<sup>34</sup>

Why did they have to fast just then? They could have fasted later on.

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* answers that Mordechai wanted to show Heaven what it would look like if Haman's plan would be successful and the Jewish nation would be destroyed. Every year, on the Seder night, there is immense joy in heaven. All the *malachim* celebrate the many mitzvos *klal Yisroel* perform. Mordechai wanted to show heaven a world without the Jewish nation, a world without all the mitzvos of the Seder.

All the joy and celebration and bounty would be missing. This would arouse Heaven to save the Jewish nation.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "A great commotion arose in heaven when no one made a Seder that night. The *malachim* asked, 'What's happening? [Where is all the spirituality and bounty that comes to the world when the Jewish people make the Seder?] They were told that the Jewish people didn't make the Seder that year]... This demonstrated to Heaven that if Haman's plan succeeds, and there wouldn't be a Jewish people, *chalilah*, the entire world would cease to exist."

Reb Eliyahu Gutmacher *zt'l* answered that Mordechai and Esther decreed a fast on the night of the Seder because they wanted to take advantage of the greatest *eis ratzon* of

the year to annul Haman's decrees. Their *tefillos* at that time were immediately answered, and indeed, Haman was hung on the second day of Pesach.

Reb Eliyahu Gutmacher describes the specialness of this night with a *mashal*: Consider a person imprisoned within four high walls. If there's a tiny breach in one of the walls, he can hammer away at that aperture; widen the breach, until he is able to escape. The Seder night provides us with that small opening. Throughout the year, everyone has "fortified walls" surrounding him, which he can't break through. For some people it's lacking *parnassah*; for others it's health issues, and other forms of *tzaros*, *rachmana litzlan*. People feel trapped; they don't see a way out. At the Seder, there's a crack in those fortified walls. We can pound on the gap (by taking advantage of these holy times), the breach will open wide, and everything can change. Even one's *mazal* can change for the better on this night. This is the reason Mordechai and Esther wanted their three-day fast to include this night - a special time for *tefillah*.

The Bnei Yissaschar *zt'l* once passed through the home of a simple person on the Seder night, and heard the *baal habayis* read the Haggadah: כנגד ארבע בנים דברה תורה אהר חכם, ואהר כנעני רשע, ואהר תם... This simpleton pronounced אהר protractedly and forcefully, in the manner people say אהר in *kriyas Shema*.

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

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person is doing *tzaar baalei chaim*! Why is he having me walk round and around for no reason, without getting anywhere? I understand that I must serve my master when we go someplace, but why he is taking me around in circles?"

The donkey doesn't realize that it is accomplishing very much with each time it goes around.

The same is by the Seder. We don't understand what we're doing with the Seder plate and with all the other customs and halachos of the Seder, but we still go through the traditions of the Seder happily, and this process accomplishes great matters, and brings us amazing *brachos*.

<sup>34</sup> The Gemara (*Megillah* 15.) teaches that this is the meaning of ויעבר מרדכי, "Mordechai transgressed..." He transgressed the laws of Pesach, because he declared a fast day.

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

The Bnei Yissacher told the chassidim who were with him, "This Yid took the four children of the Haggadah and made them into *kriyas Shema*."<sup>35</sup>

When people repeated this story to Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a*, he became very excited, but he didn't explain why. His son, Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zy'a*, explained his father's happiness:

There are matters that are dependent on one's mazal. Among them are wisdom, wealth, and children. What should a person do if he was born with a mazal to be poor, unwise, or childless, and the like? How can he change his destiny? It is written in *sefarim* that when one says אחד in *kriyas Shema*, he can change his mazal. The Bnei Yissaschar revealed that *kriyas Shema* is also during the Seder when reciting the paragraph of the four sons., Thus, at the Seder one has the potential to change his mazal.

### כאן הבן שואל

It states (*Pesachim* 116.), "They pour him a second cup of wine, וכאן הבן שואל, and this is where the child asks..." The Beis Aharon (p.79:) explains that now every Yid can request from his Father in heaven anything he wants.

כאן הבן שואל can also be translated, כאן, at this point of the Haggadah, הבן שואל, one can ask for children.

A chassid of Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* waited many years for children. When the Rebbe went to draw the water for מים שלנו, to make matzos, the chassid went over to the Rebbe and requested a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe advised him to daven for children right before *Mah Nishtanah*.

But the chassid rushed through his Seder (because he wanted to attend the Rebbe's Seder after he finished his own) and he forgot to daven for children. When he came to the Rebbe's *tisch*, the Rebbe asked him, "Why didn't you daven for children?"

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

The Rebbe of Alexander (*Akeidas Yitzchak*) *zt'l* said that by *Mah Nishtanah* one can pray for children and one can pray for good children. As it states, כאן הבן שואל.

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

It states, והגדת לבנך. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh teaches, telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* that one day you will be able to tell the story to your own children.

There was a *dayan* who didn't have children for four years after his wedding. In Elul, he was giving his weekly shiur on *Or HaChaim Hakados*. He was looking for the

35. There is indeed an association between the Haggadah, the four sons, and Shema. We say in the Haggadah: מעשה בר' אליעזר ור' יהושע ור' אלעזר בן עזריה ור' עקיבא ור' טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני ברק...עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו, הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית, "A story of Reb Eliezer, Reb Yehoshua, Reb Elazar ben Azaryah, Reb Akiva, and Reb Tarfon were reclining [at the Seder] in Bnei Brak...until their students came and said, 'Our teachers, the time to read Shema of Shacharis, of the morning, has come.'"

ה' אחד is *roshei teivos* for the four children: (1) ר'שע (4) ת'ם (3) ר'שע (2) ח'כם. On the Seder night we seek to instill in our children of all levels the awareness that אחד ה'.



vort regarding bearing children. He thought that it was in *parashas* בִּתְבוּאָה, by the discussion of אֲרָמִי אוֹכֵל אֶבֶר, which we read at the Seder. When he didn't find the Or HaChaim there, he reminded himself that it is in *parashas* Bo. He gave over the vort of the Or Hachaim in *parashas* Bo to his *shiur*, which says that by speaking about *yetzias* Mitzrayim, one merits children.

Ten months later he bore his first child.

### ***Shevi'i shel Pesach***

The seventh day of Pesach is *mesugal* for attaining *emunah*. Rebbe Mendel Riminover *zt'l* writes, "I heard from a student of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* who said in the name of his teacher, Rebbe Elimelech, that the most ideal time to attain *emunah sheleimah* is the night of the seventh day of Pesach. At this time, also strengthen your connection with holy *tzaddikim*, because that will help you attain *emunah sheleimah*. This is because about this day it states (*Shemos* 14:31), וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בָּה', ובמשה, "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe."

By *kriyas Yam Suf* it states, וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בָּה', "They believed in Hashem." It seems that before *kriyas Yam Suf* their *emunah* wasn't perfect.

The *Drashos HaRan* (*Drush* 11) explains that the Jewish nation had two questions that disturbed their *emunah*: (1) Why did they tell Pharaoh that they are leaving for only three days? They should have told him the truth; they are leaving forever. (Especially after *makas bechoros* when Pharaoh was ready to send them out for good.) Using tricks and saying "We are going only for three days" when you are planning to go for longer is generally done by people who are afraid, who aren't fully in control. But Hashem was taking them out of Mitzrayim, so why was this scheme necessary?

(2) Why did they tell the Egyptians that they want to *borrow* their clothing, gold utensils, etc. They should have said that they are *taking* them. (They had a right to take it, since they worked for the Mitzrayim for so many years.)

Saying that you want to borrow, when you really want to keep it, is also something that is done by those who don't have full power and have no other way to get the money.

These were their two questions.

But then they saw *kriyas Yam Suf*, they understood that Hashem wanted Pharaoh and his army to chase the Jewish nation and drown in the sea. Pharaoh wouldn't have chased after them had the Jewish nation told Pharaoh that they are leaving and never coming back. It was the fact that they said that they are going only for three days, and now he discovered that they were going for longer, which spurred Pharaoh to chase them.

Furthermore, the Egyptians wouldn't be interested in chasing after them if the nation asked them to give them their gold and silver ornaments. But since they told them that they were only borrowing it, and now it seemed that they aren't coming back, this roused their anger, and they went to retrieve their wealth. These two "untruths" was to enable the great miracle of *kriyas Yam Suf* to occur, and with it the destruction of the Mitzrim.

Now, everything made sense, וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בָּה', and they believed in Hashem.

Our goal however is to trust and to believe in Hashem without asking any questions at all, even when things don't make sense to us. Because we know that we are in good hands, and everything is the best way it can be.

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

The Midrash states, Nachshon ben Aminadov was first to jump into the Yam Suf. The water reached his nostrils. He shouted, הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כִּי בָאוּ מֵיִם עַד נַפְשִׁי, "Save me because

the water is smothering my soul," and that is when the sea split.

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

The Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l* said: "Shvi'i shel Pesach is Rosh Hashanah for *mesirus nefesh*."

Also, the Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar Ahavah* 8:6) writes that the lesson of Shevi'i shel Pesach is to have *mesirus nefesh*, and then miracles will occur.

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a* teaches:

When a person serves Hashem beyond his natural limits – as this happened, when they entered the sea with self-sacrifice – Hashem will act with him beyond the rules of nature and will perform miracles for him.<sup>36</sup>

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh (*Shemos* 14:14) writes, "Hashem said to Moshe, *מה הצעק אלי*, 'Why are you praying to me? ... I also want to perform a miracle [to split the sea] but they aren't worthy, and the *middas hadin* is preventing... The solution is that the nation should fortify themselves with *emunah* with a complete heart. They should go into the sea even before it splits, having *bitachon* that I will perform a miracle for them... This will generate the miracle, and the sea will split..."

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* says: The miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf* are commemorated twice a year: once on Shevi'i shel Pesach, the day the miracle occurred, and the other time is when we read *parashas בשלח* on Shabbos Shirah. This is hinted at in the word *אז* (of *אז ישר*), because *אל"ף* means teaching, and refers to learning and teaching the *parashah* of the week, and we learn *parashas בשלח*. The *ז* hints to the seventh day of Pesach.

The Chozeh writes that every year, on these two occasions, Hashem sends bounty and immense compassion to the Jewish nation.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:6) asks, it should have stated, *ויבקע הים*, the sea split. Why does the passuk say, *ויבקע המים*, that the water split? To teach us that all waters in the world split.

What was the purpose of this miracle? The Yam Suf split, so the nation could pass through. Why did all the waters in the world have to split?

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* explains that this teaches us that until today, the waters split, and salvations come to Bnei Yisroel. Particularly, salvations that are associated with *kriyas Yam Suf*, like *shidduchim* and *parnassah*.

The Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it unlocked salvations for all future

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**36.** The Midrash says that when the Jewish nation were crossing the Yam Suf, angels in heaven were prosecuting, saying the Yidden don't deserve to be saved.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* asks, could it be that at this point, after Hashem performed the ten *makos* and also *kriyas Yam Suf*, the Jewish nation wouldn't be saved?

The Sfas Emes replies that the Yidden would certainly be saved. The only question was whether they would be saved in their own merit, or because of Hashem's *chesed*. Hashem wanted the Jewish nation to be deserving of their salvation. Indeed, in the merit of our *mesirus nefesh* we were worthy of *kriyas Yam Suf*.

The Avnei Nezer asks, just as Hashem told the Yidden in Mitzrayim to do *milah* and the *korban Pesach* so they could merit *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem could have given mitzvos to the Jewish nation at the Yam Suf, and they would merit the miracle.

He answers, no other merits were needed, since they had the merit of *mesirus nefesh*.

generations — for individuals and for the greater public. Even if the gates of *parnassah* or the gates of *shidduchim* are *chas veshalom* closed, one should pray at this special *eis ratzon* by *kriyas Yam Suf*... and Hashem will save Bnei Yisroel when they shout to him."

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* writes, "The *שירת הים* (*Oz Yashir*) has everything in it: what was and what will be. All redemptions and all concepts are found inside the *shirah*. If a person says it with all his heart, with *mesirus nefesh*, according to his level, everything will be amended for his body and for his soul."<sup>37</sup>

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

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